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## **The Education of a Common Early-19th-Century Cossack: The Reminiscences of I.S. Ul'yanov**

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### **Abstract**

This article is based on a text that represents the reminiscences of I.S. Ul'yanov, a 19th-century Cossack general. While childhood and schooling are described in the reminiscences of other Cossack generals of that time (specifically, A.K. Denisov and I.I. Krasnov), what makes I.S. Ul'yanov's particularly unique is that he came from a common and poor family. The article attempts to reconstruct, based on his reminiscences, both the real education received by I.S. Ul'yanov and his pedagogical views with regard to that education.

A conclusion drawn in the article is that I.S. Ul'yanov's education was extremely limited – he received very little education in his family home, where there were very few books; he was not placed in a school; instead, he was enrolled in a program of study with the local administration, where his mentor taught him very little. Nor did I.S. Ul'yanov receive any serious military education or training. In fact, he characterizes himself as having been an “underdeveloped” child prior to joining service. Yet it appears paradoxical that he idealizes traditional Cossack education as a whole, claiming that it was facilitative of the development in Cossack children of useful moral and physical qualities. We are dealing here with an idealization of a past and a consideration of a system as a timeless exemplar. One has witnessed this done by contemporary Russian pedagogue-scholars. There appears to be a need to weigh the notion found in the literature that Cossack pedagogy was once a fairly effective system against concrete facts, including those communicated by I.S. Ul'yanov.

**Keywords:** history of pedagogy, historical pedagogical views, traditional pedagogy, Don Cossacks, microhistory, history of daily life.

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## 1. Introduction

An interesting characteristic of 19th-century Don Cossack culture is the existence of a large number of texts created by relatively little-educated individuals (some with no formal education at all). Even one of the most prominent prerevolutionary Don scholars, Kh.I. Popov, who was the founder of the Don Museum in Novocherkassk, went to no school – according to a biography of him written while he was still alive, he received a home education in a common (as opposed to noble) Cossack family, which could be characterized as his grandfather teaching him “Church Slavonic and Russian literacy” from the age of 6 and his family exposing him to books of “religious, historical, and narrative content” (Dontsy..., 2003: 408). By the age of 12, he had already familiarized himself with ‘A History of the Russian State’ by N.M. Karamzin, and at the age of 15 he became a clerk with the local administration (Dontsy..., 2003: 408).

Owing to the above-mentioned characteristic, one has access today to interesting 19th-century texts describing the home or extremely limited school education of members of the Don elite. The first such text must be the reminiscences of Don Ataman A.K. Denisov, in which he provides a short account of his education, which he received back in the 1770s in the Don region and in Saint Petersburg, where he even attended a private boarding school (Istoriya kazaka..., 1874: 22). A more detailed and in-depth account of the education received was provided by Crimean War hero I.I. Krasnov, who described the education he received during the period 1800–1810 in the home of his grandfather, Major General I.K. Krasnov (Vospominaniya..., 1873: 363-380).

The currently available array of sources covering the Don Host has enabled gaining insight into this complex and fairly exotic subject – what education was like in a region where the school system was only in its infancy (the first educational institution in the Land of the Don Host opened up only in 1790, and the number of students at Don schools surpassed 100 only close to the end of the 1820s) (Rajović et al., 2023: 1032-1033). Yet it is the education of the children of members of the Don elite and relatives of rich and influential generals that both of the texts on the subject known at this point (i.e., the above-mentioned works by A.K. Denisov and I.I. Krasnov) appear to describe.

The State Archive of Rostov Oblast contains an extremely interesting and unlooked-for text – the reminiscences of Major General Ivan Samoylovich Ul'yanov about his childhood years and the beginning of his service (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 369-399). Similar to Kh.I. Popov, his younger contemporaries considered him an “original”, as he was a person with no formal education at all (Dontsy..., 2003: 408, 480). An analysis of the reminiscences revealed that at the time he joined service as a youth I.S. Ul'yanov was a person extremely “underdeveloped” (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 392). His family was fairly poor and had no ties to the Don elite (this is discussed in more detail later below). Thus, we are dealing here with a unique source – an autobiography of a 19th-century Cossack from a common family who engaged in self-education when he was quite a grown-up man, which describes in a fairly detailed and critical manner his childhood nurture and the overall intellectual state of affairs within the circle he lived in.

The present article draws upon I.S. Ul'yanov's reminiscences to provide an insight into the way a common Cossack was brought up and educated in the period 1800–1810 – and that is based on one's own account, as opposed to observations and educated guesses from third-party sources, including those offered by modern scholars.

## 2. Materials and methods

The main source for this study is the reminiscences of I.S. Ul'yanov. As a caveat, not all of that has survived in whole – what is missing is the initial part, which must have covered the early years of his life and his initial education. Another thing that needs to be taken into account is that the reminiscences were written in the 1860s (one of the pages lists the date the text was written – December 11, 1865) (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 395) – i.e., I.S. Ul'yanov describes something that took place nearly half a century before. Accordingly, his text might contain errors resulting from distortions. Finally, it was in the 1860s that I.S. Ul'yanov took an active part in a public discussion in the Don region between proponents of liberal government reforms and their opponents – the so-called “Cossackomaniacs”, who were keen on protecting Cossack traditions (he was part of this group) (Volvenko, 2015: 101). He sometimes calls on this discussion in his reminiscences, including in the context of Cossack nurture (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 396-396ob.).

Thus, I.S. Ul'yanov can be identified here as a manifestly unreliable narrator. At the same time, for the most part his narrative is unverifiable, as it is focused on a microhistory (the life of a

particular little-educated Cossack family) and there are virtually no other sources available to us covering it (except for the family correspondence stored in the State Archive of Rostov Oblast; however, these letters belong to a later period (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 33, 34, 35)). On the other hand, the actual errors and wrong estimations by this Don public figure are of interest inasmuch as the general picture of traditional Cossack education he attempts to provide in his reminiscences comes into collision with facts and even some of his own estimations. This picture is of interest as an expression of the views of an 1860s “Cossackomaniac” with regard to a peculiar Cossack pedagogy – even where it clearly comes into collision with facts.

The present article, which will predominantly employ the historical-descriptive and historical-comparative methods, will be focused on juxtaposing the facts and estimations provided by I.S. Ul'yanov with one another and with those from some other sources (where possible). At the same time, of importance also is the use here of the historical-biographical method, which is to help gain insight into the influence of specific elements of I.S. Ul'yanov's biography and the constitution of his character on his reminiscences, and the microhistorical method, as the present work does not profess to express the pedagogical views of the bulk of Cossackdom but is focused on a detailed analysis of such views within one specific Cossack family.

### **3. Discussion**

Education in the Don region has been the subject of research among Russian scholars for many years. The first texts on this emerged back in the mid-19th century (Robush, 1859: 151-192). Prior to 1917, the subject of local education was one of importance to local amateur authors; however, their research tended to be mainly focused on the history of educational institutions. The most prominent in terms of scale and quality was ‘An Essay on the History of Novocherkassk Host Gymnasium’ by I.P. Artinsky (Artinskii, 1907). During the Soviet period, this topic faded into the background in terms of regional research – it was almost not investigated in a dedicated manner, while most of the summarizing works on regional history painted the picture of an extremely imperfect and ineffective system of education (including via a lopsided choice of documents dealing exclusively with serious issues in local education (Nash krai, 1963: 464-467)). During the post-Soviet period, on the contrary, the number of research studies covering prerevolutionary Don education increased sharply – however, it now was being idealized (Donova, 2008: 133-138). There also emerged works of a more general nature that placed little premium on specific facts in interpreting Cossack education as a sort of exemplar of Russian pedagogy (Lukash, Tatarintsev, 2020: 16-20). However, most of the works on the history of education in the Don region either overlook the early-19th-century period altogether or describe it in a most general manner. What also remains a little-researched subject is the home education of common Cossacks.

It is also worth noting that historians have researched the actual figure of I.S. Ul'yanov as well. This appears to be associated not with his significance in the history of the Don region (I.S. Ul'yanov's was a relatively minor role in it; he was a recognizable official and public figure, but nothing more) but with a unique situation source-wise – the archive of the Ul'yanov family having survived to this day. The most in-depth study of I.S. Ul'yanov has been conducted by O.M. Morozova, but the researcher has provided little to no insight into his childhood years (Morozova, 2008: 298-318).

### **4. Results**

#### *I.S. Ul'yanov's family and his character*

I.S. Ul'yanov's childhood unfolded during a rather peculiar time – when a large number of Don men were off fighting the wars against Napoleon, the Turks, and the Swedes. According to I.I. Krasnov, who describes the same period in his reminiscences about his grandfather, “it has become so rare to encounter in the stanitsas a Cossack capable of serving nowadays”. Indeed, it was pretty common for Cossacks not to return from the war for many years, with the exception of those wounded and maimed (Vospominaniya..., 1873: 364). Nevertheless, there was someone who remained with the Krasnov family in the Don region – his grandfather, General I.K. Krasnov, who had fallen from grace (Vospominaniya..., 1873: 364-365). I.I. Krasnov's father had somehow managed to retire at the age of 18 and never served after that (Vospominaniya..., 1873: 377). On top of that, the Krasnov family was a fairly wealthy one (I.K. Krasnov had inherited a fortune) (Vospominaniya..., 1873: 369). Hence, in his reminiscences I.I. Krasnov describes a pretty large and rich Cossack family (the grandfather had his son, two daughters, and 15 grandchildren living with him) (Vospominaniya..., 1873: 365), whose way of

life was, in a sense, close to that of a noble one. This family was not affected by the war so badly as to experience social problems and become dysfunctional.

By contrast, I.S. Ul'yanov's reminiscences reveal the dire social circumstances of a small hard-up Cossack family in a climate of men having gone off to war. There was only one grown-up male left for the three manors of the Ul'yanovs (descendants of one grand-grandfather) (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 383). It is hard to tell precisely how many people were there in I.S. Ul'yanov's family, as the initial part of his notes, which may have enumerated them, is missing, although the text initially lists just five individuals as members of the family – besides I.S. Ul'yanov himself, there were his unnamed older sister (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 391ob.), his mother Matrena Semenovna (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 380), his grandmother Agaf'ya Matveyevna (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 369ob.), and his grandfather Nikita Ul'yanovich (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 390ob.). Thus, I.S. Ul'yanov was being raised not in a traditional, large, family but a small one and virtually fatherless. According to his description, in the absence of men, most Cossack females had to work real hard to provide for their families (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 387ob-388ob.). As clear from the context, the Ul'yanov family was struggling back then already, although, according to I.S. Ul'yanov, things got worse for them starting in 1814, with their physical problems getting compounded by moral ones (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 384ob.).

During that time, his father returned from service – he did not even know what his son looked like (he had left for the war shortly after the birth of I.S. Ul'yanov) (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 391). The imperfect father-and-son relationship was compounded by his father not bringing back much money from the war, which was a disappointment to the family (of interest is the fact that I.S. Ul'yanov devoted several pages of his manuscript to the necessity of bringing back spoils of war, while his grandfather, Nikita Ul'yanovich, was so upset about it that he developed a condition that eventually led to his death) (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 389-391). The family soon had another two children, a boy and a girl, born into it (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 392). The father had to acquire a family of serfs, but overall the financial circumstances of their growing family got worse – to the point where they even were “experiencing food insecurity” (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 392). Consequently, during the winter of 1816–1817, the burden of running the Ul'yanovs' farmstead was shouldered by I.S. Ul'yanov and his sister, two teenagers living on a stringent budget (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 392-393ob.). Of note is the fact that his younger contemporaries gave I.S. Ul'yanov's birth year as 1803 – i.e., he was 13 at the time (Dontsy..., 2003: 480). His sister was about 2 years his senior (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 391ob.). In 1819, this quite young Cossack went off to service in the Kingdom of Poland, accompanying his father (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 393ob.).

It is for a reason that we have not mentioned the name of his father – I.S. Ul'yanov's does not refer to him by name in his reminiscences, but does to his mother. While it is possible to determine it based on his family tree, the other sources have it as Samoyla Nikitich (Morozova, 2008: 299). It is known that one of I.S. Ul'yanov's sisters was named Anna, but we don't know if that was his older sister (Morozova, 2008: 306). The very lack of attention to the names of his family members in the reminiscences may serve as a testimony to the Ul'yanov family being a dysfunctional one – in the text, the family members seem to be treated as mere performers of social roles (mother – housewife and father – warrior), rather than individuals who love children. While we already know about I.S. Ul'yanov's imperfect relationship with his father, I.S. Ul'yanov has the following to say about his mother: “My mother was by nature not a very affectionate person” (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 391ob.).

Thus, compared with I.I. Krasnov's, I.S. Ul'yanov's reminiscences paint a completely different Cossack family of the Napoleonic Wars period – one experiencing acute social problems and being dysfunctional as a result, where the father works hard and the mother works hard and is not very affectionate to her children; the father meets the son when the latter is older than 10 and fails to build a proper relationship with him; the grandfather dies as a result of being upset about his son not bringing back enough spoils of war (!). The only manifestation of some sort of tenderness within that family described in the reminiscences is fairly peculiar and demonstrates this dysfunctionality perfectly – when I.S. Ul'yanov falls seriously ill, his father declares that he would rather that it be his daughter than that it be his son who dies (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 393ob.). I.S. Ul'yanov describes his emotions from that as follows: “I surely liked that; I did not know *her* opinion, though” (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 393ob.). The way of life practiced by that family was close to that of a peasant one – both the parents and children working hard.

Thus, despite the fact that I.S. Ul'yanov's father was an officer and he himself subsequently rose to the rank of general, the family's financial circumstances were rather tight – seemingly worse than those of the average well-to-do Cossack family. Consequently, the education he received could hardly be considered high-caliber – although his parents might have been better financially fit to be able to provide their son with quality education than most common Cossacks, they did not take advantage of that potential. Of interest in this context is the following happening that took place when I.S. Ul'yanov and his father were serving. His father had promised that in Poland he would arrange for I.S. Ul'yanov to receive instruction in French, German, and dancing (possibly regarded as prestigious competencies at the time, with French and dancing known to have typically been taught to the children of regiment commanders) (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 397-397ob.). However, in actuality, his father had been throwing money about in company with a friend of his, a man named Ageyev. As a result, he not only did not have money for his son's education but was even exposed to the possibility of returning to the Don region penniless (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 397ob.). Thus, there is reason to believe that prior to joining service I.S. Ul'yanov had received an education close to what the children of most common Cossacks would, as opposed to those of officers who did care about the education of their offspring.

At the same time, it is worth noting I.S. Ul'yanov's distinctiveness as a person, which may well have been associated with his childhood and youth in a dysfunctional family. Many of his writings reveal his pronounced emotional callousness. For instance, in a small manuscript that I.S. Ul'yanov devoted to a poem by N.A. Nekrasov, 'A Moral Man', he confronts the poet, expressing his indignation at the latter sympathizing with the persona's daughter and the girl's death following her forced marriage to a person she did not love (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 196-200). To living love, which I.S. Ul'yanov condemns, he counterposes abstract "morality" (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 199ob.).

In describing his education in his reminiscences, I.S. Ul'yanov also exhibits emotional deafness – he speaks of its outer face but says nothing about his emotions and thoughts regarding it. Instead, he evaluates particular facets of his education based on a-priori notions of some abstract ideal of education without thinking about how feasible that ideal is and how well it is aligned with his own evolution resulting from such education. Note that I.S. Ul'yanov gets clearly more emotional in describing certain other topics – those that may have been more intimate to him. However, in the context under consideration here, he provides a purely outward picture, which, nevertheless, holds plenty of interest for us.

What is communicated by I.S. Ul'yanov with regard to education can be subsumed within three groups: 1) books available in the family home; 2) education received outside of the family home; 3) reasonings of a more general nature about Cossack nurture as a whole. Note that he writes nothing about the nurture and education he was given in his family home. While this might have been covered in some form or another in the missing part of the text, the surviving part is sufficiently large and detailed and contains a lot of information regarding the instruction I.S. Ul'yanov received at the hand of third-party persons. Therefore, it may be concluded that by and large the dysfunctional Ul'yanov family failed to fulfill its obligations with regard to his nurture and education. Our detailed description of the family provided above offers an answer to the question as to why that happened – in a climate of lacking spiritual affinity between the family members, having to work hard, and living regularly on a stringent budget, I.S. Ul'yanov's parents, who were fairly indifferent to education, simply did not deem it necessary to devote attention to engaging in special educational activities with their son.

#### *Books in the Ul'yanov family*

Another factor that I.S. Ul'yanov attributed problems in his development to is the limited set of books in his family home (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 376ob.). According to Ul'yanov, they had just two books, both of ecclesiastical content. One was "entitled 'A Road to Salvation'", while the title of the other he did "not remember" (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 377). The first of these appears to be 'A Road to Salvation, or a Set of Spiritual Reflections Constituting a Part of Theology for Which It Is Vital to Be Commonly Known', a well-known book by F.A. Emin (Emin, 1780). However, the child was not allowed to use those books for the intended purpose – according to I.S. Ul'yanov, they were regarded as "sacred items" and were kept next to the icons; one was allowed to touch them only when doing the dusting (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 377). In addition, I.S. Ul'yanov mentions another book he read as a child that had an influence on him.

However, there is no description of that influence in the text, which may be due to his peculiar emotional deafness. Nor does he remember the book's title and how he first got hold of it half a century before (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 377). We only know that it was a book devoted to the life of Jesus. The book seems to have impressed the young I.S. Ul'yanov significantly, which is reflected in the following words: "Had I come at that time across a meek monk, I would not have hesitated for a moment to become a novice" (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 377). To summarize, the Ul'yanov family only had printed books of religious content, and those were used for ceremonial-religious purposes exclusively, rather than for the purpose of educating the children.

I.S. Ul'yanov uses his peculiar style to share with us that in the absence of books he would satisfy his need to "fill his head" (with knowledge?) via "handwritten creations" (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 377). In one of our previous articles, we noted that during the reign of Nicholas I (1825–1855) it was a common practice among Don Cossacks that literary writings by local authors existed in the form of manuscripts (Peretyatko, 2018: 40-43). According to I.S. Ul'yanov, the Cossack tradition of writing out extracts from books went back to the late 18th century at least. He had access to his grandfather's and father's notebooks containing excerpts from various texts both in poetry and prose (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 376ob-377). However, unfortunately, it is the peculiar nature of I.S. Ul'yanov's narration that seems to most complicate the analysis of the facts he communicates – instead of providing some form of integrated characterization of those notebooks, he furnishes small and unrelated excerpts from various texts from them (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 376ob-377).

Only one time does I.S. Ul'yanov provide the name of a book that his father wrote out excerpts from, expressing regret that the actual book was not available to him. It's the famed textbook of Russian grammar by N.G. Kurganov (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 377). However, in that particular case I.S. Ul'yanov, by contrast, neither provides any specific quote from it nor a clue as to which part of the book the extracts were from. The textbook consisted of the following sections: 'Grammar', 'Collection of Russian Proverbs', 'Fancy Short Stories', 'Ancient Apothegms: Corrected and Augmented', 'Various Educational Discourses', 'Collection of Poems', 'General Taxonomy of Sciences and Arts', and 'Explanatory Dictionary of Russian' (Kurganov, 1769). Hence, extracts from this book could provide I.S. Ul'yanov with some initial knowledge in a variety of sciences – but we do not know what exactly had been written out from it by Samoyla Nikitich. Nevertheless, the very fact that the only textbook used by I.S. Ul'yanov was the one by N.G. Kurganov, which must have been in more-or-less common use among the Cossacks, certainly does merit note.

I.S. Ul'yanov also describes in his reminiscences the process of how his family obtained new manuscripts. His father brought back from his service a whole raft of copied texts, which included N.M. Karamzin's 'Sophisticated Solomon's Wisdom' (left uncommented on I.S. Ul'yanov) and odes by two local Don poets, Dmitrov and Katel'nikov (referred to by him as 'poor' (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 392)). Of interest is the fact that Ye.N. Katel'nikov was one of the first Don amateur historians and a sectarian mystic, who was imprisoned at the Solovki for heresy (Mininkov, 2011). Thus, manuscripts circulating among the Cossacks included texts by local authors too as early as 1800–1810.

We can only concur with I.S. Ul'yanov when he says that the books and manuscripts that were available in the family home did little to help his intellectual development. Although he represented at least the third literate generation in the family and his grandfather and father even had a little manuscript library (notebooks containing extracts from various texts), they do not seem to have been keen on the idea of collecting educational books for inclusion in their library, with extracts from the textbook by N.G. Kurganov eventually being the only such material available. Of interest in this context is what I.S. Ul'yanov's father did – having spent many years in military service and aware of the fact that he had a son and a daughter, in 1814 he, however, brought back extracts from various poems – not textbooks. As a consequence, essentially the Ul'yanovs' library was represented by a collection of absolutely random texts that were of little use for those trying to learn about and explore the world. In the context of that library, I.S. Ul'yanov does not mention a single academic book and does not cite a single excerpt of academic content. The bulk of the library must have been made up of subpar literary writings – it is known for certain that the library contained only one text by a famed writer – the one by N.M. Karamzin. Things in the family were even worse with printed books, with the ones they had used only as ritual objects.

Thus, the Ul'yanov family did not strive to make deliberate and extensive use of books for the purpose of educating the children. At the same time, the children had access to handwritten extracts from books and even read them, but eventually I.S. Ul'yanov was influenced only by excerpts from the textbook by N.G. Kurganov and some book about Jesus, obtained outside the family home.

#### *Education received outside the family home*

Of note is the fact that the stanitsa of Ust'-Medveditskaya, where I.S. Ul'yanov resided, had an uyezd school in it. The school was attended by a friend of his named Sergey Zotov, but not by himself (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 376). Instead, he had to be educated at local administrative institutions, serving as an assistant to the officials there.

Initially, I.S. Ul'yanov attended a course of study with the stanitsa administration. However, most of the material about it in the manuscript was lost (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 369). We only know now that classes were held at the office of the stanitsa administration (i.e., there was no separate space for the young assistants) and that he was taught by a man named Yakov Grigor'yevich (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 369). His education there was cut short when Yakov Grigor'yevich went off to service circa 1812 (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 369). As limited as it is, this information provides us with a chronology of his extra-familial education – I.S. Ul'yanov enrolled in school with the stanitsa administration when he was fairly young – under 10 years old.

Subsequently, I.S. Ul'yanov took up a course of study with the Ust'-Medveditskaya district administration (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 369). Unfortunately, he provides no accurate chronology for this. However, it is pretty obvious that I.S. Ul'yanov began his course of study no earlier than 1812, when Yakov Grigor'yevich went off to service, and finished it no later than 1819, when he went off to service himself. It appears that handwriting was the main subject there – I.S. Ul'yanov even ironically refers to the facility as a “higher handwriting institution” (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 369). The institution enrolled “many” Cossack children. It may be derived from his account that their education was essentially confined to their service there (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 369). I.S. Ul'yanov had a mentor, senior clerk Vasily Gerasimovich Popov. Popov wrote fast, if illegibly, but his tutelage of the boy boiled down to sitting in a chair provided as a gift by the latter's grandmother, Agaf'ya Matveyevna (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 369). Similarly, other mentors there did not seem inclined to put in very much effort to teach their students either (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 369). According to I.S. Ul'yanov, consequently the children there would “naturally adopt the practice of educating each other”, of which he, however, provides no specific details (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 369). To make things worse, this dubious schooling was interrupted more than once by him having to do work around the farmstead – and the further his schooling progressed the more frequently he was distracted from it (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 369).

It is pretty clear now why at the time of joining service he was a rather intellectually “underdeveloped” person. No matter how capable, hungry for knowledge, and industrious he might have been, he simply did not have the opportunity to learn something substantial, except for some basic knowledge – either at home or in school. The Cossacks represented a special military estate at the time, and a number of contemporary authors have written of certain ways of teaching military science to their young that were more exotic than books and schooling. For instance, A.V. Yarovoy notes that the Cossacks' martial games (“shermitsias”) are “mentioned in the accounts of all explorers and travelers who dealt with the Cossacks in the 18th century” (Yarovoi, 2018: 16-18). So, might I.S. Ul'yanov's intellectual underdevelopment have been made up for by a military upbringing or some special military training?

I.S. Ul'yanov speaks of nothing of the kind in his reminiscences. He provides a detailed account of his everyday life and play, in which there is little of the peculiarly Cossack. Specifically, his description of the games played by Cossack children mentions the national Russian games knucklebones, lapta, and svaika (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 371ob.). I.S. Ul'yanov never uses the term “shermitsias”. It is only in the chapter covering the joining of service that he tells us about how Cossack boys were influenced by war stories told by older Cossacks and used to “divide into Cossacks and Turks or Circassians and so on and engage in spirited battles” (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 396). However, mock war battles of this kind appear in I.S. Ul'yanov's reminiscences to have normally been initiated by Cossack children themselves, being something adults had little control over and hardly ever encouraged purposefully. Nor do his reminiscences provide any

examples of young Cossacks being deliberately trained for service (e.g., trained in using a firearm or a sword). The exception is instruction in horseback riding; yet even this is presented as a natural consequence of a focus on livestock farming among the Cossacks rather than something deliberate – Cossack children were often sent somewhere with horses, so it was natural for them to try to ride them (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 373). Thus, while I.S. Ul'yanov had certain military traditions present early in his life, he seems to have received no proper military upbringing and is certain to have received no military training prior to joining service.

It is time now to summarize the competencies acquired by I.S. Ul'yanov in the course of living and studying in the stanitsa. What is helpful here is his own reflections with regard to that, and that is notwithstanding the fact that he uses a peculiar style – paying excessive attention to trifles and leaving out important details. I.S. Ul'yanov makes no mention of any military skills. As regards general physical ones, at the time of joining service he was good at swimming and horseback riding (using quiet horses only) (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 373ob.). In terms of moral qualities, I.S. Ul'yanov limits himself to the frank confession that he was “too cowardly to be able to pull off a cheeky prank” (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 373ob.). The only discipline studied I.S. Ul'yanov mentions is penmanship, and that is where he excelled more than his peers (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 373ob.). Thus, I.S. Ul'yanov did not have any special achievements in his physical, martial, and moral development that could make up for his intellectual underdevelopment.

Thus, it is a predictable conclusion that the education received by I.S. Ul'yanov, which appears to have been similar to that of many common 19th-century Cossacks, provided him with limited knowledge and skills. These competencies were enough to serve as a clerk in the stanitsa or to join service in company with his father, but nothing more.

#### *Cossack nurture as evaluated by I.S. Ul'yanov*

One comes across an interesting contradiction here. In describing his own education, I.S. Ul'yanov does acknowledge that it was limited. Moreover, he appears to justify his father's estrangement from him by the fact that he indeed was unable to find about his son “anything that could make him feel affection for him” (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 392). Yet I.S. Ul'yanov's estimation of Cossack education is totally different – it is strictly positive.

Specifically, he asserts regarding the physical nurture of Cossacks through play and daily routine that it is this kind of nurture that “helps turn them into healthy, adroit, agile, quick-witted, and brave individuals with a good sense of direction and location” (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 373). What makes this enumeration particularly ironic is that I.S. Ul'yanov, who was raised exactly this way, considers himself neither particularly quick-witted nor particularly brave. On top of that, he appears to mythologize to an even greater extent the discourses of older Cossacks concerning combat and battle: “Through such schooling, a man will always be proud of his rank, no matter how much you mistreat him, and will always be true to the flag that his ancestors used to honorably carry; he will set a high valuation on his forefathers' contributions to the weal of their country and will cherish their glory, customs, and truth. He will not apostatize from these and will not turn on or sell out any of these treasures for personal gain” (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 373). Here again this rosy picture comes into collision with facts. Positioned here as the guardians of Cossack traditions are his older comrades-in-arms who fought in the Patriotic War of 1812 and who told him about their regiment commander, whom I.S. Ul'yanov appears to have sought to emulate (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 373). However, the same text mentions another Cossack from an older generation, a friend of his father's named Ageyev (who has already been mentioned above). All of a sudden, this man appears to have been an embezzler of public funds and a profligate (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 397-397ob.). Ageyev is said to have been a “disruptive influence” on I.S. Ul'yanov's father, arguably nurtured in the same traditions as his son (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 397).

A closer analysis of I.S. Ul'yanov's praise of traditional Cossack education reveals two distinct characteristics thereof. Firstly, it lacks concreteness – he provides no examples or illustrations of how the Cossacks' lofty qualities were manifested in practice, and secondly, he tends to laud traditional education in the context of the present and in support of the effectiveness of Cossack traditions. More specifically, he counterposes his observation that the essential qualities are developed in Cossack children through play and daily routine to the views of “out-of-touch jurists”, whom he describes as those who “know nothing about real life, lead an aimless life, and act based on pure speculation” (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 373). As claimed in the further text, “out-of-



touch jurists” dared to argue that the Don Cossacks had “lost their traditions”, whereas the Polish Insurrection of 1863–1864 actually appears to have shown the opposite (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 373). Yet it is based on the outcomes of the above insurrection that the Russian press criticized the Don Cossacks, accusing them of not exhibiting at all times the combat efficiency expected of them (this was even discussed in *Voyenny Sbornik*, the mouthpiece of the War Ministry of the Russian Empire (I.K., 1865: 79)). Thus, I.S. Ul'yanov's narrative contains two dubious themes that seem to substantiate one another – 1) that traditional Cossack play and daily routine facilitated the development in Cossack children of qualities essential for military service being substantiated by the Cossacks' military successes; 2) those military successes (in actual fact, disputable) being more convincing in the context of the allegedly effective ancient tradition of Cossack military nurture (although I.S. Ul'yanov himself did not become a brave person and did not acquire essential military skills as a result of that kind of nurture). It appears that, by voicing those themes to the reader, I.S. Ul'yanov was actually not so much communicating to them information about the state of affairs in 1800–1810 but imposing on them his own interpretation of events contemporary to the period in which he was writing his reminiscences, trying to prove that the belief about the Cossacks having lost their traditions was wrong.

Similarly, the assertion that older Cossacks' discussions were facilitative of the development in Cossack youth of lofty moral qualities was offered by I.S. Ul'yanov in the context of the activity of a certain unvirtuous group of people, allegedly descended from creep joint owners, who rose to riches that way and then seized control of the lands of the Don Host using their wealth” (GARO. F. 243. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 396ob.). Here I.S. Ul'yanov is alluding to a public debate that took place in the Don region in the 1860s, when one part of the local elite advocated for liberal reforms in the Don Host, and the other insisted on preserving its traditional ways of life (Krasnov, 1863: 231). I.S. Ul'yanov was a member of the second group, the so-called “Cossackomaniaes” (Dontsy..., 2003: 481). Thus, this part of the text contains a combination of two themes that look dubious when considered separately from one another yet seem to be supportive of one another – traditional Cossack nurture being seen as an exemplar of morality and opponents of Cossack traditions being made out as highly unvirtuous individuals. In a deep sense, the text seeks not to describe some remote past events but to discredit I.S. Ul'yanov's immediate opponents.

At the same time, it would be wrong to connect I.S. Ul'yanov's idealization of traditional Cossack education with a short-term public debate exclusively. Many texts by Don authors produced between the second half of the 19th and the early part of the 20th centuries speak of an idealized past, a sort of “golden age”, that simultaneously serves as a guide for the present. For instance, V.Ya. Biryukov, who was a member of a local commission tasked with determining the causes of the impoverishment of the Cossacks and finding ways to tackle them, describes the early 19th century, i.e. the very period in which I.S. Ul'yanov's tough childhood took place, as a time of exuberance – a time that one must at least try to have again (Protokoly..., 1899: 113). Other authors push the “golden age” further back into the past. For instance, according to the founder of Don nationalism, Ye.P. Savel'yev, the era of the ideal, freedom-loving Don Host ended with the start of the 18th century (Savel'ev, 2010: 373-378). Thus, we may be dealing here with a peculiar treatment of the past on the part of some Don Cossacks implying the existence of an ideal society in their native land in the past and its subsequent degradation. This chronotope is what I.S. Ul'yanov's narrative seems to fit with – it antithesizes his observation about ancient Cossack traditions with the views of contemporary “out-of-touch jurists” and members of a certain socio-political “group” in the Don region. However, it inevitably distorts one's perception of reality, and that can be clearly seen in I.S. Ul'yanov's text – emotionally deaf and not very well-educated, he speaks of the Cossacks' ideal, effective, and highly moral nurture, whereas the specific facts described by him reveal that the real education of a common early-19th-century Cossack was extremely limited – even in the military area.

In conclusion, it is to be noted that there are certain members of Russian society who seem to have embraced a chronotope that is close to the one described above (the belief in the existence of an ideal society in the native land in the past, one that is definitely worth emulating, and its subsequent degradation). Certain Russian scholars have propounded the idea of a productive Cossack pedagogy grounded in local traditions and directed to the past (rather than the future). According to S.N. Lukash, a major contributor to the development of this subject, “the ideal of man in Russian national culture” is predicated on “the educative values, ideals, and discourses of Cossack culture” (Lukash, Tatarintsev, 2020: 18). S.N. Lukash construes “the man of Russian

culture” as “the inheritor and continuator of Russian civilization and its Eurasian essence” (Lukash i dr., 2023: 37). Thus, what appears to substantiate the view about Cossack pedagogy being productive is not so much student successes but this pedagogy being vital to the “development and strengthening of Russian civilization”, “formation of Russian national identity in the past, present, and future”, etc. (Lukash i dr., 2023: 37). With that said, an idealized past of “Russian civilization” is clearly contrasted with a sad present – the period 1990–2000, when Russian education was oriented toward not traditional local but universalist European templates put forward by the Bologna Process (Lukash, Epoeva, 2021: 274). I.S. Ul'yanov's reminiscences are also helpful in that they reveal what the real education of poor Cossacks in Don stanitsas might have looked like in the early 19th century.

## 5. Conclusion

I.S. Ul'yanov's reminiscences about his childhood enable us to reconstruct in a most detailed manner the picture of the education of a 19th-century child from a poor Cossack family. While this way of educating one cannot be regarded as universal, it must be argued, given certain implicit facts (e.g., the fact that both I.S. Ul'yanov's grandfather and father were literate individuals), that this family cannot be regarded as having been among the least educated and cultured in Cossack society.

Summarized below are the findings from the study.

1) The deliberate education of a child in the Ul'yanov family was so limited that virtually no mention is made of it in the reminiscences. This could be regarded as a manifestation of the peculiar way of life of the Cossacks as a military estate – for many years, I.S. Ul'yanov's mother looked after the family by herself, with his father serving the whole time and subsequently meeting his son only when he was an adolescent. As a result, neither of his parents paid enough attention to his development, with the Ul'yanov family being a fairly dysfunctional one.

2) The Ul'yanovs did have printed books in their home, but one was not allowed to read them, as they served as articles of ecclesiastical use. I.S. Ul'yanov's father and grandfather maintained some notebooks, to which he had access but which contained no pedagogical texts that could be used to educate him (his father did not procure such texts, even though he had two adolescents waiting for him at home). The bulk of the content of those notebooks was constituted by extracts from literary works of dubious quality. The writings that influenced I.S. Ul'yanov the most were the extracts from a textbook of Russian grammar by N.G. Kurganov and some book about Christ, whose title he could not recall.

3) Despite the fact that there was an uyezd school in the stanitsa, I.S. Ul'yanov did not attend it. Instead, the boy was first placed with the stanitsa administration and later with the district one, where his mentor provided him with very little instruction. Nevertheless, the institution enrolled many children, who eventually found themselves compelled to engage in instructing one another.

4) I.S. Ul'yanov's everyday life and play activities were similar to those of a Russian peasant. The only peculiarly Cossack elements were mock battles between Cossack children and regular horseback riding for domestic purposes. However, even these elements were of a spontaneous nature and not controlled by adults.

5) As a result, at the time I.S. Ul'yanov was going off to service he had fairly limited knowledge and skills, as he was a person with no special military training and very little education. Little to redeem that came from being brought up as a warrior – I.S. Ul'yanov describes himself as “cowardly”.

6) Nevertheless, half a century later, in describing his childhood years, I.S. Ul'yanov criticized his own education and lauded traditional Cossack education as a whole as being facilitative of the development in Cossack children of useful moral and physical qualities. This was associated with I.S. Ul'yanov trying to substantiate his position on certain social issues topical in the 1860s, and also with another more fundamental reason – being keen on idealizing the past, as has been done by some Don Cossacks, claiming there was a “golden age” once that was a paragon to be emulated.

7) Certain figures of contemporary Russian pedagogical science have, likewise, idealized local-tradition-based Cossack pedagogy. However, I.S. Ul'yanov's reminiscences vividly demonstrate that it was possible for common Cossacks not to have any proper pedagogy whatsoever, with many Cossack children receiving no proper training in the stanitsas even for military service.

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