

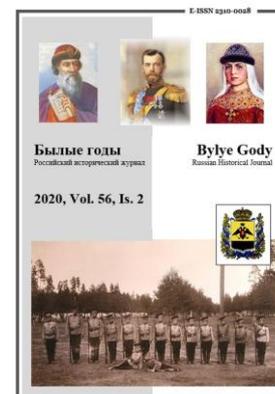
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Revisiting the History of Pedagogical Thought in Russia's South: the Pedagogical Beliefs of Major Pedagogues at the Novocherkassk Gymnasium in the 19th century. Part 1

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Abstract

Recent years have seen the publication of a plethora of articles covering the distinct features of education in various regions of the Russian Empire. However, most of these publications mainly focus on sharing statistical information (e.g., number of schools, number of students, etc.). Issues relating to the theoretical pedagogical beliefs of major provincial instructors and the characteristics of their instructional activity remain underresearched. This paper examines the experience of the Novocherkassk Gymnasium, a major center for science and education in the Don region in the 19th century, whose teaching staff included a number of major local figures. Note that much of the material on the actual pedagogical process in the above gymnasium was gathered back before 1917, mainly in conjunction with the celebration of its 100th anniversary – with much attention, due to a lack of documents, devoted to collecting information from former students of the gymnasium. Consequently, most of the information on the educational process in said educational institution is based both on official documentation and on oral, often critical, accounts by contemporaries about its teaching staff, which included individuals proven significant to the history of the Don region.

The first part of this paper covers the activity of two of the gymnasium's seminal first-cohort instructors. One of these men, A.G. Popov, the gymnasium's principal and author of one of the first-ever books on the history of Don Cossackdom, was an eminent practitioner who was the first in the Don region to endeavor to have instructors get the learning material across in an accessible and consistent fashion, for which reason he would even regularly attend classes. However, he still did underestimate the significance of special pedagogical talents and skills, keeping in the gymnasium well-educated yet incompetent instructors, some of whom spoke poor Russian. This, in large part, was associated with the distinct theoretical pedagogical beliefs dominant in the gymnasium. Some of these beliefs were born and propagandized by another seminal pedagogue – protoiereus A.G. Oridovsky, who asserted the beneficence of any education. Yet, while beliefs like these did little to motivate pedagogues, A.G. Oridovsky's being an eminent person and an eloquent speaker did help to attract students into the gymnasium, which was a far-from-perfect educational institution.

Keywords: history of pedagogy, teaching methodologies, historical pedagogical beliefs, Novocherkassk Male Gymnasium, A.G. Popov, A.G. Oridovsky.

1. Introduction

In 1907, the Don Host's provincial printing house released a large book by priest I.P. Artinsky devoted to the history of the Novocherkassk Gymnasium. In the book's preface, the author particularly accentuates that “in the essay's title, along with the adjective ‘Novocherkassk’, the word ‘Host’ was added to

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‘Gymnasium’” (Artinskii, 1907: V). Indeed, the Novocherkassk Gymnasium was for many years the intellectual center of first the Land and then the Oblast of the Don Host. Its graduates and instructors included the majority of 19th-century Don scholars, writers, and public figures. It is no wonder that by the gymnasium’s 100th anniversary (1905), the local authorities attempted to find and systematize all materials relating to its history. It became known quite soon that only a small number of these materials had survived to that day – in 1858, the gymnasium’s archive was on fire; later on, files within the archive were actively sold by its careless staff members; lastly, most of its principals were not particularly enthusiastic about documenting their activity (Artinskii, 1907: IV). In that situation, the Educational Council resolved to entrust the search for information on the gymnasium’s past to none other than I.P. Artinsky. I.P. Artinsky would turn to Don historians and local history experts, many of whom had formerly attended the school (Artinskii, 1907: IV). That would result in the release of I.P. Artinsky’s book, which, accordingly, is based on not just a body of official information but accounts from former students of the Novocherkassk Gymnasium as well.

Note that I.P. Artinsky was not the first individual who, due to a lack of sources on the history of education in the Don region, drew upon testimonials from eyewitnesses, i.e. some “oral history”, as it is termed nowadays. In 1859, there came out in Saint Petersburg a small book by A.G. Filonov entitled ‘Essays on the Don’, which in quite an unsystematic fashion describes a number of curious facts from the past and present of Don Cossackdom. The last of the essays is entitled ‘Educational Institutions in the Don Region (1790 through 1807)’. It is largely based on oral testimonials from several old men, among whom the author particularly singles out yesaul M.O. Nazarov, who in 1790 entered the Don Main Public School, which later was transformed into the Novocherkassk Gymnasium (Filonov, 1859: 151-152).

Thus, there is now available to historians some really interesting information that is based on first-hand accounts about the Don Host’s most significant 19th-century educational institution, the center for the intellectual life of Don Cossackdom. It appears to be worth systematizing the pool of available testimonials on the teaching activity at the Novocherkassk Gymnasium of several figures pivotal to the history of the Don region and their typical theoretical pedagogical views. Another fact that is worthy of note is that, as will be discussed below, with all its significance for the region, the Novocherkassk Gymnasium was quite an ordinary provincial educational institution in the Russian Empire, chronically underfunded at that. This study aims to look at several famous Don figures from a unique angle – through both providing an insight into their pedagogical abilities and helping to better understand the mechanics of the educational process in a 19th-century Russian province.

In recent years, historians have expressed a sharply increased interest in exploring the regional mechanics of Russian pre-revolutionary education. One has seen the release of articles and series of articles on the development of the system of education in Vilna Governorate (Natolochnaya et al., 2019a; Natolochnaya et al., 2019b), Vologda governorate (Cherkasov et al., 2019a; Cherkasov et al., 2019b; Cherkasov et al., 2019c; Cherkasov et al., 2019d), and the Caucasus (Shevchenko et al., 2016). In addition, attempts have been made to trace the characteristics of the system of primary education in the Cossack areas (Molchanova et al., 2019a; Molchanova et al., 2019b; Molchanova et al., 2020). Yet, specifically, the experience of particular provincial pedagogues who were held in high regard by their contemporaries remains underresearched. In the meantime, the large number of seminal graduates of the Novocherkassk Gymnasium suggests that this experience, at least, deserves thoughtful examination.

2. Materials and methods

The primary source employed in the paper’s first part is ‘Essays on the Don’ by A.G. Filonov (Filonov, 1859). The book is unique in that, while the reminiscences of students of the Novocherkassk Gymnasium were drawn upon by other pre-revolutionary Don authors as well, these individuals did so a lot later, in the early 20th century, i.e. when no eyewitnesses to the first steps of gymnasium education in the Don region were left any more. What is more, due to the poor condition of the gymnasium’s archive, reports by the first Don pedagogues, their speeches, and other proprietary texts drawn upon by A.G. Filonov may have been lost by that time. Consequently, when it comes to the description of events that occurred in the Novocherkassk Gymnasium in the period 1800–1810, the works of I.P. Artinsky, A.A. Kirillov, and some other Don authors tend to, simply, retell the information provided by A.G. Filonov (Artinskii, 1907; Kirillov, 1905; L.B., 1906). An exception is facts that are related not to the internal daily life of the gymnasium but its interaction with other official entities – documents surviving through these entities also began to be published in the early 20th century (K istorii, 1905). However, subsequently the large stock created by pre-revolutionary authors for the exploration of the history of the Novocherkassk Gymnasium, essentially, ended up not being put to proper use, with no special research conducted on the subject. Moreover, there currently are no works out there covering the characteristics of teaching by particular pedagogues at the gymnasium and their pedagogical beliefs. In reliance upon the characteristics of the source base, use in this work was predominantly made of the historical-comparative and historical-biographical methods, with information from A.G. Filonov compared with surviving information on Novocherkassk pedagogues and the general state of affairs in the Don region.

3. Discussion

The Novocherkassk Gymnasium was established in 1805 based on the Don Main Public School. Without getting into all of the issues in the operation of the newly established educational institution, it is worth noting that the most fundamental issue was actually the extremely low, or just plain unsatisfactory, level of competence of its teaching staff. This was associated with a number of reasons. First, the administration of the Kharkov Educational District approached instructor selection in quite a bizarre manner. For instance, mathematics teacher D. Bozhkovsky, who lacked competence to teach the subject, was specifically hired as a teacher so that he could tune up his knowledge of it (Filonov, 1859: 189). With that said, Novocherkassk had no alternative to hires from Kharkov, as the education level of the Cossacks remained quite low in the early 19th century. According to contemporary historian A.V. Zakharevich, service records either listed the majority of Don officers at the time as ‘illiterate’ or just left the field blank altogether (Zakharevich, 2005: 67). Even M.I. Platov wrote his last name wrong to his last days (‘f’ instead of ‘v’) (Zakharevich, 2005: 68). Conversely, according to one of the first well-educated Cossacks, I.I. Krasnov, his grandfather, a self-taught general, who had sought to provide his grandchildren with quality education, elected to set up a home-based boarding school that would employ well-educated private individuals, not gymnasium instructors (Vospominaniya..., 1873: 365-366). Subsequently, I.I. Krasnov was placed in the boarding school at Kharkov University, not in the Novocherkassk Gymnasium (Dontsy, 2003: 237). Thus, originally the Cossack elite preferred to have their children educated outside of the Land of the Don Host; even if wealthy families did bring good instructors over to the Don region, the latter were mainly employed as family tutors.

Based on A.G. Filonov’s book, the person who stands out the most among the rest of the incompetent instructors at the Novocherkassk Gymnasium is German H. Arnoldi, who “bore a striking resemblance to Vralman” (a character in D.I. Fonvizin’s play ‘The Minor’ – a German coachman who makes himself out to be a teacher) (Filonov, 1859: 188). To start with, he spoke very poor Russian. Later authors cited, with amazement, excerpts from his official reports. Here are some of them (original orthography and punctuation preserved): “hospodin principal byl neodnokratno v klass” (correct Russian: ‘gospodin principal neodnokratno prisutstvoval na urokah’ [English: ‘Mister Principal has attended classes on numerous occasions’]); “ucheniki doshli do shtenie i pisaniya” (correct Russian: ‘ucheniki doshli do chteniya i pis'ma’ [English: ‘the students have got to reading and writing’]); “kazhdoe raz nadobno k nim posylat' v kvartir” (correct Russian: ‘prokhoditsya postoyanno khodit' k nim domoi’ [‘you always have to visit them at their place’]) (Filonov, 1859: 187). Having said that, H. Arnoldi was a well-educated person, as back in Germany he had studied philosophy, history, geography, mathematics, French, and “some Russian”. However, the gymnasium’s principal, A.G. Popov, complained about his egregious instructional incompetence. As evidenced from the principal’s reports, in German class H. Arnoldi sought to engage his students in the translation of German newspapers, which he ordered for the purpose from Hamburg. However, in doing so he did not initially explain to them even the most basic fundamentals of German grammar, with his “translators” being ignorant of the German declensions and auxiliary verbs (Filonov, 1859: 188). Another dubious innovation from H. Arnoldi was to give students within the same class different homework assignments, with the practice eventually resulting in “the students learning nothing” (Filonov, 1859: 188). The students’ parents complained repeatedly that learning German at the Novocherkassk Gymnasium was a useless waste of time. However, since there was no other instructor available to substitute for him, H. Arnoldi continued to teach (Filonov, 1859: 188-189). That being said, according to A.G. Filonov, who had personally communicated with people who knew them, many of the gymnasium’s other initial instructors were not that much better at teaching (Filonov, 1859: 189). For instance, there was odious instructor of French A. Ganik, who knew his subject well and was well-educated overall (a graduate of the Naval Cadet Corps in Saint Petersburg) but who spoke Russian so poorly that he was “of no more use to the gymnasium” than H. Arnoldi (Filonov, 1859: 189).

The majority of instructors at the Novocherkassk Gymnasium not only were poor at conducting classes but had quite a bizarre way of dealing with students. This, naturally, resulted in a major mismatch between the high pedagogical principles promoted by the gymnasium and the way they were put into actual practice. The reasons behind this will be examined at the end of the present part of the paper. For instance, in 1805, when the Main School was transformed into the Gymnasium, it was visited by Archbishop of Voronezh Arseny and M.I. Platov personally, and during their visit one of the instructors, P. Yanovsky, delivered in front of the students a pompous speech, in which he urged them to “triumph” and called their lot “fortunate” (Filonov, 1859: 154). That, however, did not prevent him from entering someone else’s classroom and slap a student there so bad that his nose started bleeding (Filonov, 1859: 189). Likewise, H. Arnoldi would punish students for little things by grabbing them by their hair and hitting the side of their heads (Filonov, 1859: 190). Based on documentation from the gymnasium’s archives and testimonials from the first students of the Main Public School and the Gymnasium, A.G. Filonov had this to write, in plain and unequivocal terms, about that situation at the gymnasium: “limited in their knowledge, the instructors would deal with the students in a rude, insolent, and harsh manner” (Filonov, 1859: 189).

It is no wonder that, with such poor instructors on staff, during the first years in operation the gymnasium, essentially, was struggling for its existence. Indignant at the harsh treatment visited on their

offspring, parents would simply stop their children from attending the school. The gymnasium kept no statistics of such dropouts, but it is known that as many as 20 students left the Novocherkassk uyezd school, affiliated with it, for that reason in 1806 alone (Artinskii, 1907: 46)! A major role in the Novocherkassk Gymnasium's being eventually able to overcome the problem and even winning some regard from the Cossacks was played by its first principal, A.G. Popov. This man is now mainly known as the author of one of the first books on the history of Cossackdom, an almost anecdotal one at that. Here is what contemporary historian N.A. Mininkov had to say about A.G. Popov's 'A History of the Don Host': "The first work on the history of the Don region created within the culture of Cossackdom, it is distinguished by certain typical features of pseudo-scholarly discourse surviving in part to our day. One of them is the book containing a number of statements that are not substantiated by a credible source, like, for instance, the statement about Don Cossackdom descending from the Amazons. It is no wonder that Popov's essay was recognized as poor and was quite fairly subjected in later Don historiography to harsh criticism, and with some historians it even was the object of irony and sarcasm" (Mininkov, 2010: 266-285). Indeed, A.G. Popov did not make a great historian, but it is at the time he headed the Novocherkassk Gymnasium that it was attended by V.D. Sukhorukov, the Don region's most illustrious 19th century historian (Artinskii, 1907: 423). M.I. Platov's correspondence with A.G. Popov contains a curious component that offers a slightly different angle on the failed book by the principal of the Novocherkassk Gymnasium – the ataman associated his subordinate's scholarly inquiries with purely pedagogical objectives, with a desire to "perform zealously the duty of educating and perfecting our youth, <...> feeding their young hearts with instances of paternal virtue and gallantry" (Artinskii, 1907: 57). In general, A.G. Popov did succeed in this – despite the extremely low level of competence of the majority of its instructors, it is under him that the Novocherkassk Gymnasium started to regularly see its graduates enroll in Kharkov University, which was quite a success (Artinskii, 1907: 49).

Yet, here one is faced with a paradoxical situation. Whereas there is at least some information available on teaching methods employed by poor teachers at the Novocherkassk Gymnasium during the first years it was in operation, there is almost nothing available on teaching methods employed by its successful instructors. Reports to the administration mainly contain complaints. At the time, contemporaries tended to share with A.G. Filonov mainly funny or scandalous facts ("stories of a most preposterous nature", as put by the Don local history expert himself) (Filonov, 1859: 191). Consequently, there is very little mention of A.G. Popov as a pedagogue, whilst whatever is available is quite brief, which makes it quite difficult to provide a sound characterization of the first principal of the Novocherkassk Gymnasium.

Above all, it is worth noting that A.G. Popov, unlike most of his subordinate teachers, was a natural Donian. Popov was born in 1763. At the age of 10, in 1773, he was placed in the Host's executive office to learn clerical work. In 1775, at the initiative of the new ataman, A.I. Ilovaisky, the young man quite unexpectedly found himself enrolled in Moscow University (L.B., 1906: 50). After graduating from the university, A.G. Popov for about a decade and a half, up until 1797, held various posts related to administering the Don Host, which required some serious knowledge and preparation. For instance, he was in charge of land surveying, and took part in several military campaigns as well (L.B., 1906: 50-53). In 1797, the authorities finally thought to place the Don Host's educational institutions, including the Don Main Public School, in the charge of this well-educated Cossack, who was not indifferent to education. His predecessor was regimental physician A.M. Yagodin, an out-of-towner, who, according to contemporaries, was a well-educated person but did not bring that much to the table (Artinskii, 1907: 12-13). By contrast, A.G. Popov made it known straightaway that he would administer education in the Don region not just formally but with as much fervor and perseverance as possible. A.G. Filonov writes that first and foremost the new director of Don educational institutions attempted to obtain both from his predecessor and the Host's executive office some articulate data on "the number, achievements, and condition of students", but it was found that the instructors did not even keep this kind of statistics (Filonov, 1859: 151).

Ultimately, the main thing that is known for sure about A.G. Popov as a pedagogue is that, while formally he did not teach a single discipline, he regularly visited the classes of the gymnasium's incompetent instructors in order to keep a check on them and impose some kind of system on their teaching. This was revealed by the actual instructors in their testimonials, but it, unfortunately, was done in too generalized and obsequious a manner to draw any profound conclusions: "Mister Principal, Lieutenant Colonel Alexei Grigoryevich Popov, who tirelessly concerned himself with the education of youth, attended classes on a regular basis" or "owing to his diligence and proclivity for the sciences, so in harmony with his personal qualities, the principal often visited the classroom to observe anything that was pertinent to his job" (Filonov, 1859: 163). That being said, as suggested from his own reports to the administration, A.G. Popov really appears to be a man who intuitively understands that the instructor must not only know their subject well but be able to get the material across to the student in a proper fashion too. In this respect, the principal continually worked with H. Arnoldi and attempted to "suggest to him more than once" "what the students had to be taught before proceeding to translating" (Filonov, 1859: 188). According to A.G. Filonov, certain reports he had seen contained direct answers by the principal to instructor requests dealing with instructional work specifically. For instance, when instructors of Russian once complained about the lack of special grammar books, A.G. Popov reminded them that personally he *was* concerned about that but suggested that, instead of "waiting for the grammar textbooks to come out", they should make sure that "the

students actually learn it” (Filonov, 1859: 164). It becomes perfectly clear what role was played by the Novocherkassk Gymnasium’s first principal in the history of Don pedagogy if you add to that the fact that A.G. Popov regularly visited the gymnasium’s library and its special rooms. Prior to his being appointed to the office, it was even quite usual for some of the school’s equipment to be “lost” mysteriously (e.g., a geometry box with “just a protractor left in it”) (Filonov, 1859: 159). He was an innovative pedagogue, a groundbreaker, or at least a seminal theoretician. He really desired to see the Don region develop a solid education system, and, to that end, he was engaged in a big, tedious, and inconspicuous activity that was predicated not on mere theories but on common sense and was aimed at ensuring that instructionally incompetent pedagogues would pass on to the children as much of their knowledge as possible. In fact, he was the first in the Don Host to realize clearly that what mattered was not just what kind of material you are going to teach but also how you are going to do it – so, a major portion of his work involved providing the gymnasium’s teachers with instructional assistance specifically.

Still, A.G. Popov lacked consistency in that area. While striving to get the instructors to provide instruction in a proper manner, in staffing he obviously gave preference to instructionally weak pedagogues over those who were incompetent in the subject taught. It is clear that this was like choosing between the bad and the worse, with A.G. Popov, perhaps, ending up choosing the worse. In this context, it is particularly revealing how he expended the funding obtained at the time the Main School was being transformed into the Gymnasium on bolstering the teaching staff. A.G. Popov did not fire the notorious H. Arnoldi and A. Ganik, both of whom were unable to teach the children anything worthy, with the latter even getting himself in 1806 in a police report after refusing to pay a debt and threatening to give a beating to the officer who had come to collect it (Filonov, 1859: 189). But he did fire a quite mediocre history teacher named A. Zolotarev, who even against the backdrop of the rest of the school’s incompetent teaching staff was particularly distinguished by “weak knowledge” – but who was never mentioned by A.G. Filonov’s collocutors as a particularly poor pedagogue (Artinskii, 1907: 44). A. Ganik, who spoke poor Russian, was transferred to the position of history teacher in order to vacate the position of instructor of French to a man named V. Picard, who had a good qualification from Kharkov University (Artinskii, 1907: 44-45).

Still, judging by the successes achieved by the Novocherkassk Gymnasium’s top graduates, the practice of the principal attending classes as a guidance counselor and employing knowledgeable yet instructionally incompetent teachers produced a satisfactory result, which was especially the case against the backdrop of the performance of the Don region’s district schools. These schools gave little to no thought to the importance of getting knowledge to children in effective ways, with an 1806 check by Kharkov University revealing the “striking ignorance of the students”, who were just made to learn entire passages by heart, without thinking about the actual meaning behind them (Filonov, 1859: 191). Things would even get as funny as the following: “To the question ‘What is Asia?’ some would respond by saying ‘Asia is a plant’ and others by saying ‘Asia is a [‘strana’ – the Russian for both ‘country’ and ‘side’ (archaic)]; and then to the question ‘Which [‘side’], right or left?’ one could, actually, respond by saying ‘left’” (Filonov, 1859: 191). Ultimately, it was A.G. Popov who, at the behest of Kharkov University, sought to specifically “exhort the instructors that real student knowledge is formed not through cramming words but through understanding the ideas expressed by them, so it may be worth for them focusing on, apart from just having their students learn things by heart, having them, rather, gain some insight into what they are learning” (Filonov, 1859: 191).

The person regarded by contemporaries and later authors as “a bright and happy exception” among the incompetent instructors at the Novocherkassk Gymnasium was protoiereus A.G. Oridovsky (Artinskii, 1907: 14). Here, one is faced with the same situation as in the case of A.G. Popov: the other areas of activity pursued by one of the founders of education in the Don region having pushed his teaching work proper into the background, making it less visible to future generations, with A.G. Oridovsky, as a result, being totally unknown today. He, indeed, was one of the more prominent personalities in the Don Host on the cusp of the 18th and 19th centuries. Suffice it to say that A.G. Oridovsky was one of the first Don poets, and it is based on his verses that the gymnasium’s students acted out scenes extolling the virtues of education during its gala activities (Filonov, 1859: 185-189). The poet priest was patronized by M.I. Platov himself: funding provided by the Don ataman was used to publish a speech written by A.G. Oridovsky as a tribute to Alexander I, which essentially could be regarded as the first instance of printed Don literature (Oridovskii, 1811). If you add to this the fact that A.G. Oridovsky represented the Don clergy at the time Novocherkassk was being built and was in charge of the construction of the city’s first chapel, it becomes quite clear why only a few of the achievements of such an all-round person would attract the attention of researchers (Savel'ev, 1906: 39-41).

Still, first and foremost, the Novocherkassk protoiereus was a teacher. His relocation to the Don Host was organized in 1790 by one of M.I. Platov’s predecessors, A.I. Ilovaisky, who had told the administration directly that the Don clergy was in acute need of well-educated people capable of engaging in religious-educational activity: “The city of Cherkassk has a shortage of educated priests who can compose and provide oral instruction in a God’s Law course and teach Christian catechism; thus, there appears to be a need in such priests, as many of the subordinates are still suffering from the malaise of superstition” (Kirillov, 1905: 8). It is not known whether it was an informed choice by the ataman or just a natural outcome of the circumstances, but he did manage to avoid making the mistake that would be made later on by the administration of the Kharkov Educational District – rather than looking for instructors with a brilliant

education, A.I. Ilovaisky went with a candidacy that, while more modest at first glance, was more reliable in actual fact. A.G. Oridovsky went to school not abroad and not in a capital but attended the Kharkov Collegium, where he was “brilliant at” grammar, poetry, history, geography, Greek, rhetoric, philosophy, and theology, and “set an example of well-mannered behavior” (Shadrina, 2016: 157-165). What is more, after finishing his studies, A.G. Oridovsky was asked to stay and teach at the collegium, which at the time was the largest educational center in the east of Ukraine and the south of Russia (this pretty much all that is known about the major Don pedagogue’s youth, with even his date of birth remaining unknown) (Kirillov, 1905: 7). Considering the amount of effort it took to transfer A.G. Oridovsky to the Don region (A.I. Ilovaisky personally requested that they appoint him the fourth priest in the Host cathedral), it is highly likely that, being confident in their protégé’s pedagogical talents, the Don authorities chose his candidacy in an informed manner. Himself the protoiereus would write on this that he had been summoned to Cherkassk “at the behest of the late general-in-chief, Host ataman, and cavalier Alexei Ivanovich Ilovaisky” (Shadrina, 2016: 157-165).

Eventually, this personal choice of instructor paid off. Characterizations given of A.G. Oridovsky contrast not only with the contempt displayed towards most instructors at the Novocherkassk Gymnasium but also with the moderate respect enjoyed by A.G. Popov. A.G. Filonov, who had the chance to speak to people who knew the protoiereus, gives him the following laconic and telling estimation: “in our gymnasium, he ranks *first* in merit” (Filonov, 1859: 169). What is more, A.G. Filonov with great reverence cited in his essay on the history of education in the Don region entire writings by A.G. Oridovsky surviving to his day, devoting to them entire pages. By contrast, he limited himself to only a few short phrases from speeches by the other instructors. “For these are the only mausoleums he left us as a remembrance of him as an intelligent mentor. Let us then perpetuate the memory of him!”, – rhetorically exclaimed the researcher before sharing another creation of his hero’s (Filonov, 1859: 181). Later authors tended to avoid this kind of naïve exaltations, yet, in essence, the estimation of A.G. Oridovsky as the most prominent Don pedagogue of the early 19th century was only endorsed by them. Here is what famous Don historian A.A. Kirillov, who was closely associated with the church, had to write on this: «A.G. Oridovsky, first a priest and then a protoiereus (since 1795), was unanimously described by both contemporaries and later writers as a brilliant pedagogue, a fervent advocate of education, and an outstanding instructor, who was ranked first in merit in the newly established gymnasium. In addition to school classes, he also taught privately, whereby he helped to facilitate the growing interest in education among a wide audience in Cherkassk” (Kirillov, 1905: 8).

However, just like in the case of A.G. Popov, all those eulogies by historians and contemporaries failed to reveal what specifically made A.G. Oridovsky an instructor ranked “first in merit”. It is even not clear which subjects he taught. I.P. Artinsky is confident that the protoiereus taught catechism, sacred history, logic, and rhetoric (Artinskii, 1907: 14), whilst A.G. Filonov refers to the priest as an “instructor of the fine sciences” (Filonov, 1859: 180). Considering what education was like at the time, A.G. Oridovsky may well have taught quite a broad array of disciplines. After all, as a “brilliant instructor” he was invited to provide instruction at private homes, which normally did not imply narrow specialization; in addition, at the Kharkov Collegium he taught “Lower Grammar and Greek” (Kirillov, 1905: 7; Filonov, 1859: 167). The only author who wrote about A.G. Oridovsky’s pedagogical practices proper was the very same A.G. Filonov – yet, it is not quite clear whether he relied upon testimonials from the students of the protoiereus or upon his speeches solely. In any case, there is a passage in ‘Essays on the Don’ that is of interest, as it represents the first attempt in the history of Don pedagogy to identify the pedagogical and instructional principles employed by the outstanding instructor of the past. Here is the gist of it: “Some of those lines place the clergyman’s speech [A.G. Oridovsky’s speech on the day of the inauguration of the Novocherkassk Gymnasium] in close quarters with the profound thoughts of Pirogov on education. “Alexander’s wish is that everybody should develop their talents to be all they can be”, – said the estimable protoiereus in 1805; a similar idea was gloriously introduced into our pedagogy by the illustrious contemporary educator by way of his ‘questions of life’, suggesting that a person must, above all, be nurtured to be a good person, and only then be educated to be a warrior, professor, locksmith, diplomat, doctor ...” (Filonov, 1859: 176). Worthy of attention is the fact that this way to somewhat naïvely compare A.G. Oridovsky’s speeches to the ideas of pedagogy of the second half of the 19th century was staunchly opposed by one of the classics of Russian criticism, N.A. Dobrolyubov. In a special review of ‘Essays on the Don’, N.A. Dobrolyubov devotes special attention to this particular issue, remarking ironically that in actual fact the ideas expressed in A.G. Oridovsky’s speeches are not that profound and, essentially, are just “general phrases that have been reiterated for ages” (Dobrolyubov, 1962: 476-477). Having said that, he immediately admits that certain statements by the Novocherkassk protoiereus sound quite modern for the 1860s, which he, however, associates with that statements like those have been “the perennial domain of phrasemongers throughout history” and would sound as modern “at the time of Maximus the Greek or Cyril of Turov!” (Dobrolyubov, 1962: 476-477).

As already demonstrated above, public speeches by many of the instructors at the Novocherkassk Gymnasium were out of sync with the actual pedagogical practice, with A.G. Oridovsky’s poetic and public career suggesting that the Novocherkassk protoiereus had quite a decent command of his era’s flamboyant rhetoric. Yet, the writings of the instructor, ranked “first in merit” in the Novocherkassk Gymnasium, which were fully reproduced by A.G. Filonov, provide an idea of – if not the way the protoiereus really conducted classes, then, at least – what his pedagogical ideals were. Consequently, it will be worth, following in the

footsteps of A.G. Filonov, briefly examining these writings, which, in essence, represent the first fully surviving endeavors by a Don author to conceptualize the significance of education in his era. Essentially, A.G. Oridovsky's ideas were neither original nor novel, which at the end of the day mattered little: the standing he enjoyed among his audience turned the Novocherkassk protoiereus into a "fervent advocate of education", someone with whom the first generation of educated Novocherkassians associated the very idea of education (Kirillov, 1905: 8). Therefore, even if in his pedagogical practice A.G. Oridovsky did not quite keep to the principles he publicly declared, these principles are of significance for the history of Don pedagogy.

In this context, it, above all, is worth noting that what is woven through A.G. Oridovsky's writings is the idea that education is, most importantly, needed for the development of a proper personality. However, there is a great difference between this idea of the protoiereus and the related concepts of later secular pedagogues: the Novocherkassk priest viewed learning as a way to get closer to God, for it can help to manifest in them God's image and likeness. A.G. Oridovsky had the following to write on this (and he really meant it): "Man is the image of the invisible God; his soul and mind form the grandeur that likens him to God; yet, this Godlike creature can become so disastrously miserable if you do not nourish his talents! His mind is like none other but an uncultivated tract of land that produces thorns and thistles. <...>. Only the sciences can serve as a means of helping to perfect his talents and helping Man to improve to the level he truly deserves to be at. The sciences are a gift sent down from Heaven for Man to be creative" (Filonov, 1859: 170-171). Consequently, while it can be stated that the protoiereus, above all, urged nurturing the student to be a "good person" first and only then educate them to become a representative of a certain profession, it is religion, exclusively, that was seen by him as the basis of this education: "Honorable fathers! Do you not wish for your children to be both well-mannered and virtuous? Theology is the source of all virtues. <...>. "To be part of society but not to live piously is to be a captive of your passions. Uncontrolled passions will do you no good, just as darkness will never beget light. What will be of a faithless son when he enters society? He will have no respect for the law and the truth. He will sacrifice his talents to his passions. He will become a vile spreader of false rumors and a public disturber. He will become a slave to extravagance and other sins" (Filonov, 1859: 173). A.G. Oridovsky sought to promote the idea about the indissoluble link between true education and faith even in his verses that later would be used in plays acted out by the gymnasium's students. For instance:

Russian	English
Mladye nashi dni na to ot Goda danny, Chtob izhdevali my ikh na dela izbranny, Chtob yunyi razum nash science prosveshchali, I dushu knowledgeem i veroi ukrashali» (Filonov, 1859: 181).	"God grants us our young days So we could spend them on worthwhile pursuits; So we could enlighten our young minds with science And adorn our souls with knowledge and faith".

However, try as he might, A.G. Oridovsky failed to formulate clearly in any of his writings which specific qualities are developed in a person by the "sciences", bringing them closer to God. Rather, he sought to prove the general utility of the "sciences" by contradiction, without sparing dark paint to describe "ignoramus": "Does not education encourage a person to selflessly contribute to the common good, more so at a time when that is particularly needed? Does not science make a person prudent through experimentation and encourage them to do something memorable that will benefit future generations? And, lastly, is it not education that helps a person to become a high-level minister and a true patriot to their country?" (Filonov, 1859: 174). Consequently, we cannot but acknowledge that N.A. Dobrolyubov was right: in trying to substantiate the general need for education in terms of being able to get closer to God, A.G. Oridovsky did break into flamboyant, fatuous rhetoric, "the perennial domain of phrasemongers throughout history". Things would get to the point where to statements like "people can live and prosper well without science" the priest would respond, without providing specific arguments, with questions like "Which of the two is of greater benefit – darkness or light? Rudeness or politeness? What, if not science, is most reliable in terms of educating the human heart and ennobling our morals?" (Filonov, 1859: 173).

Also worthy of note is the fact that in A.G. Oridovsky's speeches and verses there is not a single word about the significance of particular disciplines. Instead, the protoiereus keeps talking about the significance of the abstract "sciences" for human society, suggesting that "science combined with piety is the steering wheel used to direct the course of the ship of common prosperity" (Filonov, 1859: 175). He emphasized the practical significance of education, especially in his verses written for gymnasium events – but, then again, he did so in a rather generalized fashion, without offering specifics:

Russian	English
"Tut nuzhen svet uma i tonkoe suzhden'e, Chtob zloe otdalit' ot grada pokushen'e; Potrebno vremena so vremenem slichat', Lukavstviya stezi potrebno preduzhat',	"It will take a bright mind and subtle judgment To avert the perils of others' scheming against the city; It will help to compare different eras;

I raspoznat' lyudei i vse manery sveta,
 Chtob s slavoï pobedit' zlost' khitrogo naveta,
 Potrebno i pero, chtob raspri raznimat',
 I kazhdomu urok dostoinyi vozdavat'" (Shadrina,
 2016: 182-183).

And it will help to learn to anticipate others' crafty
 plans;
 And learn what people in other lands and their
 customs are like,
 If one is to succeed in averting the dangers of cunning
 defamation;
 Likewise, good writing will help to reconcile
 disputants
 And provide each with some useful advice".

Thus, it is no wonder that certain disciplines taught by A.G. Oridovsky became forgotten. Even surviving texts by the protoiereus indicate that he was not enthusiastic about some particular subject. While the Novochoerkassk protoiereus championed education in general, it was somewhat naïve of him not to demarcate domains of human knowledge. In this context, it is quite illustrative that he was asserting in his verses the extreme utility of attending the gymnasium, which was a purely civil institution, for a military career:

Russian

"Vozmozhno l' bez uma pobedoi vozgremet'?
 Vozmozhno l' prostyaku gradami ovladet'?
 Ne siloi Gerkules, ne krepost'yu Solon
 Srazhaet sil'nogo, beret pobedy tron,
 No zrelost'yu uma, iskusstvom mudrykh ruk
 Trofei, lavry zhnet i sokrushaet luk" (Filonov, 1859:
 182).

English

"Can a person win without being wise?
 Can a shallow person conquer cities?
 It is not through mere strength that Herculeses and
 not through mere endurance that Solons
 Overpower the tough and claim the wreath of
 victory,
 But through a mature wit and manual dexterity
 That they convincingly claim the spoils and reap
 the laurels of success".

All this produced in A.G. Oridovsky' quite a unique attitude towards the students. He referred to the gymnasium as a "temple" and called on the students to "sacrifice their youth immaculately to science; once in, try not to look left or right but strive to be diligent; try to use [their] time, like a precious gift, on acquiring an education" (Filonov, 1859: 175-176). It appears that the gymnasium's students were lucky not least because they could go to school. Accordingly, in his speeches the protoiereus did not say a word about the harsh treatment of students rampant in the classroom. On the contrary, he encouraged the parents "not to linger over the placement of their child in this school, as doing so will help to protect their morals and keep them from depravity, for the primary focus is on upholding faith, law, and humanity" (Filonov, 1859: 175). With that said, A.G. Oridovsky was neither naïve nor tolerant of abuse: his detractors even forced him to leave the Don region in the interval between the atamanships of A.I. Ilovaisky and M.I. Platov allegedly for his committing a series of "brash and malevolent deeds" (in actual fact, he was involved in the fight against corruption and cronyism among the clergy) (Shadrina, 2016: 157-165). However, in this case the Novochoerkassk protoiereus must have deemed that the blatant obscenities of instructors at the Novochoerkassk Gymnasium could actually be put up with given the fact that this was the only educational institution where the majority of Cossacks, apart from wealthy people who hired private tutors, could get some kind of education.

Thus, the key pedagogical principles publicly declared by A.G. Oridovsky were extremely naïve and, in essence, could be reduced to the following three simple tenets:

1) Education is needed for the self-perfection of humans; it can help to manifest in them God's image and likeness.

2) Furthermore, education has practical significance as well, as an educated person is likely to achieve success in any area faster, regardless of whether or not that activity has a direct relation to their education.

3) Consequently, the duty of any parent is to place their child in the gymnasium as soon as possible, while the duty of any child is to sacrifice their youth to science.

Yet, the Don region would remember the protoiereus's speeches for very long, despite their obvious flaws. It must have been not so much about the content of his speeches but the very personality of A.G. Oridovsky, who had earned a major standing among the Cossacks. In the specific situation that the Don region found itself in in the early 19th century, it is down-to-earth and in some respect even erroneous pedagogical ideas like those promoted by the Novochoerkassk priest that it was highly worth indoctrinating the local, poorly educated, elite with, for the utility of attending the Novochoerkassk Gymnasium was by no means obvious, with its repulsively rough and harsh instructors; and, much as N.A. Dobrolyubov criticized A.G. Oridovsky for his being a phrasemonger, his rhetoric and personal prestige must have been the only reasons it was possible to attract students into the gymnasium.

Note that, judging by surviving excerpts from speeches by other Don pedagogues, these individuals held similar views but did not have the prestige and talent of A.G. Oridovsky. The pomposity and substantive

inanity of their speeches, which extolled the abstract “sciences” in detachment from specific subjects and the real state of affairs in the Novocherkassk Gymnasium, was derided not even by N.A. Dobrolyubov but by the much more tolerant A.G. Filonov. For instance, instructor I. Grechenovsky uses the following language to illustrate the idea that “fine education helps a person to be of maximum use to mankind as a whole and those around them in particular”: “After a dark night, once all the storms and tempests, so horrendous in the dark, are over, there begins a day, with the light adorning with gold everything it will touch with its rays – this is when the world takes on its wonderful forms, ready to fulfill the duty placed upon it, with lush pastures spreading across the fields, sundry varieties of bread growing in the vast tracts of land, and herds of bleating sheep grazing in the mountains” (Filonov, 1859: 180). All these vague rhetorical beauties, which had little to do with the actual educational process, were, in turn, to serve as proof that “upbringing and education particularly contribute to learners having respect for the authorities and their teachers, and thereby being of maximum use to society” (Filonov, 1859: 179). Pace with his teachers was kept by A.G. Popov as well. For instance, during the first-ever gala event staged at the gymnasium he wanted to know what to “liken today’s youth, who are enjoying great education and are blossoming with brilliant abilities, vitality, and pliancy, to” (Filonov, 1859: 180). The principal rejected comparisons with “a garden full of fabulous, succulent fruits” and with “speedy gazelles galloping over the hills”, concluding that it was best to compare his students to a “highest mountain” – this way, one would “have God in his heart and thunder in his hand” (Filonov, 1859: 180). Further, in continuation of the bizarre associative link, A.G. Popov proceeds to suggest that a mountain cannot be changed “either by storms or by the passage of time”, which is another reason to compare to it a “well-bred youth” who, by virtue of his education, “is thrifty in running his household, prudent in doing his job, skillful in military affairs, and active in civil life” (Filonov, 1859: 180). In the view of A.G. Filonov, these statements formed the most interesting part of speeches by the Don pedagogues; the researcher possessed full texts written by them, but many of those writings “contained phrases of such a general nature” that he refrained from providing more excerpts from them (Filonov, 1859: 176-177). “Those speeches must be good if Mr. Filonov, too, found common elements in them! Just imagine what should seem as a common element to that young man, moved by a speech from Oridovsky!”, – exclaimed N.A. Dobrolyubov – and that is something it is hard not to agree with (Dobrolyubov, 1962: 477).

It just remains to state that, while the surviving excerpts from statements by first-generation Don pedagogues are not sufficient to fully reconstruct their theoretical pedagogical views, it can be asserted with confidence that those pedagogues did share the idea about the definite utility of education for the development of a person – yet, they did not even try to concretize it, focusing instead on rhetorical beauties and all kinds of comparisons, which in practice rather produced a comical effect. These theoretical pedagogical views, in turn, can explain both the drawbacks of the majority of instructors at the Novocherkassk Gymnasium, an attempt to describe which is made at the beginning of this work’s main part, and the contrast that existed in the gymnasium between its officially declared lofty pedagogical principles and actual practice. The idealization of the abstract “sciences” and embracement of the notion of the definite utility of any learning involuntarily led to a softening of purely instructional requirements for teachers. This approach also explains why A.G. Popov kept well-educated yet, as suggested by contemporaries, good-for-nothing instructors (e.g., A. Ganik). With Don pedagogy just making its first steps in the early 19th century, one could already then notice the first major mismatch between theory and practice in its system. This can be best illustrated by taking the example of the pedagogical activity of A.P. Popov, who was first to endeavor to get the instructors to conduct their classes in an instructionally proper manner and provide them with special instructional recommendations. Yet, in his speeches he comes across as a rhetor who is totally detached from reality. Thus, the mismatch between the notion of the definite utility of any learning and the actual incompetence of many of its instructors would long remain a weak spot with the Novocherkassk Gymnasium. The story of what was done to resolve this mismatch will be related in the work’s next part.

4. Conclusion

As evident, right from the outset of the operation of the Novocherkassk Gymnasium there set in quite a peculiar state of affairs, which would persist going forward. On the one hand, it is hard to recognize the overall level of education provided in it as particularly high, as its teaching staff included many accidental individuals who knew little about the teaching profession, with it being acknowledged even by the gymnasium’s administration that the children acquired little knowledge from the classes taught by them. However, on the other hand, the gymnasium was held in some regard by the Host authorities, being, in fact, first the only and subsequently the largest center for education and science in the Don region. Consequently, its teaching staff naturally included individuals who were pivotal to the history of the Don region – it was quite logical for a well-educated person, be it a scholar or a writer, to try to get a job as an instructor at the gymnasium personally or for the actual authorities to arrange for that. As a result, the gymnasium’s prestige was largely based not on the average level of competence among its teaching staff but on the activity of particular instructors of that kind, with most contemporaries admiring the personalities of these figures rather than their actual pedagogical achievements.

During the first years in operation, the gymnasium experienced the above state of affairs particularly pronouncedly. This had to do with the naïve beliefs of the time’s pedagogues about the definite utility of

learning any “science”, which often resulted in that to teach the “sciences” the school hired totally accidental individuals who were quite well-educated but often did not have any pedagogical experience, were not too big of a personality, and at times even spoke no Russian. Consequently, a large portion of the gymnasium’s instructors did not even match the minimum criteria, with medium-level instructors non-existent there altogether, whilst it did have several “stars” on staff, who stood out quite conspicuously against that backdrop. In the early 19th century, there were just two good instructors in the Novocherkassk Gymnasium, with each earning a firm place in the history of the Don region.

The gymnasium’s principal A.G. Popov was the first Cossack to endeavor to write the history of Don Cossackdom. Although he was unable to create a work that would match the scale of the era he lived in, and his ‘A History of the Don Host’ entered Don historiography more as a hilarious mishap, his very attempt to do it is testimony to A.G. Popov being an extraordinary person. This Don education figure was not particularly successful in his theoretical pedagogical efforts, failing to rise above the flamboyant, fatuous pedagogical rhetoric of other instructors at the Novocherkassk Gymnasium. Nonetheless, A.G. Popov was a prominent practitioner who introduced into educational practice regular visits to classes by the principal, aimed at evaluating the teachers’ instructional performance and providing them with suggestions as to their instruction. In this context, what is particularly revealing is his clear-cut directives to instructor of German H. Arnoldi, who was wont to proceed to hard topics straightaway (e.g., having his students professionally translate the latest German newspapers), without having provided the learners with some baseline knowledge first. Equally revealing is A.G. Popov’s suggestion to dictate the learning material to the children in disciplines for which there were no textbooks available. However, A.G. Popov was being precluded from implementing his practical ideas to the fullest by his erroneous theoretical beliefs (e.g., preferring well-educated instructors over less educated ones even if the former were not competent enough to properly conduct classes). As a result, even after the Novocherkassk Gymnasium received additional funding towards staffing purposes, the administration would keep on staff the most odious of the school’s instructors, as was the case with the foreigners who spoke very poor Russian, with the actual value of such classes being just negligible.

The person whom both contemporaries and later authors regarded as the best Don pedagogue of the early 19th century is protoiereus A.G. Oridovsky. His interests extended well beyond teaching at the gymnasium. He was one of the first Don poets and was among the unofficial leaders of the local clergy, which he even represented at the Host’s gala activities. A.G. Oridovsky used his status and poetic talent to promote education in the Don region and persuade the Cossacks of the need to place their children in the gymnasium, despite all the imperfections in its operation. However, the image of the “fervent advocate of education”, first proposed by A.G. Filonov, completely pushed into the background in surviving sources the protoiereus’s actual practical pedagogical activity. It is even not known which specific disciplines he taught. Yet, A.G. Oridovsky was the first theoretician of pedagogy to be held in high regard in the Don region, and it is no wonder that many of the theoretical pedagogical tenets advocated by him in his speeches have survived to our day. The priest maintained that the “sciences” are of utility in two major ways – they bring humans closer to God and make them better prepared to engage in virtually any type of practical activity. Therefore, it was the duty of any parent to place their child in school, whereas the child was expected to sacrifice their youth “immaculately” to science. This kind of somewhat abstract pedagogical beliefs that did not factor in the significance of particular subjects and teaching methodologies, which may have been shared by the majority of Don pedagogues in the early 19th century, did not have a very good effect on the quality of education at the Novocherkassk Gymnasium. In a climate where there were very few well-educated individuals in the Don Host and instructors were sent to its lands by the Kharkov Educational District by no means for their abilities, it was hardly possible to raise the level of teaching at the local gymnasium. That being said, in his public speeches, A.G. Oridovsky did try to justify the existence of the Novocherkassk Gymnasium in its imperfect form and explain why it was a good idea to place one’s child in it. Ultimately, A.G. Popov and A.G. Oridovsky managed to strengthen the gymnasium’s positions in the Don region and secure the enrollment of its best graduates in Kharkov University. The solid groundwork that this helped to lay would enable the next generation of Don pedagogues to tackle objectives of a more serious nature now.

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