The Tsar, The Empire, and The Nation

Aoshima, Yoko, Staliūnas, Darius

Published by Central European University Press

Aoshima, Yoko and Darius Staliūnas.
The Tsar, The Empire, and The Nation: Dilemmas of Nationalization in Russia's Western Borderlands, 1905-1915.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/89934.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/89934
Part I

Transformations of Imperial Nationality Policy
An Inconsistently Nationalizing State: The Romanov Empire and the Ukrainian National Movement, 1906–1917

Anton Kotenko

Introduction

The southwestern provinces of Kiev, Volhynia, and Podolia posed a challenge for the nationality policy of the Romanov Empire. During half a century after its acquisition from the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, Russian emperors and the central imperial bureaucracy conceived this region, which was populated by numerous ethnic and religious groups, as quite an exotic Polish territory, occasionally even “associating it with something similar to the overseas colonies of Western European empires.”

Even though the indifference of the emperors toward the national composition of the formerly Polish *terra incognita* had already started to change during the last weeks of Nicholas I’s life, it was definitely bound to change after the January Uprising of 1863–64. It turned out that the area was mainly populated by peasants, the majority of whom were defined by ethnographers not as Poles, but as Orthodox and Catholic Little Russians/Ukrainians.
As Little Russians, they were declared to be members of the tripartite Russian nation who potentially could be relied upon by the government in its new nationality policy in the region. At the same time, their Russianness was problematized by the emerging Ukrainian national movement and its activists. The latter clearly argued that the southwest of the empire was populated not by Little Russians, but by Ukrainians who were distinct from both Russians and Poles. No wonder that both visions dramatically collided after the emergence of the public sphere in the Romanov Empire in 1906.

The history of Russian nationalism in the Romanov Empire and, in particular, its southwestern provinces, has recently become fashionable in historiography. It has been discussed not just in scholarly literature, but even in popular historical monographs and edited collections. The general argument suggested by historians to explain the emergence of Russian nationalism since Hugh Seton-Watson’s idea of “official nationalism” (and its popularization by Benedict Anderson) is that since the 1830s, the empire required a new ideological foundation to preserve its stability.

3 The major breakthrough in this imagination was a result of an expedition organized by the Russian Geographical Society and conducted by Kievan Ukrainophiles under the leadership of Pavlo Chubynsky in 1869–70. The organizers and executors interpreted the results of the expedition differently. For more on the expedition, see Anton Kotenko, “Etnohrafichno-statystychna ekspedyciya P. Chubyns’koho v Pivdenno-Zakhidniyi Krai,” Ukrains’kyi istorychnyi zhurnal 3 (2014): 128–51; and Anton Kotenko, “Eto stoilo by obshchestvu deshevele gribov’: Lystuvannya Pavla Chubyns’koho z Rosiis’kyym heohrafichnym tovarystvom,” Spadshyna 10 (2015): 167–343.


5 Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 2006), 86. Seton-Watson defined “official nationalism” as a doctrine, that appeared in the Habsburg and Romanov empires in the second half of the nineteenth century, according to which the leaders of the empires “considered it their task, and indeed their moral duty, to impose their nationality on all their subjects—of whatever religion, language or culture. As they saw it, by drawing these people
Thus, it was the state and its officials who cautiously began to practice some elements of Russian nationalism by attempting to integrate the empire around the Russian nation. By the 1860s, the idea spread among the Russian intellectuals, some of whom, like Iurii Samarin, argued that "we, the Russians, must now become what the French are in the French Empire, and the English in the British Empire." The empire actively embraced Russian nationalism during the reign of Alexander III and his successor Nicholas II. In December 1905, for instance, the latter famously and symbolically accepted the badge of the most popular Russian nationalist organization of the time, the Union of Russian People (Soiuz Russkogo Naroda, hereafter SRN).

The SRN was particularly active in the Southwestern region of the empire. According to contemporary estimates, the region was a stronghold of nationalists: in 1907, around half of the SRN’s members (197,636) came from the territory of modern-day Ukraine; half of them (99,336) resided on the territory of Volhynia, where they were led by the priests of the local Pochaev Monastery. Among the socially deprived peasantry living in the Ukrainian province, the Union vigorously campaigned against the “conspiracy” of Ukrainian nationalists, Polish landowners, and Jewish merchants, presenting all of them (as well as state bureaucracy, but never the emperor) as the main reasons for local social and economic troubles. Another major regional Russian nationalist organization—more elitist in comparison to the SRN—was the Kiev Club of Russian Nationalists, which was created in April 1908. During the first year of its existence, it had 329 members, men and women.

Still, the question of how connected all of these organizations were to the government of the empire has remained open. One argument put forward by Alexei Miller and Ricarda Vulpius suggests that in the second half of the nineteenth century, there was a project in the Romanov Empire to create upwards into their own superior culture, they were conferring benefits on them; while at the same time they were strengthening their state by creating within it a single homogeneous nation." Hugh Seton-Watson, Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977), 148.

6 As quoted in Miller, "The Romanov Empire and the Russian Nation," 332.

7 Omel’ianchuk, Chernasostnuoe dvizhenie, 139–43.

8 Edelman, Gentry Politics, 70.
ate a Russian nation out of Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians.\(^9\) Another argument was proposed by Theodore Weeks, who stated that there “the word ‘policy’ seems far too definite a term for the confused, disparate and uncoordinated actions of the Russian administration vis-à-vis its non-Russian subjects.” According to Weeks, Russian “official” nationalism was first and foremost aimed not at building the Russian nation, but at preserving the Romanov Empire.\(^10\) Recently, Valerie Kivelson and Ronald Suny suggested uniting these positions by distinguishing four programs for saving the empire on the eve of the World War I: building an imperial civic nation; turning the empire’s Eastern Slavs into the ruling nation; relying on the estate principle; transforming the empire into a federation of different nations.\(^11\)

In this paper, I would like to approach the problem of relations between the imperial government and Russian nationalism from the point of view of the censorship of Ukrainian language texts from 1905 to 1914. I argue that the proposition of the empire’s gradual but consistent Russian nationalism from above since the 1830s to the World War I is not accurate. Not only should we make a distinction between popular and state nationalisms; we should also question the coherent nature of the latter. In particular, despite all the limitations of and prohibitions on Ukrainian activity, the imperial authorities on the eve of the Great War neither pursued a systematic plan of turning the peasants of empire’s southwestern provinces into Russians, nor promoted a coherent anti-Ukrainian policy. Not only did not all state officials endorse the project of turning the Romanov Empire into a Russian one, it also seems that there was no coherent project or a “master plan” (as Weeks suggested\(^12\)) of this kind.

Moreover, post-1906 developments in the state’s regulation of Ukrainian-language publications show that contrary to the development of Rus-

---

sian public nationalism, which indeed was on the rise, the empire curiously became less nationalist than before. It became less anti-Ukrainian and, thus, less pro-Russian than it had been during the period when the Valuev Circular and Ems Edict remained in force. Yes, many state officials favored the project of turning the Romanov Empire into a Russian Empire; they also supported Russian nationalist organizations and did their best to suppress Ukrainian nationalists. However, even those bureaucrats who argued against Ukrainian nationalism had to comply with existing laws, which provided Ukrainians with many more opportunities to disseminate their ideas than those in force between 1863 and 1906.

Imperial Authorities and Russian Nationalists Against Ukrainian Nationalists

Until 1906, a Ukrainian public sphere in the Romanov Empire did not exist;13 it was impossible to publish a text in the Ukrainian language and orthography even, for instance, on such an apolitical subject as the Sahara Desert. According to the stipulations of the emperor’s edict (vysochaishego poveleniia) of May 18, 1876 and its amendment from October 8, 1881, the only texts that were allowed to be published in the “Little Russian dialect” were historical documents which including the preservation of the original orthography, dictionaries, and original fiction (translations were forbidden) following the rules of Russian orthography. Thus, the abovementioned brochure on the Sahara by Borys Hrinchenko was banned because even though it “did not contain anything opposite the censorship rules, it

---

13 Technically one might date the appearance of Ukrainian public sphere in the empire by 1905, when the Ems Edict, which was never formally repealed, lost its power after the October Manifesto granted freedom of speech to the population of the empire. From then on, the Ukrainian press could be published without asking for prior permission from the censorship committee. On December 31, 1905, the first issue of the first Ukrainian daily newspaper, Hromadi’ka Dunka, was published. However, I argue for dating the emergence of a fully-fledged Ukrainian public sphere in 1906 because until the spring of 1906, the St. Petersburg Committee for censorship still banned Ukrainian publications with references to the Ems Edict. The last such prohibition seems to have taken place in April: RGIA, f. 777, op. 7, №2 (Po malorossiiskim izdaniiam), 73, 76. The prohibited text was “What school do we need” (Iakoї nam treba shkoly) by Borys Hrinchenko, a reprint from Hromadi’ka Dunka.
did not belong to belles lettres.”14 The only way for Ukrainians to disseminate their ideas via print was, thus, to publish them in Galicia and later smuggle them into the Russian Empire.15

This situation changed immensely in 1906, when after the liberalization of publishing rules, Ukrainian activists immediately used the opportunity to popularize their views via print media. Even though Ukrainian did not become a language of administration, the courts, and, most importantly for Ukrainian nationalists, schools,16 it was still used for publishing books, newspapers, and journals. Thus, according to official data, in 1909, nine periodicals were published in Ukrainian in Kiev with an average general print run (srednii obshchii tirazh) of 11,300 copies; in 1910, there were ten periodicals with an average general print run of 15,985 copies; in 1911, it was twelve periodicals with an average general print run of 14,800 copies; in 1913, there were fourteen periodicals with an average general print run of 17,320 copies.17 None of these was suppressed by the authorities for being a Ukrainian periodical. Thus, in 1915, when thirty members of the State Duma asked the ministers of internal affairs and war for the reasons why the majority of Ukrainian publications were closed, they received the response that out of the fifteen publications mentioned in the inquiry, only four had been closed by the authorities (three by the military and one by the general-governor), whereas eight of them ceased publication on their own and two were still being published.18 What concerned the most important Ukrainian publication of the time, Rada, after it was closed, its publisher never even applied for permission to reopen the newspaper, which, according to the officials, probably would have been supported.19

14 RGIA, f. 777, op. 5–1897, №7 (Po rasmusotreniui sochinenii na malorossiiskom narochii), 127–28.
15 According to the 1876 edict, books published in Ukrainian abroad could legally circulate in the empire only after the permission of the Main Department for Press. See Dmytro Doroshenko’s memoirs about the Ukrainian usage of Finland as a window to smuggle books in Ukrainian into the empire: Dmytro Doroshenko, Mohi spomyny pro davne my nule (1901–1914 roky) (Winnipeg, 1949), 48–49.
17 TsDIAK, f. 295, op. 1, № 438 (Otechety o rabote Kievskogo vremennogo komiteta po delam pechati), 56–109.
18 RGIA, f. 776, op. 17, № 447 (Zapros, vnesennyi za podpis’iu 30 chlenov Gosudarstvenoi Dumy...), 1–2.
19 In fact, by 1914 the publisher, Ievhen Chykalenko, accumulated many debts and thus could not continue publishing Rada. Thus, as he mentioned it in a number of his letters to different people, the decision
Instead of repressing the Ukrainian press, the government shored up some Russian nationalist periodicals published in the Southwestern region. For instance, in 1913–15, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (hereafter MVD) provided annual subsidies to the newspaper Kiev. However, even though over three years the amount of these subsidies reached sixty-five thousand roubles, by the end of 1916, Kiev, “the only newspaper in the region with a steady national-Russian tendency,” still carried a deficit of twenty thousand roubles. Another project, which was supported by the MVD in 1916, were newspapers published by the Kiev “Society of the Double-Headed Eagle” (Kievskaia kopeika and Dvuglavyi orel). In 1916, the Minister of Internal Affairs allocated each of them a monthly allowance of one thousand roubles.

It was Russian nationalists and not the government who clearly attacked the Ukrainian nationalist movement. Activists of the latter were accused of political separatism and the desire to break apart the Russian nation and empire. In the opinion of Russian nationalists, Ukrainian was not a separate language and Ukrainians were not a separate nation, but rather the Little Russian part of the Russian tripartite nation. Even their name, “Ukrainians,” was a “fabrication”: “There are no Ukrainians here,” stated one of the Kievans in his 1913 talk. “There are no Ukrainians here either alive or in the cemeteries: neither on the ground, nor under it.” A specially coined word designated Ukrainian activists as Mazepists after the Cossack hetman Ivan Mazepa, who “betrayed” Peter I by siding with Charles XII in 1708.

Except for fighting Ukrainian activists in the press, southwestern Russian nationalists tried to combat their Ukrainian rivals by denouncing
them to the authorities, alerting the latter of the growing “Ukrainian menace.” An example of this approach might be the famous case of the so-called Stolypin circular issued by the minister in 1910, which closed the Ukrainian “Prosvita” society in Kiev as an “alien society.” The initial proposal to close “Prosvita” came to St. Petersburg from the Kievan governor-general Fedor Trepov. However, Trepov’s correspondence with St. Petersburg contains a newspaper clipping from a St. Petersburg newspaper, which accused Kievan regional authorities of heeding the requests of a local Russian nationalist newspaper Kievlianin. On the margins of this clipping, someone from the MVD demanded that the abovementioned article from Kievlianin be found; it turned out to be an op-ed by Anatoly Savenko. Its author argued that despite the authorities’ 1909 decision to forbid the activity of Polish “Oświata,” Kiev still had many other organizations pursuing similar separatist aims such as the Ukrainian “Prosvita”; Savenko persistently suggested the government continue its repressive policy and close the Ukrainian associations as well. Stolypin followed this suggestion.

Sometimes Russian nationalists tried to influence even the conceptual apparatus of state officials. It seems that high-ranking officials like the Kievan governors, not to mention authorities in St. Petersburg, did not care much about which word—“Ukrainian” or “Little Russian”—to use to designate the population of the southwestern part of the empire and its lan-

23 RGIA, f. 1284, op. 187–1910, № 21 (O zakryti obshchest), 66–68. At the moment, this “alienation” of Ukrainians seems to have been a simple mistake, which was corrected in a few months. The new version of the circular stated that only “Ukrainian societies, which deny the unity of the Russian nation and propagate Ukrainian separatism and independence” should be closed. See Petr Stolypin, Perepiska (Moscow: Rossen, 2007), 361; Hillis, *Children of Rus’*, 138; RGIA, f. 1284, op. 187–1909, № 260 (Po tsirkuliaru 20 ianuaria sego goda), 50.


25 The Kiev governor and local journalists were not the only ones, however, who could have inspired Stolypin’s circular. Two years before, the St. Petersburg Department of Police received another similar request, this time coming from the mayor of Odessa. The latter notified authorities in the capital of subversive gatherings of the local “Prosvita,” whose members cursed Bogdan Khmelnitski for the unification of Ukraine with the Russian Empire. The mayor asked St. Petersburg to close “Prosvita.” RGIA, f. 1284, op. 188–1908, № 159 (Ob ukrainskikh obshchestvakh “Prosvita”), 4. Valentyna Shandra suggests that the circular was inspired by a report by a Kievan censor, Sergei Shechegolev, which was submitted to St. Petersburg by the Kievan governor Alexei Girs: Valentyna Shandra, “Mova iak zasib formuvannia natsional’noї identychnosti,” in Ukrains’ka identychnist’ i menne pytannia v Rossii’kii imperii: sproba derzhavnoho rehuliuvannia, edited by Hennadii Boriak (Kiev: Instytut istoriї NANU, 2013), xxxvi.
language. For instance, in 1913, the Kievan governor sent a request to the Kiev Temporary Committee for Print asking for data on a prospective publisher for a journal in the “Ukrainian language.” However, a member of the committee left a note on the margins of this request so as not to forget to “inform the governor that official terminology recognizes only the Little Russian dialect, whereas the term ‘Ukrainian language’ was introduced without preliminary permission (iavochnym poriadkom).”26 In 1914, the same committee received a request from the head of the Kiev gendarmerie about a number of books and journals in the “Little Russian language” that were approved for publication. In its reply, the Committee informed the gendarmes of books and journals written in the “Little Russian dialect.”27

Occasionally some state officials, like Petr Stolypin, backed up the Russian nationalists, as happened, for instance, during the elections to the western zemstvos in 1911. At the same time, many other state officials remained “either indifferent or opposed to them.” Even the new head of the Council of Ministers, Vladimir Kokovtsev, was far less sympathetic towards Russian nationalists as opposed to Stolypin, his predecessor. Thus, during the fourth Duma elections, despite all the nationalists’ desire for governmental help, the state’s assistance to them became less consistent.28 The same was true at the local level. If the governors of Kiev and Podolia provinces, Alexei Girs and Aleksandr Eiler respectively, supported the Russian nationalists and were considered allies by them, “[the Russian nationalists] were extremely mistrustful of the governor general of the southwest, F.F. Trepov.”29 Another governor of Volhynia, Aleksandr Kutaisov, also opposed them (and in 1912 he was removed from the office by the MVD).30

The Kiev Temporary Committee for Print seems to be the only imperial institution of the time that consistently opposed the Ukrainian national movement, and in this way, it could have carried out the project

---

26 TsDIAK, f. 295, op. 1, № 440 (Perepiska o vyiasnenii dopustimosti k obraschchenii razlichnykh izdaniii), 99–100.
27 Ibid., 191.
28 Edelman, Gentry Politics, 148–49.
29 Ibid., 150.
30 Ibid., 128, 130–36.
of nationalizing the Russian Empire. Between 1909 and 1917, it was led by Timofei Florinski, a historian and philologist who seems to be one of the few imperial officials who did not hide his Russian nationalist bias, and, since the end of the 1890s, actively and consistently fought against Ukrainian national activists. In addition to his published brochures, this was revealed by his annual secret reports to the Main Department for the Press. There, Florinski made a clear distinction between the “Little Russian dialect” of the Russian language and the “Little Russian bookish dialect of the newest type (the so-called Ukrainian language).” Florinski always used the latter in quotation marks to underline its artificiality and difference from the language spoken by “Little Russians.” According to Florinski, were not a separate nation but a political party aiming at political separatism from the Russian Empire. Therefore, the Kievian Temporary Committee for Print used any pretext to ban Ukrainian publications.

**Imperial Authorities Oppose Russian Nationalists**

At the same time, despite governmental subsidies to Russian nationalist newspapers and the related activity of some imperial officials, one still cannot argue that the officials of the late Romanov Empire pursued a coherent state-directed nationalizing project.

First, except for the subsidies, local Russian nationalist newspapers were also read, fined, and banned by the censors and courts. For example, when the lobbyist of *Dvuglavyi orel* asked the Minister of Internal Affairs for a grant, he included a note that his paper was repeatedly subjected to both judicial and administrative penalties for its articles criticizing state officials and accusing the latter of “betraying the fatherland.”

---

31 Timofei Florinskii, *Malorusskie iazyk i "ukrainsko-russkii" literaturnyi separatizm* (St. Petersburg, 1900).
32 TsDIAK, f. 295, op. 1, № 438 (*Otchety o rabote Kievskogo vremennogo komiteta po delam pechati*), 56, 116, 179, 298).
34 RGIA, f. 776, op. 33, № 407, 16.
In addition, a number of local officials tried to curb the antisemitic publications of Russian nationalists by informal means. Thus, in 1912, the Kiev governor asked the Minister of Internal Affairs, Aleksandr Makarov, to use his connections and stop *Dvuglavyi Orel* from publishing articles that promoted a “hostile attitude among its readers towards governmental agents and diminishing governmental prestige.” However, despite all his efforts, even in 1914, the general-governor had to state that the newspaper continued to publish articles “discrediting not only local officials, but even the representatives of the higher central government.”

Similarly, regional imperial authorities tried to control and regulate the activity of Russian nationalists in the Volhynia province. For instance, in 1905, its governor informed the Kiev general-governor that he received a copy of *Troitskie listki*, the dissemination of which he considered undesirable for his province because of its texts, which could have “caused unacceptable discord and a mutual distrust among the native Russian population and numerous non-Orthodox people who live in the Volhynia province. In particular this unrest can be directed against Jews, who are treated by the local Christian population, predominantly the low class, in an unfriendly way.”

Both the Volhynian governor and the Kiev general-governor tried to restrain the Pochaev monks, Iliodor and Vitalii, whose sermons and publications in a local newspaper entitled *Pochaevskie izvestiia* were characterized by an “extreme intolerance towards local Jews and Poles.” Thus, in 1907, the Kiev general-governor secretly wrote to Prime Minister Petr Stolypin asking him to contact the Synod and use it to help stop the activities of Iliodor and Vitalii. However, in 1908, the Volhynian governor again secretly informed the MVD that despite all of the useful patriotic activity of Vitalii, some of his actions deviated from the law and were very undesirable from the point of view.
of view of preserving state order, and in particular those who call for violence against local Polish landlords.\(^{39}\) At the end of 1908, one of them, Roman Sangushko, even complained to Stolypin about *Pochaevskie izvestiia*, which “instigates hatred towards all non-Orthodox (*inovertsam*) and aliens (*inorodtsam*), Polish landlords, Jews, and even the local administration, whose representatives are accused of being revolutionaries or bribe-takers, bought by the enemies of Russia.”\(^{40}\) Even though it seems that the efforts of the authorities did not attain their desired result, the correspondence between the Volhynian governor, the Kievan general-governor, and the MVD on this subject, which lasted until 1910, at least indicates the hesitation of imperial authorities concerning their wholehearted embrace of local nationalists.

Similarly, the story of the Ukrainian media attests to the fact that the attitudes of state institutions and Ukrainian activists were not shaped by constant repressions and bans. Even Timofei Florinski, with all his hatred for the Ukrainian press, not only had to disguise his actions through some formal procedures, but also had to act in a framework of existing law. Thus, the only way for him to suppress the Ukrainian media was to follow the law as strictly as possible and hope that the Kiev judicial chamber would support his resolutions. However, quite often, even this was not the case. For instance, in 1909, Hnat Hotkevych complained to the Main Department for Press that the Kiev Committee for Print refused to review his “Album of Historical Portraits,” adding that “in principle, some actions of the Kiev censor belong to the area of lawlessness (*prinadlezhat k oblasti proizvola*)” St. Petersburg demanded explanations from Florinski, who submitted a report arguing that Hotkevych had not followed the formal requirements. But this clarification did not convince the Main Department for the Press, which allowed the album to be published even without asking the Kievian censors to review it.\(^{41}\)

---

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 23. The reason why such articles could appear at all was that *Pochaevskie izvestiia* was published in town, which did not have a separate censor. Thus, each issue of the newspaper had to be checked by a policeman in Kremenets, 25 verst (about 25 km or 17 miles) far from Pochaev, which meant that even when the policeman decided to arrest the issue, it would have already reached the subscribers.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 14.

An Inconsistently Nationalizing State

In a number of other cases, Florinski failed to ban Ukrainian publications because of the local judicial chamber. For instance, in March 1909, this institution refused to confirm a block on Volodymyr Samiilenko’s poetry, “To Ukraine” (Ukraїni), which was accused by the Kievian censors of having a “separatist-Little Russian tendency” and instigating “hatred toward the contemporary system of government and Russians.”42 In another case from 1910, the same chamber refused to confirm a ban on a tear-off calendar whose publishers, according to Florinski’s Committee, committed a host of crimes. One of them was not simply the calendar’s mention of the deaths of Karl Marx and Alexander II on the same page because they both occurred on the same day, March 1, but the sequence in which they appeared on the page: Marx’s death preceded the emperor’s despite the fact that even pure chronology demanded the contrary.43

Probably the best-known instance of the Kievian judicial chamber’s refusal to support Florinski in his crusade against Ukrainians took place during the same year, 1910. It was related to the decision of the Kievian Temporary Committee for Print to confiscate the fourth issue of the newspaper Selo and its calendar supplement, which contained a map of Ukraine. Florinski argued that the map and the accompanying article advanced an idea of Ukrainian separatism and threatened the unity of the Russian nation. One of the ways it did so, according to Florinski, was the calendar’s consistent usage of the terms “Ukraine,” “Ukrainians,” “Ukrainian nation,” “Austrian Ukraine,” and “Russian Ukraine.” According to him, “This arbitrary renaming of one branch of our Russian nation (russkogo naroda) aims at asserting to the masses, which the calendar targets, a wrong and criminal idea that the ‘Ukrainian nation,’ which is created anew, constitutes a separate nation.”44 Kievian Ukrainians celebrated the judicial chamber’s decision to revoke the prohibition as “a slap to Florinski.”45

43 Alexander II was killed in 1881, whereas Marx died in 1883: RGIA, f. 776, op. 16 p. 2, № 357 (О возбуждении судебного преследования по “Отрывному календарю” на малороссийском наречии), 1–5.
44 TsDIAK, f. 295, op. 1, № 259 (Випуски з зборуван заседанн комітета), 8–17.
45 Ol’ha Mel’nyk, “Lysty Leopolda Budaia iak dzherelo do vyvchennia naukovo-orhanizatsiinoї ta
Thus, in 1912, Florinski complained to his St. Petersburg superiors that all “attempts of the Committee to fight the dissemination of these ideas by addressing the criminal court had never achieved this aim. The judicial chamber did not find anything illegal about propagandizing these ideas, which could have been punished by criminal laws.” He continued to grumble in a similar way in 1914:

As far as our Criminal Code does not have laws that would protect the national and cultural unity of the Russian nation, even during the current year, the Committee, as I have explained many times earlier, did not have the objective means to fight the harmful and extremely dangerous direction of the “Ukrainian” press. The activity of this party developed without any obstacles. [...] I found it possible to institute only two proceedings [...] One was not yet discussed. And in the first case the editor was fined 200 roubles. “Ukrainian” periodicals cannot complain about “repressions.”

**Conclusion**

It has been suggested in historiography that one should distinguish “Russian nationalism as a public sentiment, and the ‘official nationalism’ of the autocracy” as “closely connected yet independent phenomena, sometimes going on side by side, but no less often entering into conflict with each other.” This study proposes complementing this argument with a revision of the idea of Russian “official nationalism.”

In May 1910, Kievan Ukrainians buried one of their leaders, Borys Hrinchenko. According to contemporaries, no less than 3,000 people at-

---

46 TsDIAK, f. 295, op. 1, № 438 (Otchety o rabote Kyivskogo vremensogo komiteta po delam pechaty), 188.
47 Ibid., 308.
48 Miller, Ukrainian Question, 5.
An Inconsistently Nationalizing State

tended the funeral. Those who remembered the passage of Taras Shevchenko’s body through Kiev in 1861 could easily notice the contrast: according to Oleksandr Rusov, back then, Shevchenko’s coffin was accompanied by only eighty people. Rusov’s interlocutor, Martyrii Halyn, explained the difference: “All of this was achieved by the press. If the administration was smarter, first of all, it would have closed Rada because it was [Rada] that laid the foundation for such a pompous funeral.”49 Even if Russian nationalists from the southwestern provinces of the empire energetically argued that Ukrainian activists were breaking the Russian national body, and thus should be suppressed, it seems that the imperial government never embraced Russian nationalism as its regular policy at all levels; it never “became smarter” about suppressing them. Meanwhile, those imperial bureaucrats, like Timofei Florinski, who definitely tried to undermine the Ukrainian national movement were not part of a centralized state-led effort that would encompass all branches of the imperial government. If one imperial institution did not allow the usage of the Ukrainian language in schools, another institution still permitted thousands of people of different classes to read Ukrainian publications.

Thus, instead of being considered a modern nationalizing state that conducts a nationalizing policy from above, or an outstanding example of the application of Seton-Watson’s doctrine of “official nationalism,” the Romanov Empire should be viewed as an inconsistently nationalizing empire that did not pursue a coherent program of making the empire more Russian from reigns of Nicholas I to Nicholas II. One of the examples of this inconsistency, which was recognized even at the time, was the legalization of the Ukrainian press in 1906. So long as publishers stuck to existing laws, they would be able to see their texts printed and sold and, maybe, even read.
