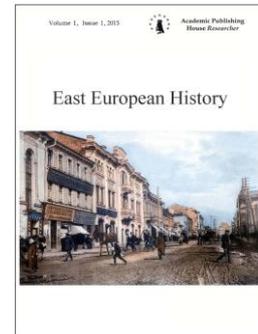


Copyright © 2017 by Academic Publishing House Researcher s.r.o.



Published in the Slovak Republic
 East European History
 Has been issued since 2015.
 E-ISSN: 2500-1310
 2017, 3(1): 17-22

DOI: 10.13187/eeh.2017.1.17
www.ejournal49.com



Cultural and Educational Activities of Community-Based Organizations in Kursk Governorate at the turn of 20th centuries

Oleg E. Chuykov^{a, *}

^a Kursk state university, Russian Federation

Abstract

Educational work of community-based organizations in Russia at the turn of 20th century was of great importance for the development of the province. Kursk land was not an exception. In Kursk governorate (an administrative division of the Russian Empire – *gubernia*), public initiative was common in the activities of out-of school educational institutions, vocational, female and pre-school education. Commissions on Public Readings and Kursk Teachers' Society should be specially noted among the community-based organizations with regard to their active work. They worked with the approval of the Ministry of Education and the Most Holy Synod (the highest governing body of the Russian Orthodox Church between 1721 and 1918). Cultural and educational activities of community-based organizations were very popular among the local community; in the governorate, it was supported by the representatives of the local government and the merchants. The active work of the members of these organizations was also aimed at ensuring the interaction between the power structures and local financial elite because the financial support of this kind of activities was of a fundamental nature and required large investments.

Keywords: community-based organizations, Kursk governorate, educational activities, Kursk Teachers' Society, Kursk Physicians' Society, Commissions on Public Readings.

1. Introduction

At the turn of 20th century, Kursk governorate was a province; its economy was predominantly agrarian. In the underdeveloped industrial sector, sugar-beet mills were of great importance.

It was the period when a significant development of the picture of the Russian province took place. The province was no longer perceived as a sort of 'exotic land' discovered by an educated person from the capital city. This imposed opinion of a province was refuted during the reforms of 1860s-1870s aimed at the development of education and mainstreaming cultural and educational activities in the provincial governorates.

2. Methods and Sources

The main sources used in this article are data from the State Archive of the Kursk region, the Russian State Historical Archive, periodicals of Kursk governorate of the period under study, and scientific works of Russian scientists on the corresponding problem. Application of comparison,

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: chuykov-ru@mail.ru (O.E. Chuykov)

problematic-chronological methods allowed representing practices of cultural and educational activities of community-based organizations in Kursk governorate in the period under study.

3. Discussion

Russian scientists studied the issues of cultural and educational activities of community-based organizations even in the early 20th century. A monograph "People's House and its Social and Educational Significance" by V. Ya. Danilevskiy is one of the first works in which the author analyzes the results of the activities of the first Russian People's Houses in their campaign against massive ignorance which was considered a public disaster (Danilevsky, 1898).

V.I. Chernoluskiy in his work "Private initiative in Public Education" indicates that community-based organizations were one of the most common institutions in all countries, including Russia; they were free associations of people of the same social class, with similar professional interests, etc. (Chernolusky, 1910). I.L. Shcheglov considers such traditional forms of cultural activities of educated segments of the population as 'theatrical groups' and 'people's theatres' in his "People and Theatre" (Shcheglova, 1906).

A.A. Tankov was among Kursk scientists of that period. He wrote an important work "A Historical Sketch of the Kursk Community Club, 1863-1913" (Tankova, 2013), which contains participants' personal memories. The author pays attention to the positive role and popularity of the community-based organization among Kursk town dwellers and in Kursk governorate.

In Soviet historiography the issues of the development of community-based organizations was considered mainly in political context. In 1970s, A.D. Stepanskiy developed the foundations of the system analysis of community-based organizations' activities in his work "The Tsarist Autocracy and Community-Based Organizations at the Turn of 20th Century" (Stepansky, 1982).

The works of O.Yu. Soboleva "Legal Community-Based Organizations at the Turn of 20th Century (the period of 1890-1914) (based on the source data of Yaroslavl and Kostroma governorates), T.M. Kazovskaya "Role of Educational Societies and Patrons in the Formation of St. Petersburg Cultural Environment (the period from the end of 19th to the beginning of 20th centuries)" published in 1994, etc. are among the studies on the cultural and educational activities in Russian provinces which are worth noting.

The works of Russian historians concerning socio-cultural organizations in the provinces of Central Black Soil region are of particular interest for this research. A.S. Tumanova in her thesis research "Political Community-based Organizations in Tambov Governorate in the Early 20th Century (the period of 1900-1917)" says that the main role in the socio-cultural support belonged to intelligentsia who chose gradual improvement of all the aspects of town life without radical changes and painful upheaval (Tumanov, 2008).

Belgorod scientists I.N. Safonov and I.T. Shatokhina indicate high popularity of community-based organizations among the population. They note that the Society of Basic Education Promotion, the Society of Music and Dramatic Art which united Kursk intellectuals were especially popular among the people in Kursk governorate (SAKR. F. 54. Inv. 37. D. 798. L. 2-4).

Russian researchers have studied community-based organizations from the perspective of the impact of socio-political factors and processes. They gave their division into periods and classifications, analyzed the reasons for the formation of these organizations, their legal status, and difficult relations with government authorities. However, these works were devoted to community-based organization in the capital and major cities without considering the specificity of their work in Russian provinces. The objective of this article is to reveal the specific features of cultural and educational activities of community-based organizations in Russian provinces at the turn of 20th century using the data sources of Kursk governorate.

4. Results

By the end of 20th century a significant number of educated people, including those with higher education, which could be obtained only outside Kursk governorate at that time, lived in the town which was administrative and educational centre with military units, railway administration, etc.

In 1897, the literacy rate in the rural area was 16 %, whereas in the town it was 39 %. 775 people who had higher education lived in the towns of Kursk governorate and 411 people with higher education lived in the villages; 13,766 people who finished secondary educational

institutions lived in the towns of Kursk governorate and 8,249 people with secondary education lived in the villages (SAKR. F. 1. Inv. 1. D. 5458. L. 58-60).

All the officials, the nobility, the intelligentsia, the officers, and the merchants had need of cultural communication and constructive recreation, which was capable of capturing the interests of anybody. A.V. Koshman rightly notes that their social and educational activities facilitated the development of democratic processes and the growth of educational potential of the society (Koshman, 2001).

The most common forms of educational activities were public readings. In the governorate, they were organized by various community-based organizations. In 1891, Kursk Physicians' Society was involved in this work. A.D. Stepankiy noticed that physicians were one of the largest and most organized groups of Russian intelligentsia. Medical societies joined more than a half of 18,000 Russian physicians in 1897; Physicians' Societies existed in 113 cities in 1904 (Kursk Provincial Gazette. 1891. 20 November).

Kursk Physicians' Society was engaged in significant educational activities popularizing information concerning health and health care among the population. In 1891, the society was allowed carrying out Public Readings on hygiene. But because of the insufficient number of approved brochures for such readings, the society appealed to Town Duma (Town Council) with a proposal to combine the activities of Duma's Commission on Public Readings with the activities of Kursk Physicians' Society. Duma agreed to this proposal. At the end of November in the building of the Kursk Real school (a type of non-classical secondary school in the Russian Empire (*real'noe uchilishche*)), free public readings began as a result of joint efforts of the physicians and the Town Duma's councilors.

The Chairman of the Kursk Physicians' Society V.I. Dolzhenkov, energetic and active public figure of the town, was elected as the Chairman of the joined Commission. He drew to the Commission a large number of enthusiasts who, despite the difficulties, continued readings. For example, from 1891 to 1893 due to lack of funds and the absence of rooms the readings were held in the hall of the Kursk Real school; then these readings took place in the building of the town secondary training school in Sadovaya Street, and since 1897 they were held in the town theater. The successor of the Commission – the Society for the Promotion of Primary Education in Kursk governorate – also had many problems with rooms for readings.

In 1912 the Kursk newspaper wrote that due to the high cost of shadow pictures for lanterns, they were rented from Kiev Commission on Public Readings. Later the pictures were bought because a special art fund was created. It was placed in a special storage house and used during public readings not only in Kursk town, but also in the whole governorate.

The Commissions on Public Readings similar to that one in Kursk were also organized in the governorate's uyezds (administrative secondary-level subdivisions of the Russian Empire). It was an urgent task at that time. The Commissions were typical community-based organizations in which local intelligentsia (physicians, teachers, etc.) on a voluntary basis was engaged in challenging business – people's education as well as their diversion from drunkenness. Local priests were usually involved in religious-moral readings but in the villages, public readings usually realized these two functions and were held using the books approved by the Ministry of Public Education. The procedure of such readings is described in the article devoted to public readings in New-Tavolzhanka village of Belgorod uyezd. Both individuals and community-based organizations could be initiators of such commissions. In Medvenka sloboda (a kind of settlement in the history of Russia, the word is derived from the early Slavic word for 'freedom', the settlers of such sloboda were freed from various taxes for various reasons) of Oboyan uyezd G.N. Baycher, a zemsky physician (local village physician; after serfdom had been abolished in 1861 medical care in many rural regions was provided by zemstvo (local elected council) initiated the religious-moral readings in 1894.

N.I. Solovyov, a Medvenka teacher, reported in the newspaper that in already mentioned New-Tavolzhanka village A.I. Iost, the managing director of the New-Tavolzhanka sugar-beet mill had become the initiator of such readings (Kursk Provincial Gazette. 1891. 20 November). In Sudzha (small town in Kursk governorate), Sudzha Charitable Organization put forward such an initiative in 1895 and was allowed conducting readings in the town and slobodas. Its work was so active that in 1896 Sudzha Zemstvo Assembly at the request of the medical council appropriated

400 rubles for purchasing shadow pictures and commissioned the council to organize public readings in the uyezd. They began in March, 1897.

Despite the fact that the readings started in the second week of Great Lent, they were held on weekdays and had no system. They were a great success; there were so many people who wanted to listen to the readings, that none of the school buildings, where they could be held, had enough seating capacity. There were cases, when a lantern stopped burning because of lack of air, due to a great number of listeners, and the pictures faded beyond recognition.

As it was stated in the report on public readings to Sudzha Zemstvo Assembly in 1898, they had to remove winter window frames and open the windows to let the stream of fresh air in and then the lantern began to burn, and it was possible to continue the readings.

The rooms were always overcrowded during such readings especially in slobodas. The listeners were very attentive and there was an order in the rooms, especially when the reader was good and the very topic of readings was well chosen. As the listeners and the readers suffered greatly in overcrowded rooms, they had to impose some limitations on the number of listeners or, as in Goncharovka, such readings were conducted separately for children and adults. Sometimes people were so interested in the topic of readings that they asked for the book, which was read, to read it at home. Moreover, Sunday school librarians noted that if the reading was successful, the demand for the book of the corresponding author increased.

More than 11,000 listeners visited about 48 readings ([Kurskaya newspaper. 1902. 27 June](#)). To cover the whole uyezd by the readings, the Commission addressed to the governor with the petition but because of a long process of getting a permit in some villages the readings were held together with St. Feodosy Pechersky Fellowship, which had such a permit. It was noted in the report that 5-6 thousand people attended the readings ([Kurskaya newspaper. 1912. № 54](#)). Thus, the process of public readings expanded around the governorate and the readings attracted attention of different groups of listeners.

Public lectures became another widespread form of education activities of the Kursk Commission on public readings. Pyotr Grigoryevich Popov, a member of the Commission, became an organizer of public lectures in Kursk. This kind of activities was especially popular among Kursk citizens.

The Kursk Governorate News wrote that the lecturers managed to awake the society from hibernation and apathy, aroused interest for science and stimulated scientific activities; it was that kind of activities which distinguishes intellectual and energetic people from wretch "Oblomovs" ([SAKR. F. 1. Inv. 1. D. 5458. L. 58-60](#)).

The lectures were popular, many people visited them and, moreover, they brought profits. During the autumn and winter period of 1894-1895, 38 lectures brought 933 ruble income ([SAKR. F. 54. Inv. 37. D. 798. L. 2-4](#)).

The members of the Society for the Promotion of Primary Education of Kursk governorate (it was founded in 1898) presented public lectures. For example, in 1902 the following lecture courses were given under the authority of the Society: World study (2 lectures) by Mikhail Vladimirovich Vyakhirev, a teacher of Kursk Land Surveying School; Russian literature (5 lectures) by Aleksandr Yefimovich Danilevich, a teacher of Kursk Real school; Physics (10 lectures) by Nikolai Viktorovich Goguntsev, Staff Captain of the 123th Kozlovskiy Infantry Regiment; Anatomy, Physiology, and Hygiene (6 lectures) by Yakov Yefimovich Chernomordik, a physician; Natural Sciences (5 lectures) by Vasiliy Vasilyevich Krainskiy, a Kursk Men's Gymnasium teacher; Russian History (5 lectures) by Sergey Ivanovich Ladinskiy, a Kursk Real school teacher ([Kursk newspaper. 1902. 27 June](#)).

As it can be seen from the topics of the courses organized by the Society, they gave extended education in different fields of knowledge. Besides, they were presented by highly qualified professionals, which contributed to the expansion of public lectures in the town and they were supported by the citizens. Organization of public libraries and book trade became another educational activity of Kursk intelligentsia. The members of the II department of the Society for the Promotion of Primary Education applied to the governor for the necessity of opening book storages as they considered it to be their duty to help people in choosing books for reading because they were against pulp fiction which hindered intellectual development of people.

Book storages were opened in Kursk and Belgorod. As for the libraries, the Society was involved both in the development of theoretical issues (Library Charters, leaflets, lists of books, etc.) and practical ones (petitions to the Governor concerning new libraries opening, their Charters

approval, raising money for libraries opening and support, sending for books and their distribution, librarians employment, etc.) In this difficult work, the Society relied on the community.

In 1899, a circular letter calling for cooperation in opening public libraries was sent to priests, teachers of rural schools, zemstvo physicians, zemstvo heads, landowners. After that, the replies started coming from different parts of the province. Intelligentsia demonstrated a sympathetic attitude to the problem; they were willing to support libraries working in them, providing free of charge rooms or cash donations.

To find additional necessities, public association constantly appealed to Kursk governorate and uyezd zemstvos, which countenanced all undertakings in the field of developing the means of non-formal education, and, in particular, the formation of public libraries. For example, Kursk governorate zemstvo cooperated with temperance societies and uyezd patronage commissions on temperance which provided financial support and opened libraries at tea houses as far as possible. In addition, the zemstvo gave a grant of 100 rubles for library opening, and 25 rubles for buying books for each library ([Kursk newspaper. 1902. 27 June](#)).

All these measures contributed to the increase in the number of libraries opened in Kursk governorate. In 1899, only 5 libraries were opened; in 1902, 12 libraries were opened. By 1904, the number of public libraries reached 57 and only 3 of them were in the towns (Kursk, Belgorod and Fatezh), all the other libraries were in the rural areas.

Another progressive aspect of work was the formation of Sunday schools. For example, in the governorate centre there was a women's Sunday school, supervised by the Kursk eparchy school board since 1886, and school library was subsidized by Kursk governorate zemstvo. Teachers from local educational establishments worked there. In fact, the Sunday school was a public institution. Over 200 girls studied at school during a year. Many schoolgirls (63%) lived in the outskirts of the town and suburban settlements ([RSHA. F. 1284. Inv. 233. D. 174. L. 39](#)). In 1899, the Society for the Promotion of Primary Education opened 2 Sunday schools for boys (in Kursk and Yamskaya sloboda).

In 1936, only one men's Sunday School remained in Kursk. Schools worked according to the developed two-level programs for illiterate and semiliterate ([Troynitsky, 1904: 174](#)).

The school teaching staff was small: 10 teachers worked at school in 1899 and the same number of teachers were in the years of 1904/05; they were teachers of Kursk educational institutions. Initially, students were not younger than 16 years old but in 1904, the age limit was lowered to 15. The number of those who studied at these schools steadily increased. For example, in 1899, 25 people studied at Kursk men's Sunday school but in the period of 1904/05 academic year 98 people studied there. The qualitative composition of learners also changed. In 1899, among those who studied at school, there were 9 illiterate, 10 semiliterate, and 6 literate people. According to their vocation, there were 22 artisans and 3 domestic servants. According to their social class, there were 21 peasants and 4 representatives of lower middle class.

In 1904/05, the number of trainees was as follows: 20 illiterate, 22 semiliterate, 30 well literate people and 26 people who finished primary school. According to their vocation, there were 9 farmers, 67 artisans, 12 labourers, 6 unemployed, 3 railway workers, and 1 domestic servant. According to their social class, there were 2 noblemen, 31 representatives of lower middle class and 65 peasants ([Chuykov, 2014: 112](#)).

Many learners of the school, who had been literate, attended classes to acquire new and expand current knowledge. This is proved by the fact that in 1904, a group of learners asked to include political economy and law into education program. The presence of farmers among the school learners shows that mostly people of the suburban settlements and peasants from nearby villages attended the school.

In 1901, Kursk Teachers' Society was established in Kursk. Initially, its functions were to provide financial support to teachers. Prince Peter Dolgorukov, a well-known public person of the zemstvo and a brother of Pavel Dolgorukov, the Chairman of the Moscow Pedagogical Society, was the Chairman of the Society's Board ([Chuykov, 2011: 97](#)). Under his leadership, the organization expanded its activities through educational work. The Society merged with the Commission on Public Education. The Society pushed the public to the idea of organizing of a museum of visual teaching aids of Kursk governorate zemstvo, which would work on a regular basis. A special workshop, which made physical instruments and models of simple machines, created collections in

botany, mineralogy, and zoology, was established in 1902. A.Ya. Minaev was the head of the museum. In 1902, under his leadership a tour round the south of Russia was organized for a group of people's teachers and teachers from Kursk, Moscow and Tambov governorates. In 1906, the Pedagogical Society was organized in Kursk (in 1914 it was renamed as Pedagogical Committee). Above all, its main aim was educational activities. In 1910, Pedagogical club was opened in Belgorod.

5. Conclusion

Under these conditions, each type of educational community-based organizations, due to their specific tasks and activities, contributed to public education.

Thus, the specific features of the cultural and educational activities of community-based organizations of Kursk governorate at the turn of the 20th century are:

- combination of administrative resources of the zemstvo and financial support of patrons and community-based organizations in the educational work carried out among the population;
- educational and methodological support of the educational process;
- organization of new institutions of cultural and educational activities on the territory of the governorate (Sunday schools, libraries, museums, etc.);
- financial support the employees of the named above institutions.

Thus, at that time cultural and educational activities of the community-based organizations of Kursk governorate were a progressive, gradual process which had a quite achievable goal. Community-based organizations of the governorate formed a viable system of financial support of the process of cultural and educational activities and the development of educational and methodological basis.

References

- [Chernolusky, 1910](#) – *Chernolusky V.I.* (1910). Private initiative in the field of public education. St. Petersburg. 195 p.
- [Chuykov, 2011](#) – *Chuykov O.E.* (2011). Patriotic activities of youth non-governmental organizations on an example of Kursk area. Monograph. Kursk.
- [Chuykov, 2014](#) – *Chuykov O.E.* (2014). Historical stages of development of the youth movement in Russia. *Proceedings of the South-Western State University. Series: History and Law.* №1.
- [Danilevsky, 1898](#) – *Danilevsky V.Y.* (1898). People, at home and its social and educational value. Kharkov. 40 p.
- [Koshman, 2001](#) – *Koshman A.V.* (2001). Sketches of Russian culture of the XIX century. T. 3. M.: Because of the Moscow University. 283 p.
- [Kursk Provincial Gazette. 1891. 20 November](#) – Kursk Provincial Gazette. 1891. 20 November.
- [Kurskaya newspaper. 1902. 27 June](#) – Kurskaya newspaper. 1902. 27 June.
- [Kurskaya newspaper. 1912. № 54](#) – Kurskaya newspaper. 1912. № 54.
- [Kursk Provincial Gazette. 1906. 5 January](#) – Kursk Provincial Gazette. 1906. 5 January.
- [Kursk newspaper. 1902. 27 June](#) – Kursk newspaper. 1902. 27 June.
- [RSHA](#) – Russian State Historical Archive.
- [SAKR](#) – State Archives of the Kursk region.
- [Shcheglova, 1906](#) – *Shcheglova I.* (1906). The people and the theater. SPb. 424 p.
- [Stepansky, 1982](#) – *Stepansky A.D.* (1982). Social movement in Russia in the late XIX beginning of XX centuries: the Directory. M. 382 p.
- [Tankova, 2013](#) – *Tankova A.A.* (2013). Historical Sketch of the Kursk public 1863–1913 years club. Kursk. 137 p.
- [Tumanov, 2008](#) – *Tumanov A.* (2008). Social movements and the Russian public in the early twentieth century. M. 254 p.
- [Troynitsky, 1904](#) – *Troynitsky N.A.* (1904). The first national census of the Russian Empire, 1897. Kursk province. T. XX. SPb.