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The Relationship of Education and Economic in the Don Host at the 1890

Artyom Yu. Peretyatko ^{a, b, *}

^a Southern Federal University, Russian Federation

^b East European History Society, Russian Federation

Abstract

The question of the possible relationship between the level of education of the Cossacks and the degree of their well-being has not been raised by historians to date. Meanwhile, “His Imperial Majesty’s Commission to analyze the causes that damaged the economic life of the Don Host, and to formulate measures to restore its economic well-being” (“N.A. Maslakovets’ Commission”) in 1899 confidently stated that it was the shortcomings of the education system in the Don Host Land that entail the impoverishment of the Cossacks.

The author, on the basis of the protocols of the commission and the materials of its activities, preserved in archives (the State Archive of the Rostov Region, the Russian State Military Historical Archive and the Manuscripts Department of the Russian National Library), shows that the commission did not have unity in considering educational issues. Nevertheless, prevailing was P.G. Mordvintsev’s point of view, according to which education in the Cossack regions was to ensure the universal literacy of male Cossacks and their mastery of the special technical knowledge necessary for effective agriculture. Prior to achieving this goal, according to the members of the commission, it was impossible to implement many other measures they proposed aimed at restoring the well-being of the Don farms. However, War Minister A.N. Kuropatkin rejected the commission’s proposals, relying on the opinion of the most conservative part of the Cossacks, who believed that education discouraged Cossacks from hard work.

Keywords: the Don Host Land, Don Cossacks, Don economy, N.A. Maslakovets’ Commission, impoverishment of Don Cossacks in the late XIXth century, N.A. Maslakovets, M.S. Markov, Kh.I. Popov, A.N. Kuropatkin.

1. Introduction

“In the matter of the low productivity of their agricultural activities, the Cossacks certainly bear an involuntary retribution for the lack of intellectual energy in it. But how to blame it for the

* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: ArtPeretatko@yandex.ru (A.Y. Peretyatko)

fact that those who should carry this out, not only did not give it the necessary special schools, but did not give a sufficient number of literacy schools, so far half of the male population remains illiterate, not to mention the female” ([Protocols, 1899: 176](#)). The quote is taken from “His Imperial Majesty’s Commission to analyze the causes that damaged the economic life of the Don Host, and to formulate measures to restore its economic well-being”, or as it is more commonly named by historians “N.A. Maslakovets’ Commission”. The idea that an insufficient educational level is one of the reasons of the impoverishment of the Don Cossacks has been repeatedly expressed by its members. Moreover, as we will see below, completely strangers sent letters to N.A. Maslakovets, arguing that it is the improvement of the education system in the Don Host Land that can serve as an impetus for the development of the local economy. Although in recent years several articles have been published examining the activities of the commission of N.A. Maslakovets ([Peretyatko, 2018](#); [Skorik, 2014](#)), it was precisely those aspects of its work that were related to education that did not attract the attention of researchers. Meanwhile, the commission’s materials contain a number of interesting authors’ assessments of both: the situation in Don education at the end of the XIXth century and the impact of this situation on the development of the Don economy – assessments belonging to persons of completely different positions and status, from retired officers to the War Minister inclusive. In our article we would like to provide these assessments to the attention of modern historians and educators, as well as to carry out at least their most general analysis.

The results of this analysis will be especially in demand now, when historians have clearly increased their interest in studying the features of education in various regions of the Russian Empire ([Cherkasov et al., 2019](#); [Cherkasov et al., 2019a](#); [Magsumov et al., 2018](#); [Shevchenko et al., 2016](#)). This year, the first post-Soviet article was published that claimed to analyze the evolution of the primary education system in Cossack regions ([Molchanova et al., 2019](#)). However, such articles usually do not consider the goals that the government set for itself, conducting educational reforms, allocating money to create new schools, or, conversely, reducing funding for education in specific provinces and areas. On the other hand, the reasons for the impoverishment of the Cossacks at the end of the XIXth century were often considered simplistically both by contemporaries and by later historians, and the main reason for this impoverishment was the decrease in Cossacks’ land units allotments ([Volvenko, 2017: 147-149](#)). Even the question of the influence of the degree of education of Cossacks’ masters on their level of well-being has not yet been raised in historiography.

So, what do the materials of the commission of N.A. Maslakovets tell us about whether the Cossacks needed education to improve their well-being, and, if so, what kind of education?

2. Materials and methods

We hasten to add, that we do not plan to analyze the entire vast amount of statistical information about Don education, which was collected by the commission of N.A. Maslakovets. We will be precisely interested in the opinions of its members on the relationship between the level of well-being of the Cossacks and the educational system in the Don Host Land expressed by them during their work. Therefore, we will not turn to the final report of the commission ([Maslakovets, 1899](#)), but to its protocols ([Protocols, 1899](#)). In relation to this approach, we will also almost not dwell on the reports of the commission members on certain features of Don education, since the facts contained in them are of a special pedagogical nature. We will be more interested in their reports on the economy, that described those aspects of the education system in the Don that hindered its development. In addition to the protocols of the commission, we also turn to archival materials of the State Archive of the Rostov Region (GARO) and the Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA).

The main methods we use are historical-descriptive and historical-comparative methods. Most of the opinions given below were not previously involved in scientific circulation, and therefore we will cite extensive quotes from them. On the other hand, comparing them with each other, we try to understand which of these opinions was closer to reality, and to what extent reforms in education could actually help to solve the economic problems of the Don.

3. Discussion and results

The decision to establish a commission to study the economic problems of the Don Cossacks and the search for ways to resolve them was made in 1898, as a result of a petition from the Don

nobles to Nicholas II (Volvenko, 2017: 120). On June 16, its future chairman was elected: it was Lieutenant-General N.A. Maslakovets, who was at the disposal of the War Minister, a former official of the Don Host Land's administration and the Orenburg ataman, who received orders to leave "for the Don region immediately, to gain on-the-spot understanding of the issues of the forthcoming discussion of the commission" (GARO. F. 410. Op. 1. D. 682. L. 6ob). The government official spent the next three months traveling around the villages, figuring out "the current situation of various parts of the population of the Don Host Land" (Protocols, 1899: 1). On the 19th of August the Ataman's chancellery submitted for his consideration a memorandum on the causes of the economic decline of the population of the Don Host Land, compiled by retired colonel A.G. Fateev (unfortunately, we did not find any additional information about this person) (GARO. F. 46. Op. 1. D. 3282. L. 23ob). This is the earliest analytical document related to the work of N.A. Maslakovets' Commission, which is represented in the archives. And it is symptomatic that its author began his text with a description of the problems of Don education.

A whole section was devoted to these problems, "Overview of the Mental and Moral Development of the Population of the Don Host Land" (GARO. F. 46. Op. 1. D. 3282. L. 14). A.G. Fateev noted that there were no higher educational institutions on the Don at all, and, for instance, in 1897 only 35 people passed a full course of secondary education (13 – in Novocherkassk gymnasium and 22 – in Uryupin and Ust-Medveditsky intermediate schools) (GARO. F. 46 Op. 1. D. 3282. L. 14-14ob). Here the author has slightly distorted the reality by not including into the secondary Don educational institutions the gymnasiums and the intermediate schools of Taganrog and Rostov-on-Don. Further A.G. Fateev even more dramatized the situation in Don education, proving that the Cossacks have almost no chance to study at the educational institutions listed by him. He complained that "government officials, merchants and craftsmen, by the very nature of their occupation, live in cities and large centers of the population, and therefore have the opportunity to always find teachers and tutors for preparing children for educational institutions; but where does the Cossack a farmer, a villager, who lives on his own site, take a teacher or a tutor to prepare his children, since there are no lower educational institutions, neither schools near the place of his residence, and therefore his children do not get into secondary schools, or because of poor preparation they are not included in the competition" (GARO. F. 46. Op. 1. D. 3282. L. 15). Although these allegations were probably based on real observations, A.G. Fateev somewhat distorted reality by trying to protect the Don Cossacks from accusations of inertness and unwillingness to get the education. According to the latest assessment of the N.A. Maslakovets' commission, 66 % of male Cossack children got primary education, when the lack of schools was felt mainly in sparsely populated areas (Protocols, 1899: 251-252). However, A.G. Fateev, without citing any statistics, but only on the basis of the maxim cited above, claimed as if "it is safe to say that out of 35 young people who graduated from gymnasiums and intermediate schools in 1897, hardly the half of them were the children of the voiskovoy class" (GARO. F. 46. Op. 1. D. 3282. L. 15).

However, such an exaggerating was necessary for the Don Colonel to prove: if one of the reasons for the impoverishment of the Cossacks was the low educational level of the Cossacks, then the government was solely responsible for this. A.G. Fateev complained, referring to the experience of the already closed Ust-Medveditsky gymnasium, that most of its graduates of Cossack origin "were not serving in the Don Army, despite their desire and efforts to devote their strength to the benefit of their native land" (GARO. F. 46 Op. 1. D. 3282. L. 15-15ob). Indeed, it is seen from the tables cited by him, that of approximately 60 graduates of this gymnasium (information about whom it was possible to collect) only about 1/3 remained to serve in the Don (GARO. F. 46. Op. 1. D. 3282. L. 15-15ob; 22ob-23). Nevertheless, as the retired colonel admitted, there was no lack of people with higher education in the Don Host Land, but most of them were nonresidents (GARO. F. 46. Op. 1. D. 3282. L. 15ob). A. Fateev did not even set the question of why allegedly "those Cossacks who want to devote their strength and power to the benefit of their native land" did not return to the Don Host Land after graduating from higher educational institutions. Meanwhile, this issue deserved special attention: for instance, in 1900 A.N. Kuropatkin, when personally visited a number of educational institutions of the Don, noted that the graduates of some of them, in principle, are oriented towards a career in St. Petersburg rather than at home (RGIA. F. 1263. Op. 4. 1901 D. 48. L. 83-84).

However, A.G. Fateev argued that it was precisely the lack of educated Cossacks that was one of the reasons for the decline in welfare in the Don, and that “in the economic sense, the ranks of the voiskovoy estate with a university education would be more useful” (GARO. F. 46. Op. 1. D. 3282. L. 150b). The retired colonel justified this assertion with several facts. First of all, he reminded that there are elective posts in the Don Host Land, but there is essentially no one to be selected at these positions: “For example, we can point out the composition of the justices of the peace of the Ust-Medveditsky district elected for the expiring three-year period. This elected structure consisted of: two medical officers, one technologist, one natural scientist and one who did not finish the course of the secondary school; in the upcoming congress of justices of the peace, a former povytchik* of the deceased bailiff was elected, he did not get any education, but had only clerical service, thus, there are not a single magistrate with a law education”(GARO. F. 46. Op. 1. D. 3282.L. 16). Nevertheless, there were some pitfalls: lawyers consisted a half of the remaining graduates of the Ust-Medveditsky gymnasium (GARO. F. 46. Op. 1. D. 3282. L. 150b). Thus, the problem was not so much the lack of Cossacks with higher education as the fact that those who had it were in no hurry to occupy elected posts according to their specialty, preferring more profitable jobs. In addition, according to A.G. Fateev, also in non-elected posts Cossacks with higher education would be more useful than nonresidents, having a greater moral impact on local residents. “Indeed, to whom is it most natural to turn to for advice in all sectors of the economy, and especially in the field of rights, to a brother Cossack, uncle, nephew, even a matchmaker, if not to a relative who graduated from a higher education institution? It would be strange if the Cossack began to reveal his soul to another official, a stranger to him both by birth, and by education, and by family structure and by the local spirit itself”(GARO. F. 46. Op. 1. D. 3282. L. 16). This statement was also not indisputable: officials of non-voiskovoy origin accused Cossack officials of a peculiar understanding of their duties, to the extent that ordinary Cossacks were allowed to plunder voiskovoy equipment as “belonging to every Cossack” (Novitsky, 1991: 54). Accordingly, the moral influence of such officials on the Cossack masses could be far from unambiguous.

A.G. Fateev summarized his arguments as follows: “In order to increase the economic well-being of the Region, its own local educated people are needed, therefore, it is necessary to increase the number of secondary schools in the Don. <...>. In addition, to recruit service people in the Don Host Land who, as officials on the one hand and landowners on the other, will at the same time be useful zemstvo leaders and, thus, will have a comprehensive impact on mental, moral and economic development of the entire population, receiving greater trust and authority than officials who do not belong to the voiskovoy estate, who are not familiar with the national life, its spirit, customs and even local names of objects ”(GARO. F. 46. Op. 1. D. 3282. L. 16-160b). Although at first glance this conclusion may seem convincing, as we saw above, proving it, A.G. Fateev made a number of inaccuracies and distortions. He exaggerated the difficulty of getting an education for the Cossacks and diminished the opportunity for them to stay within the Region after getting secondary and higher education. In fact, the colonel wanted to create special conditions for the educated Cossacks, facilitating their career within the Don Host Land. It must be said, such ideas were traditional in the Don educated environment, and back in 1860 one of the local committees suggested that in the region “all positions in educational institutions should be replaced by school ranks of both genders, mainly from the Cossack estate” (Volvenko, 2014: 18). This idea was rejected, and the Minister of the Interior of the Russian Empire P.A. Valuev noted on its account that “there is not even a reservation made here, therefore, a direct conclusion is allowed on the advantage of the less capable, only if they belong to the Cossack estate over the more capable, if the latter, by origin from the natives of the Empire, are not suitable for this condition ”(Volvenko, 2014: 18).

The fact that the note by A.G. Fateev "On the causes of the economic decline of the population of the Don Host Land" was not mentioned in the later materials of the N.A. Maslakovets' commission can be attributed precisely to the similar pro-Cossacks position of its author: the retired colonel described mainly the well-known problems of Don education, and made obvious conclusions from them, but at the same time under the guise of these problems and conclusions tried to suggest N.A. Maslakovets idea about the need to create additional preferences in the Don Host Land for Cossacks who got secondary and higher education.

* An outdated term used to call people in charge of court proceedings.

Evidence of the problems of Don education is proved by personally written by War Minister A.N. Kuropatkin at the beginning of 1899 "Summary to the general review of personal all-submitted reports of voiskovoy nakaznykh and nakaznykh atamans for 1897" (RGVIA. F. 330. Op. 61. D. 2109. L. 93) and "Conclusions of the Minister of War from the reports of voiskovoy nakaznykh and nakaznykh atamans for 1897" (RGVIA. F. 330. Op. 61. D. 2109. L. 96). In the first of these documents, two paragraphs are devoted to Don education, which we will give below. "Literacy in the Don <army> is declining. They ask for allowances from voiskovoy capitals. The amount of money goes to the equipment of the Cossacks. <...>. Explain on the Don region. In 1896, 46 schools were opened. In 1897 - 18. Among these 46 schools 35 were benefited from voiskovoy capitals" (RGVIA. F. 330. Op. 61. D. 2109. L. 95). Sketchy style of A.N. Kuropatkin makes it difficult to fully understand this text, but it is obvious that the situation with the education in the Don did not suit the War Minister. This is also evidenced by the fact that in the conclusion he included among the main goals of the Directorate General of the Cossack Troops "finding ways for sooner resolution of cases <...> to increase the level of education in the troops" (RGVIA. F. 330. Op. 61. D. 2109. L. 97ob).

N.A. Maslakovets' commission itself began its meetings on January 12, 1899 (Protocols, 1899: 1). Already at its second meeting, it was decided to consider in detail the question of "general and professional education in the Don Army"; a report on this topic had to be prepared by a group of M.S. Markov, S.V. Balabin, A.I. Ulyanov, A.D. Trailin and A.S. Yezhov (Protocols, 1899: 3). The most famous of these persons is M.S. Markov, Don leader of the nobility in 1892-1901 and one of the initiators of the creation of the N.A. Maslakovets' commission (Dontsy, 2003: 302-303). Well-educated (back in 1850 he graduated from Kharkov University as a lawyer), M.S. Markov once served as adjutant and government official for special assignments under four Don atamans M.G. Khomutov, P.Kh. Grabbe, A.L. Potapov and M.I. Chertkov (Dontsy, 2003: 301-302). His career was in the era of the Great Reforms, and in 1875 M.S. Markov resigned relatively young, a little older than forty years, with the rank of colonel, due to the need to manage the vast estates inherited (Dontsy, 2003: 302). He acquired great authority among the Don nobility, and held the post of the leader for three terms. It is interesting, that the noble assembly persuaded him to remain in the fourth term even (Dontsy, 2003: 303). Unfortunately, special biographical studies about M.S. Markov has not yet been written, apart from a small essay in the famous collection "Dontsy of the 19th century" (Dontsy, 2003: 301-303). The authors of this collection, who personally knew the leader of the nobility, considered the goals of his social activity "to renew the Don, eliminate its grave needs, develop institutions favorable to its moral and material well-being, and achieve the possible well-being that the Don land was deprived of" (Dontsy, 2003: 303). M.S. Markov was chosen to the N.A. Maslakovets' commission by the nobility of Cherkasy district (OR NLR. F. 1055. Unit. 18. 18. L. 3). It is significant that such an authoritative public figure decided to participate in the drafting of a report on education in the Don, rather than reports on the economy or military service of the Cossacks.

The other two co-authors of the education report, Major General S.V. Balabin and A.D. Trailin, were elected to the N.A. Maslakovets' Commission from the noblemen of 1 and 2 Don districts respectively (OR NLR. F. 1055. Unit. 18. 18. L. 3). According to the extreme scarcity of information about them, they belonged to the number of Don public figures of the second plan, respected in their districts, but almost unknown outside the Don Host Land. There is a small passage in the book of the local amateur historian D.M. Shumakov "Orlov Bakhtin Cadet Corps" about S.V. Balabin. Regarding to it, S.V. Balabin had higher education not a civilian but military one (he graduated from the Mikhailovsky Artillery School), and, like M.S. Markov, in the liberal 1870s held positions in the Don Host Land's administration under M.I. Chertkov, and then served in the elections in the noble assembly, and even was elected as the leader of the noblemen of the 1st Don district (Shumakov, 2017: 32). There is even less information about A.D. Trailin. However, on the website named "Art and Culture of the Russians Abroad", compiled by the D.S. Likhachev's Foundation, it is mentioned that Major General A.D. Trailin was the father of the Cossack emigrant composer S.A. Trailin (Leykind et al., B.G.). A titular adviser A.S. Yezhov was a figure of the same scale, appointed to the N.A. Maslakovets' commission by the Regional Administrative Committee on Zemstvo Affairs (RL NLR. F. 1055. Unit. 18. L. 3). He was an active member of the Don Society of Agriculture, and in 1905-1910 served as chairman of this society (Savelyev, 1913: 33-34). During the years of its chairmanship, the "Society" supported the War Ministry in opening agricultural

courses and schools in the Don, and in general did a lot to popularize agronomic knowledge among the Cossacks (Savelyev, 1913: 33). We didn't find any information only about voiskovoy foreman A.I. Ulyanov, delegated to the N.A. Maslakovets' Commission by Don Host Land's headquarters (OR NLR. F. 1055. Unit. 18. L. 3). Probably, this was a fairly ordinary officer, possessing information about the affairs on the Don, but not noted for any vigorous social activity.

Thus, the N.A. Maslakovets' Commission was formed by a representative group of people to prepare a report on the situation in Don education. It included the current leader of the nobility, two generals (apparently retired), a well-known public figure (a member of the local agricultural society) and an official of the Don Host Land's headquarters. At least two of them themselves had higher education. Given the heterogeneity of all these individuals, one could expect that the report they compiled would turn out to be fairly objective and would not contain such obvious distortions and stretches as A.G. Fateev's note. However, disputes about Don education began even before the report was prepared.

The impetus for the beginning of these disputes were the words of N.A. Maslakovets itself, who stated at a meeting on April 6, 1899 that, although he recognizes factors leading to the impoverishment of the Cossacks, such as a decrease in their allotments and an increase in the severity of the Cossack service, "the purpose of establishing this commission and the task of its activity would be far from being fulfilled, <...> if, during its studies, it would have lost the third factor in the life of the Cossack population, which is the personal energy and perseverance of the local population in the field of its agricultural activity" (Protocols, 1899: 135-136). It was in response to this phrase that the representative of the hopper nobles P.G. Mordvintsev (OR NLR. F. 1055. Unit of art. 18. L. 3) said the words that we quoted at the beginning of this article. And now it's time to dwell on them in more detail.

P.G. Mordvintsev in general was perhaps the most mysterious member of the N.A. Maslakovets' commission. In it lists he is mentioned as a "nobleman" (OR NLR. F. 1055. Unit of art. 18. L. 3), that is, obviously, he did not serve as an officer or government official. We did not find information about his social activities. Nevertheless, it was he who was appointed rapporteur on a key issue on the economic situation of the Don Cossacks (Protocols, 1899: 2). Moreover, P.G. Mordvintsev did not just argue with the chairman of the commission, but also prepared a detailed note to him entitled "Reply of the representative of the noblemen of the Khopersky district P.G. Mordvintsev to "considerations" of N. A. Maslakovets" (Protocols, 1899: 173-177). Apart from P.G. Mordvintsev, there was only one member of the commission, A.A. Donetsky, who dared persistently to object N.A. Maslakovets (Protocols, 1899: 156-161), but in his case this was understandable: A.A. Donetsky was a figure of scale M.S. Markov and later represented the Don landowners in the State Council (Figures, 1906: 24). In general, it seems that no matter who P.G. Mordvintsev was, his authority among the Don Cossacks was very great.

Objecting N.A. Maslakovets, P.G. Mordvintsev accused him that the concept of "energy" was interpreted by the chairman of the commission too vaguely (Protocols, 1899: 173). He himself argued that the personal energy of any person should be considered as a combination of the energies of the "muscular-labor" and "neuro-brain" energies (Protocols, 1899: 173). At the same time, the possibilities of developing "muscular-labor energy" P.G. Mordvintsev considered "extremely cramped"; the future, in his opinion, was "neuromuscular energy", "infinite, but determined by a single ratio of the sum of knowledge, general culture" (Protocols, 1899: 173).

It is clear, the terminology used by the Don noble was very primitive, but hiding behind it were quite new ideas for the Don in the second half of the 19th century. In fact, by an increase of "muscular-labor energy" he meant the extensive development of the economy, and by an increase of "neuromuscular energy" – intensive one. P.G. Mordvintsev emphasized that the extensive development of agriculture in the Don can not be denied: in the Don Host Land over the past 20 years, the area for planting for a Cossack family has increased from 5 tithes of land to 12 (Protocols, 1899: 173). However, intensive development was not seen. According to P.G. Mordvintsev: "In the considerations of Mr. Chairman, there is a desire to justify the conclusion with digital data that a large amount of land allotment is not a necessary condition for greater wealth of the agricultural population. <...>. In principle, the validity of such a statement cannot be denied: evidence of its correctness can be found in the enormous productivity of the fields of the Englishman, Danish, Chinese and others. But this approach is true only if, according to the law set forth by us, the productive energy of a person is increased by the corresponding and necessary amount of

knowledge, and therefore this situation cannot be applied to Cossacks” ([Protocols, 1899: 174](#)). And, finishing the discussion about education on the Don and the influence of the level of this education on the welfare of Cossack farms, P.G. Mordvintsev came to different conclusions than A.G. Fateev, and at a much higher level of argumentation of his theses. P.G. Mordvintsev also admitted that the lack of education of the Cossacks impedes the development of the Don economy, and also blamed it solely on the government. “The system when secondary schools are getting closed, and instead, schools that serve to satisfy the needs of the same military service are being opened, this system must take upon itself all the responsibility for only negatively reflecting it in life” ([Minutes, 1899: 176](#)). However, he believed that Don needed not a few "local educated activists people" trained in gymnasiums and intermediate schools, but a general increase in the level of education of ordinary Cossacks, both in "literacy schools" and, especially, in "special schools" so that the Cossacks were able to harvest the same crops from their plots as the "British, Danes, Chinese."

N.A. Maslakovets did not even try to argue with P.G. Mordvintsev. Perhaps the matter was not only the convincingness of the latter's statements, but that his position as a whole turned out to be close to the chairman of the commission, who, being an Orenburg ataman, even in conditions of severe hunger, did not allow closing schools and demanded their material support from the local authorities ([OR NLR. F. 1055. D. 104. L. 10-100b](#)). It is quite possible that the general understood that the Don Host Land administration was really to be blamed for the problems of Don education, and it did not pay enough attention to it (he himself at the end of 1880 in the Orenburg region personally demanded that the Cossack boys go to school and attend schools without permission, allowing use coercive measures for this ([RNLN. F. 1055. D. 104. L. 10](#)). Therefore, the above statements of P.G. Mordvintsev were subsequently considered by the majority of the N.A. Maslakovets' Commission as unconditionally true and direct relationship between the level of education and the development of the economy was not questioning by its members (with one exception, which we will write about below).

A detailed report, or rather, reports on Don education, were prepared by M.S. Markov, S.V. Balabin, A.I. Ulyanov, A.D. Trailin and A.S. Yezhov only by the second half of May 1899. Obviously, to simplify the perception of information, the students prepared three reports: on public schools in the Don, on the dissemination of special knowledge in the Cossack environment, and on military-craft schools. All of them were heard at meetings of the commission on May 20 and 21, 1899. The first two reports were read by A.S. Yezhov, and the last one – by A.I. Ulyanov. Such a choice of the persons who presented the reports was apparently determined by their official position: recalling that A.S. Yezhov represented Zemstvo in the N.A. Maslakovets' Commission, and A.I. Ulyanov represented the Don Host Land's headquarters.

In the “Report on public schools in Cossack settlements”, the authors explicitly questioned “the question of achieving the general literacy of the voiskovoy estate” ([Protocols, 1899: 251](#)). In their opinion, the “general public education” for the Don Cossacks was “desirable and necessary both in the types of religious and moral education of the younger generation and the development of its spiritual and mental strengths, and in the types of success that the commission outlined for a number of events to disseminate between the Cossack population special knowledge of crafts, agricultural knowledge, etc.” ([Protocols, 1899: 251](#)). In other words, the authors of the report (in full accordance with the opinion of P.G. Mordvintsev) believed that without the spread of universal education in the Don it would not be possible to ensure the proper growth of the economy, since the increase in "neuromuscular energy", the intensive development of agriculture, would remain inaccessible to illiterate Cossacks. However, unlike P.G. Mordvintsev and A.G. Fateev, they not only did not allow negative comments to the Don Host Land administration, but also agreed to consider that, on the whole, the Don Host Land, even if it stayed behind the neighboring provinces in the development of education, this lag was not too significant ([Protocols, 1899: 251](#)). Instead, the authors of the Report decided that in order to achieve universal literacy, at least there is a need to open another 453 small schools in sparsely populated areas for the male population, which will cost about 274,000 rubles ([Protocols, 1899: 252](#)). Unfortunately, due to the "general impoverishment of the Cossack population", it was impossible to think that this amount would be taken from the societies of the Cossack villages, and it was supposed to be asked from the Don Host Land administration ([Protocols, 1899: 252](#)). Thus, in the final analysis, the main problem for the development of Don education turned out to be the need to increase funding for Cossack villages from above. The authors of the Report considered the search for internal resources, resources of

the Cossacks to achieve even the most important goal of ensuring universal literacy of the Don Cossacks, impossible. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Finance of the Russian Empire in April 1899 announced that it would oppose the allocation of new subsidies to the Don army, since these subsidies turn out to be “the replenishment of deficiencies in the welfare of the Cossacks by the rest of the population of the Empire” (OR RNB. F. 1055. Ed. xr. 59. L. 4). Significantly less interesting for us is the "Report on the dissemination of technical and craft knowledge among the Cossack population, on general educational institutions in the Don Host Land". It actually lacks a constructive part. Although, its authors wrote that “according to the goals set by the commission for raising the culture of the voiskovoy population of the region, a contingent of educated people equipped with knowledge of various specialties is as necessary for districts as general literacy of the population” (Protocols, 1899: 253). However, they almost did not offer any specifics in this direction. Perhaps the most interesting of the ideas expressed by them was the idea of giving special benefits for serving military service by graduates of craft schools, provided that in return they will replace the positions of craftsmen at the villages (Protocols, 1899: 252-253). It was supposed that in this way two problems could be solved at once: on the one hand, it would be possible to develop the craft in the villages by the graduates of these schools, and, on the other, these graduates would not give up the profession for the sake of other occupations (Protocols, 1899: 252-253). Unfortunately, the matter did not get to more definite proposals in the Report, and neither the number of alleged posts of the village craftsmen, nor their responsibilities to the Don army were even discussed.

Finally, the “Report on military craft schools in the Don region by Ulyanov”, according to its name, was personally prepared by A.I. Ulyanov. In contrast to the collective that prepared the previous reports and included, as we recall, well-known Don public figures, the officer of the Don Host Land’s headquarters chose to avoid the generalizations and declarative statements. Basically, he provided statistical information that is not relevant to the topic of our article. Nevertheless, his report clearly showed how expensive it was to train specific specialists in the necessary army specialties: according to this, in 1896-1898 the training of a Cossack artisan for combat units cost the army about 1,000 rubles (Protocols, 1899: 254). As we can see, he returned to the key question that without appropriate funding all projects for the development of Don education were doomed.

Unfortunately, the details of the discussion of the three reports described above were not recorded. The least controversy, apparently, was caused by the "Report on public schools in Cossack settlements." A majority of 12 votes to 2 N.A. Maslakovets’ Commission adopted a resolution “not only on desirability, but also on the need to find measures to meet the growing needs for universal education of the Cossack population” (Protocols, 1899: 258). Five proposals for the dissemination of craft and technical knowledge in the Cossack environment were more ambiguous: some of them were approved unanimously in general, and others by a relatively small majority of 9 against 6 votes (Protocols, 1899: 258-259). It was proposed to improve funding for craft schools in the region; to review their programs, paying more attention to crafts useful in Cossack life; to leave only 2 military artisan schools, transforming the rest of these institutions into civilian ones; to prohibit the collecting in these schools the equipment for Cossacks who was going to serve (obviously it was made to make students concentrate on the development of civilian crafts); and, finally, to allow Cossacks who graduated from the course of craft schools to enroll in a merchant society, which gives exemption from service by the dowry (Protocols, 1899: 258-259). But worst of all by officials was met the decision on the need to develop not only primary and special, but also general education in the Don: although the N.A. Maslakovets’ Commission recognized the opening of 2 gymnasiums (male and female), an intermediate school, several other gymnasiums and even a new “agricultural-industrial educational institution”, this initiative has passed by a majority of only one vote, 8 votes to 7 (Protocols, 1899: 259).

As we see the members of the N.A. Maslakovets’ Commission considered the development of primary and technical education in the Don as “not only desirable, but also necessary”. In their opinion, only on condition of universal literacy of at least male population all their proposals in other areas could be reached. The development of general and higher education, to which A.G. Fateev paid so much attention, was evaluated by them much more ambiguously, and was not included in the number of priorities. Because of P.G. Mordvintsev rational and modern attitude to education prevailed in the commission not as an end in itself, but as a necessary condition for the development of “neuromuscular energy” in a Cossack environment.

One of the “special opinions”, submitted by those disagreeing with the majority of the members of the N.A. Maslakovets’ Commission, was made in this way. It belonged to another well-known Don public figure, Kh.I. Popov. He, unlike most representatives of the Don elite, came from a simple Cossack family, and did not receive any education (Dontsy, 2003: 408). Having made a career due to his own talent and hard work, Kh.I. Popov is still known as the founder of the Don Museum (now the Novocherkassk Museum of the History of the Don Cossacks) (Dontsy, 2003: 410). Already in 1860 he became a prominent figure in the camp of the Don Conservatives, or, as they were usually called, “Cossackomani” (Volvenko, 2015: 199). In 1863, in one of his articles, a novice public figure demanded that the government to “increase funds for education” and even to “open a university” in the Don (Volvenko, 2015: 199). In the future, the political views of Kh.I. Popov, if they were displaced, only further to the right, and at the beginning of the 20th century he joined the Black Hundreds (Kornienko, 2013: 41-43). Don conservative got into the mainly liberal N.A. Maslakovets’ Commission under curious circumstances: two people, alternately elected to the commission from the Ust-Medveditsky nobility, eventually refused to leave for Novocherkassk, citing illness, and on February 7, 1899 in the midst of the commission’s work, Kh.I. Popov was finally elected as its member from the Ust-Medvedsky nobility (GARO. F. 410. Op. 1. D. 682. L. 149).

As a matter of principle, the Don conservative agreed with the opinion of the liberal majority of the N.A. Maslakovets’ Commission on the need for universal primary education. However, he considered it unacceptable that the commission clearly preferred schools of the Ministry of Education over diocesan schools. Kh.I. Popov, on the contrary, wrote about the latter: “The relatively recent existence of them for only fifteen years has already shown such results that give them the right to be on an equal footing with the schools of the Ministry of Education” (Protocols, 1899: 259). And, given the ever-increasing role of these schools and their extremely constrained financial situation, Kh.I. Popov called for providing them with at least minimal assistance from the voiskovoy budget (Protocols, 1899: 260). In our opinion, in fact, the Don conservative was right, but the problem once again rested on the impoverishment of the Cossacks, who, without additional fees, could not cope with the burden of their duties, and the reluctance of the Ministry of Finance to “replenish the shortcomings in the welfare of the Cossacks,” allocating additional subsidies to the Donskoy Army. There was no place to take money from to support church schools in the Don, and perhaps most of the N.A. Maslakovets’ commission did not support Kh.I. Popov precisely because of the apparent impracticability of the proposals of the latter; however, it cannot be ruled out that Don liberals were closer to schools that are more independent from the church.

The second special opinion was filed by voiskovoy foreman I.G. Folimonov, who was also not included in the initial composition of the N.A. Maslakovets’ Commission and included in it already in the course of the meetings (OR NLR. F. 1055. Unit. 18. L. 3-3ob). Unlike all the persons considered by us above, he represented in the commission not some administrative body, or even the nobility of one of the Don districts, but the Cossack village (stanitsa) societies (Protocols, 1899: 243). Apparently, he, like A.I. Ulyanov and P.G. Mordvintsev was not an active public figure, and we could not find information about him. Probably I.G. Folimonov was one of those who voted against the proposals of the majority of the N.A. Maslakovets’ Commission. He refused to see the postulated by P.G. Mordvintsev relationship between the level of education and the development of the economy, and therefore considered the existing school curricula to be quite sufficient. Let us cite his words on this point: “Teaching, according to the current program, is enough - besides this, residents do not impose secondary requirements on schools, the population appreciates a beautiful letter, fluent reading, perhaps the ability to write a receipt, singing in church, and so on. No agricultural occupations, different types of manual labor are required from the school, and should not be required because children of 8-9 years old go to elementary schools, and graduate being 11-12 years old. According to the calendar, there are 180 school days per year, and there are 540 per 3 years, out of this number, children miss a lot due to various circumstances. With such a limited time, the existing program is hardly implemented. What efforts are required to teach where to put “yat”^{*}. The school should be comprehensive, let the children develop mentally and ennoble morally.

* The latter in Russian alphabet.

An elementary school should set its own task so that a person, upon leaving it, strives to learn and improve all his life” (Protocols, 1899: 261-262).

In a sense, a conceptual similarity can be seen between the texts of A.G. Fateev and I.G. Folimonov. The authors declared the Cossacks' formal desire for education (we omitted the corresponding section from the “special opinion” of I.G. Folimonov, since it does not contain anything fundamentally new (Protocols, 1899: 261), however, the main text referred to certain circumstances (“different accidents”) that prevent them from organizing normal and regular school attendance by children. Even worse, instead of the clear relationship between the economic development and the skills acquired in schools that P.G. Mordvintsev and the majority of the N.A. Maslakovets’ Commission insisted on, I.G. Folimonov, like A.G. Fateev, offered an extremely vague statement about the “usefulness” of education, while education, in its interpretation, was supposed to give Cossacks only status but unnecessary skills for the economy, such as beautiful handwriting spelling and even church singing.

It is not surprising that I.G. Folimonov’s proposals in the field of education were equally bizarre. He did not indicate what amounts would be required to ensure universal education in the Don, and, obviously, hoped to achieve it “free” for the Cossacks. We take this word in quotation marks, because we have in mind the specific Cossack idea of expenses, which N. A. Maslakovets described this way: “He feels the household expenses so much, since he seems to be paid by the owner, to satisfy a particular need, in cash or their corresponding obligations” (RNL. F. 1055. Unit XR 22. L. 2ob). So, I.G. Folimonov proposed to build schools from the Don Host Land’s forests; they should be engaged in the construction and dispensation of stanitsa societies; he even proposed to buy textbooks for the children of poor Cossacks with the help of trustees (Minutes, 1899: 262). In addition, he proposed transferring all schools to the Russian Orthodox Church, and thus saving 67,600 rubles. salaries to secular teachers (Protocols, 1899: 262). There was only small problem: instead of increasing spending on education, I.G. Folimonov proposed to increase the cost of maintaining the Don clergy in general, so that it would not only commit itself to teaching in schools, but would cease to demand money from the Cossacks for spiritual needs. The necessary amounts significantly exceeded the estimated costs of the treasury to achieve universal literacy in the Don: they should have been at least 442,000 rubles (Protocols, 1899: 263). It is not surprising that not only the liberal majority of the N.A. Maslakovets’ Commission, but also Kh.I. Popov did not support I.G. Folimonov.

4. Conclusion

We have clearly seen that the materials of the N.A. Maslakovets’ Commission contained a number of expert opinions on the current state of Don education on the eve of the 20th century and on its impact on the region’s economy. Among the authors of these opinions, on the one hand, are famous personalities: War Minister A.N. Kuropatkin, leader of the Don nobility M.S. Markov, the largest Don historian Kh.I. Popov, and on the other - completely forgotten and unknown figures, like retired Colonel A.G. Fateev or voiskovoy foreman I.G. Folimonov. Nevertheless, all these opinions can be divided into three groups, depending on the basic concept presented in them.

The most popular and prevailing in the N.A. Maslakovets’ Commission concept can be considered to be conditionally called “liberal,” in accordance with the general ideological direction of the commission. Initially, it was proposed by P.G. Mordvintsev, and then developed by preparing a report on the education M.S. Markov, S.V. Balabin, A.I. Ulyanov, A.D. Trailin and A.S. Yezhov. In accordance with this concept, education was needed by the Cossacks for the development of “neuromuscular energy”, intensive methods of farming, allowing to sharply increase the yield from existing Cossack allotments. The first step towards achieving this goal was to ensure universal primary education, at least among male Cossacks, and to expand the network of craft schools in the Don, which should have been given a more practical focus. From our point of view, the main provisions of the liberal concept of the development of Don education were quite reasonable and logical, but the problem was that their implementation would require hundreds of thousands of rubles, which the members of the N. A. Maslakovets’ Commission expected to take from voiskovoy sums. However, the Ministry of Finance was negative about the increase in spending on the Don Cossacks, which made it difficult to obtain funding for Cossack schools from above. Going forward, we note that the N.A. Maslakovets’ Commission, in general, considered it possible to solve many Cossack problems through measures requiring government funding, and its final reform project

included an increase in annual government spending on the Don Army by 1,414,591 rubles. (Maslakovets, 1899: 119). However, A.N. Kuropatkin managed to increase the annual government subsidies to the Don Army by only 538,000 rubles (RGIA. F. 1263. Op. 4. 1901 D. 48. L. 4). This money was directed mainly at solving the highest priority goal of the War Minister, at direct financial support for the Cossacks coming to the service (RGIA. F. 1263. Op. 4. 1901 D. 48. L. 57), which, of course, made impossible the implementation of the liberal concept of development of Don education.

The opposite, "reactionary" concept in the framework of the activities of the N.A. Maslakovets' Commission turned out to be essentially marginal. It was represented only by A.G. Fateev in a private letter to N.A. Maslakovets and I.G. Folimonov in the "special opinion" rejected by the commission. Within the framework of this concept, the connection between the development of education in the Don and the problems of the Don economy was postulated in a much more general form, without clear specifics. It was proposed to "improve" the education system, based on the rather conflicting desires of the Cossacks themselves. So, A.G. Fateev argued that the government should specifically "attract" people of voiskovoy estate of higher and secondary education to serve as Don officials, giving them some privileges in comparison with non-voiskovoy officials; I.G. Folimonov went even further, demanding that all elementary schools on the territory of the Don Host Land to be transferred to the church and that no special economic skills should be introduced into them, since the Cossacks themselves find the existing programs "sufficient". We note, that this concept, as well as the liberal one, came from below, from a retired official and a member of the N.A. Maslakovets' Commission elected from the Cossack villages. It shows well why the development of education in the Don was faced with difficulties not only through the fault of the government: the most conservative-minded part of the Cossacks put forward extremely contradictory and non-modern requirements for schools.

Finally, the latter concept can be called "conservative," since it was mainly promoted by government officials (A.N. Kuropatkin, A.I. Ulyanov) and Kh.I. Popov. In our article, we paid little attention to the texts of these persons, since their authors were interested not so much in the Don education system as a whole and its impact on the well-being of Cossack farms, but in the obvious organizational problems of this system. Therefore, these texts are most valuable statistically (with the exception of the works of A.N. Kuropatkin) and contain many specific figures characterizing the situation of Don schools. However, their authors did not make any generalizations and far-reaching conclusions. And the concept contained in their works can be reduced to the fact that, first of all, it is necessary to solve the obvious and most acute problems in the system of Don education. In particular, Kh.I. Popov outlined the question of the need to support church schools, which found themselves in dire financial difficulties due to the inattention of secular authorities; A.I. Ulyanov proposed reforming the military-art schools, based on the experience gained over the last decade of their work. Given the lack of funding for the implementation of the liberal concept of the development of Don education and the obvious archaism of the reactionary concept, it was the conservative concept of solving current problems without far-reaching plans that could be most in demand. However, the materials of the N.A. Maslakovets' Commission show its main weakness: within its framework, education was supposed to be developed insufficiently systematically, with attention to details, but without due attention to the whole.

Our article would not be complete if we had not at least briefly traced the further development of the problem. Unfortunately, the War Ministry was distrustful of the findings of the N.A. Maslakovets' Commission and even sent its final report for discussion to the combat commanders of the Russian army (RGVIA. F. 330. Op. 61. D. 2109. L. 23). In 1900, personally A.N. Kuropatkin visited the Don Army to find out the reasons for the impoverishment of the Cossacks, but they no longer raised the question of the relationship between the level of development of education in the Cossack environment and the welfare of Cossack farms. Moreover, the minister was greatly impressed by the stories of some old Cossacks about the dangers of the existing educational system, close to the peculiar statements of A.G. Fateev and I.G. Folimonov. The most telling situation occurred in the Mikhailovskaya stanitsa, where a certain "experienced Cossack" complained to the minister who believed him that literate girls who had graduated from the local school "shy away from hard work, and ordinary Cossacks are afraid to marry them" (RGIA. F. 1263. Op. 4. 1901 D. 48. L. 44ob). And, alas, A.N. Kuropatkin raised the question not about the fact that the Don Host Land was ready for universal primary education, but about the

fact that it was the schools that caused the Cossacks to “think of themselves as scientists” and “do not want to do the black work” (RGIA. F. 1263. Op. 4. 1901 D. 48. L. 55). In fact, in comparison with these statements by the War Minister, even the ideas of A.G. Fateev and I.G. Folimonov were progressive. In any case, the first of them at least briefly mentioned the need to “increase the number of elementary schools in farms” (GARO. F. 46. Op. 1. D. 3282. L. 17), and the second generally considered useful “the introduction of a urgent universal literacy”, albeit within the framework of his highly specific education system (Protocols, 1899: 262). But A.N. Kuropatkin rejected all opinions expressed in the framework of the activities of the N.A. Maslakovets’ Commission, and, referring to reactionary statements about the harm from the existing education system, he decided not to reform it, but simply not expand it, in the hope that illiterate Cossacks are better capable of “black work”. Perhaps this was one of the reasons why the economic problems of the Cossacks were not resolved until 1917.

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