The Tsar, The Empire, and The Nation

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Politics around Universal Education in Right-bank Ukraine in the Late Tsarist Period

Kimitaka Matsuzato

The introduction of obligatory or universally accessible education represented a landmark of modernization in many countries. In nation-states that were latecomers to modernization, such as Germany and Japan, obligatory primary education was vital for nation-building and survival in the age of imperialism. The tsarist government in Russia was comparatively indifferent to nation-building and preferred to entrust the burden of primary education to public institutions such as churches, peasant communes, and local self-governments. The government’s dependence on these institutions necessitated constant negotiation so as to deposit as great a burden as possible on the other party, but at the same time, it promoted heroic endeavor and self-sacrifice among pedagogues, clerics, and municipal officers.

The politics around the introduction of universal primary education in the Southwestern Region (Right-bank Ukraine) of the Russian Empire in the early twentieth century raised two issues. First, it intensified the contradiction between accessibility to and the quality of primary education. Right-bank Ukraine lacked zemstvos until 1911 because of the government’s fear of local Polish elites’ dominance. Because of this disadvantage, the local “Russian” youth needed the swift spread of lower elementary

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1 I use the terms “universally accessible education” and “universal education” to distinguish the tsarist government’s policy of primary education from obligatory education. Until the end of its existence, the tsarist government did not find it possible to introduce obligatory primary education in Russia, but instead tried to realize a situation whereby all children of school age could go to school if they and their parents wished.
education. At the same time, industrial growth and mounting professionalism in Right-bank Ukraine made the existing one-class (three-year) and two-class (five-year) schools obsolete since these schools gave their graduates no opportunities for advancing to middle school or state service. Facing the choice between geographically uniform elementary schooling and advanced primary education, the Ministry of Education (ME) chose the former, but it needed to convince those communities requesting the latter. Second, the policy for universal primary education intensified the competition between parish and secular (ME and zemstvo) schools in Right-bank Ukraine. Given the lack of zemstvo schools, at the beginning of the twentieth century, 83 percent of primary schools in rural Right-bank Ukraine were Orthodox parish schools, but ME officers were dissatisfied with the quality of these schools.

On May 1, 1904, the government established the Provincial and District Committees for Zemstvo Administration (Komitety po delam zemskogo khoziaistva; hereafter, zemstvo committees) in three Southwestern Provinces. Composed of representatives of state institutions and appointed councilors, zemstvo committees were nicknamed “margarine zemstvo,” meaning pseudo-zemstvo. Since then, zemstvo schools began to challenge the monopolistic position of Orthodox parish schools in Right-bank Ukraine, though the government obliged zemstvo committees to subsidize

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2 In pre-revolutionary Russia, the adjective “Russian” implied what post-revolutionary terminology called “Eastern Slavic.” In other words, it included Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians. On this issue, see Alexei Miller, “Ukrainskii vopros” v politike vlastei i russkom obshchestvennom mnenii (istoria polovina XIX v.) (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2000); Klimentii K. Fedevych and Klimentii I. Fedevych, Za Viru, Tsaria i Kobzaria: Malorossiiskii monarkhizm i ukrainskii natsional’nyi rukh (1905–1917 roky) (Kiev: Krytyka, 2017); and my “Pol’skii faktor v Pravoberezhnoi Ukraine: Konets XIX–nachalo XX v.,” Ab Imperio, no. 1 (2000), 91–106.

3 At single-class schools a teacher had a class composed of pupils of three different grades, while two-class schools had another senior class composed of the fourth and fifth grades.


parish schools. The multi-confessional composition of the region’s population made this competition even harsher. Recent studies have revealed that non-Orthodox parents, such as Polish Catholics and Jews, unexpectedly acquiesced to sending their children to Orthodox parish schools, perhaps for the sake of their secular knowledge. Orthodox parish schools, in turn, released non-Orthodox pupils from the obligation to attend classes on Divine Law (zakon bozhii), meaning elementary Orthodoxy.⁶ Nevertheless, Polish parents hoped to have secular ministerial (ME) and zemstvo schools in their neighborhoods (or at least, that is what ME and zemstvo officers believed).⁷ Polish notables’ and intellectuals’ activities to establish Polish schools without the authorities’ permission rose after the Revolution of 1905. The oversight office of the Kiev educational district not only repressed this movement but also collected data on these Polish schools. Such data did not indicate the political dangerousness of the Poles’ movement, but the ME demonized it so as to validate a request to the Ministry of Finance to subsidize its attempts to establish universal primary education.

This paper investigates the politics around universally accessible education in Right-bank Ukraine in the early twentieth century from the multiple perspectives briefly outlined above. Before embarking on this task, a detour is necessary to survey the history of primary education in post-Emancipation Russia, the most striking feature of which was the government’s dependence on religious, local, and communal institutions.

**Pre-History: Dependence**

Under serfdom, various ministries, such as the Ministries of Crown Lands and State Properties, ran their own schools, but the most numerous categories were ministerial (ME) and parish schools.⁸ In contrast to the post-1861

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⁷ In 1894, the overseer of the Kiev educational district reported that parish schools were useless for education because they could not interest the population of other faiths who compose “more than 18 percent of my district, and, in Volyn Province, more than 23 percent.” (Drovoziuk, “Osvitnia diial’nist’,” 19).

⁸ In villages of state peasants, for example, parish schools were built under the guidance of local branch-
period, their functions were divided by children’s educational stages. Rural children were to obtain elementary literacy at parish schools. Those who enjoyed better material conditions entered ministerial schools to receive higher primary and intermediate education. Despite these divisions based on pupils’ educational levels, there was an ideological contrast between the two types of schools. Ideas of modernization, professionalism, and social mobility guided ministerial schools, while parish education represented the idea of estate-based stability and clericalism. Ministerial schools were much more qualified than parish schools from a pedagogical point of view, but they were expensive and inaccessible for the unprivileged strata of society. Parish schools were closer to the people, if they existed at all, but the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) was too poor to build enough parish schools to service the vast empire, and priests were too uneducated to become teachers of rural children. Zemstvo schools would fill the vacuum between these extremes—qualified but inaccessible ministerial schools and relatively cheap but unqualified parish schools.

The imminent abolition of serfdom provoked the government’s interest in revitalizing primary education in rural Russia. It was unconceivable to conduct peasant reforms without creating a stratum of literate peasants who understood their new legal status, rights, and obligations. Released from the power of their owners, the peasantry needed literate officials deriving from their own estate to manage village and township self-government. In the early 1860s, the initial bet was placed on parish schools to fulfill this goal. Alexander II and the newly appointed minister of education Aleksandr Golovnin, a representative of the so-called progressive bureaucrats, supported this policy, and the Holy Synod obliged the local clergy to involve themselves in primary education. Because of the lack of sufficient

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Budget and available teachers, many parish schools, the number of which mushroomed in 1861, remained on paper. The peasants were disappointed with the parish schools’ poor performance and began to deny them material support. Even the parish schools, which had survived the upheavals surrounding their creation, were practically replaced by zemstvo schools in zemstvo provinces, while in the non-zemstvo Right-bank Ukraine parish schools continued to play a more or less important role.

In 1860, the government created the Special Commission to deliberate on supplemental proposals required by the coming Peasant Provision. This commission reported the need to substantially develop primary education among peasants to the Editing Commission. Given that universal obligatory education was unachievable because of insufficient funds and manpower among the peasants, the Special Commission found entrusting the creation of village schools to peasant communes unavoidable, and placed the contents of education (uchebnaia chast’) under the control of the ME.

The Special Commission submitted this opinion to the Editing Commission, which in turn passed it on to the Main Committee on Peasant Affairs. Correspondence between the Main Committee and the ME resulted in the famous Peasant Provision, confirmed by the tsar on February 19, 1861. This Provision granted village assemblies the right to petition for literacy education and authorized township assemblies to petition for establishing township schools. Peasant communes were allowed to collect commune taxes in order to run schools and pay salaries to teachers.

During the term of Minister of Education Golovnin, two managerial issues came to the fore. First, the ME began to integrate schools run by various ministries, which had been inherited from the pre-Emancipation period, into its jurisdiction. This policy unsurprisingly caused conflicts with the Holy Synod. Golovnin appeased the Synod by asserting that the ME had no intention of intervening in the primary education run by the ROC, but, on the contrary, the rural clergy’s active involvement in primary edu-

10 Olena Drach, “Rozvytok pochatkovoi osvity v Ukraini (1861–1917 rr.).” Dysertatsiia na zdobuttia naukovo-stupennia kandydata istorychnykh nauk (Kharkiv, 2001), 49–53.
11 Rozhdestvenskii, Istoricheskii obzor, 396–97.
tion would give them additional income to alleviate their difficult material conditions. The imminent creation of local self-governments, zemstvos, provoked a discussion about to what extent the zemstvo should bear responsibility for public education. The Zemstvo Statute of 1864 did not regulate relations between the government and zemstvos in public education, but the Provision on Primary Popular Schools, confirmed by the tsar on July 14, 1864, stipulated zemstvo participation in the provincial and district education councils. While building their own schools, zemstvos in many cases accepted schools established by various ministries and village communities in the pre-Emancipation era.

The Law of May 29, 1869 authorized the ME to open “model schools” in villages if the latter’s assemblies adopted the agreement (prigovor) to provide land for the building of schools. Moreover, the ME was to pay stipends to priests who finished pedagogical courses at theological seminaries and who were selected as teachers by zemstvos and peasant communes. The ME was to subsidize schools run by the ROC, zemstvos, village communes, and private persons. To supervise schools, the ME introduced inspectors of popular schools (inspectory narodnykh uchilishch), whose duties and competencies were prescribed by the Instruction of October 29, 1871. These inspectors were obliged to encourage zemstvos, city self-governments, and peasant communes to open new schools. If these local communities did not have sufficient means to establish new schools, inspectors were to petition the overseers of the educational districts. When the office of Directors of Popular Schools was introduced in each province, this obligation was passed on to them.

The new Provision on Primary Popular Schools of May 25, 1874 led the system of provincial directors of schools and inspectors of popular schools to completion. Historians often attribute this system to Minister of Education Dmitrii Tolstoi’s intention to establish state control of

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12 Ibid., 449.
13 Ibid., 450.
14 Drach, “Rozvytok pochatkovoi osvity,” 57.
15 TsDIA Ukrainy, f. 707 (Kiev educational district), op. 229, 1908, spr. 103, ark. 12–14.
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public education, while simultaneously limiting the zemstvos’ responsibilities to the purely managerial and material aspects of schools. Yet, the point was that the government once again confirmed its intention to rely on social institutions in primary education by assigning supervision to the ME. Before 1897, the ME’s expenditure for subsidizing primary education was negligible, while the zemstvos bore the main financial burden of building and running rural primary schools. This is why the Southwestern Region (Right-bank Ukraine), which lacked zemstvos because of the Polish question, was so disadvantaged in primary education. In Right-bank Ukraine, the Provincial Committee of Guardianship of People’s Temperance, introduced in 1894 (when the government introduced state sales of vodka), managed primary schools. Apparently, these schools were expected to substitute the role of zemstvo schools in zemstvo provinces, but this was an unrealizable desire. As a result, peasants’ literacy rate was lower in Right-bank Ukraine than in Left-bank Ukraine and the Great Russian Provinces which had zemstvos.

On July 12, 1879, the last years of Alexander II’s reign but under the influence of his son, the future Alexander III, the Committee of Ministers adopted a resolution which found it impossible to develop primary education “without granting the clergy the dominant position in the management of primary education.” Under Alexander III, this new course was promptly codified. On January 26, 1882, the Committee of Ministers requested Ober-Procurator Konstantin Pobednostsev of the Holy Synod to work out measures to develop parish schools. The Special Commission established under the Synod prepared the Rules on Church-Parish Schools, which were confirmed by the tsar on June 13, 1884. According to these rules, the Synod introduced school councils attached to bishoprics. At the

16 For example, see I. V. Zaichenko, Osvita i pedagogichna dumka v Ukraini u XIX–na pochatku XX st. (Kiev: Komprint, 2013), 201–202.
17 This was a high-profile institution in which the provincial governor, bishop, and marshal of the nobility participated.
end of the 1880s, these councils opened their district (uezd) branches. In the 1890s, following the model of ministerial and zemstvo schools, two types of schools, one-class and two-class schools, were established. The one-class schools provided a three-year education mainly composed of divine law, hymns, reading in Church Slavonic, Russian language instruction, calculation, and penmanship. The two-class schools provided a five-year education that supplemented one-class schools’ contents with elementary geography, Russian history, an understanding of nature, drawing, and painting. In contrast to the short-lived boom of parish schools in the early 1860s, this time, the ROC enjoyed abundant financial support from the government. During the twenty-five years after 1884, about forty thousand parish schools were opened in the empire, and the total number of their pupils reached about two million.20

The Turning Point

As mentioned earlier, in the early postreform period, the ME tried to integrate schools run by various ministries into its jurisdiction. Accordingly, it preferred to subsidize its own (ministerial) schools, rather than zemstvo and parish schools.21 In 1869, the ministry issued 170,000 rubles of credit for popular education in the thirty-four zemstvo provinces, but only 51,000 rubles of this were distributed to non-ministerial schools. Since 1897, the ME increased subsidies for popular education every year. In 1899, it started to subsidize parish schools. The sum of the credits delivered to primary and parish schools rose from 1,484,672 rubles in 1897 up to 8,284,672 rubles in 1906, that is, it increased more than 6.6 times in nine years. Besides, schools in the Warsaw educational district and the Western Provinces received special subsidies. In 1902, the ME decentralized distribution of credits; the ME began to issue credits to school districts, which in turn decided how to

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20 Ibid., 1, 17–20.
21 It might seem strange to refer to a ministry “subsidizing” agencies under its own control. However, this was the standard terminology adopted in documents of the then ME, which testify to the fact that the creation of a ministerial school in a locality did not mean automatic funding by the ministry.
distribute the credits among schools, considering petitions sent from various secular and religious institutions that supported schools. Ministerial schools often needed to compete with zemstvo schools located nearby.

The ME devised this application-based financial support to make petitioners promise to bear appropriate burdens in response to government subsidies. Communities requesting government subsidies to build a new school had to explain what they could give the planned school: land for the school building, part of its construction expenditures, or apartments for teachers. Moreover, the ministry expected public initiative and creativity to develop primary education, which often proved to be more important than money. For example, in 1904, the ME started to subsidize handicraft courses at popular and parish schools. This was a response to public proposals aiming to make primary education more attractive to peasant parents.

After the introduction of margarine zemstvo in Right-bank Ukraine in 1904, both the ME and the Provincial Committee of Guardianship of People’s Temperance began to transfer their schools to zemstvo committees. That this transfer started not after the real zemstvo was created in Right-bank Ukraine in 1911 but during the presence of “margarine zemstvo” between 1904 and 1911 deserves attention. For example, in 1906, in Kiev Province, the Provincial Committee of Guardianship of People’s Temperance transferred nine primary schools over to zemstvo committees, which also opened four primary schools by themselves. In sum, there were thirteen zemstvo schools in Kiev Province at the end of 1906. In 1907, the number of zemstvo schools increased from thirteen to twenty. Among the seven new schools, six had been transferred from the ME to zemstvo committees.

As a result of the vigorous expansion of primary education, as of January 1, 1904, the number of ministerial schools in the Russian Empire reached 42,574 with 97,874 teachers and 3,126,359 pupils, while the total number of the other kinds of schools amounted to 45,376 with 97,619 teachers and 1,961,670 pupils. Thus, the total number of school pupils was 5,088,029,

22 TsDIA Ukrainy, f. 707, op. 229, 1908 rik, spr. 103, ark. 142v.–16 (part of the ME document “Svedeniia po razrabotke shkol’nykh setei i planov osushchestvleniia vseobshchego obucheniia”).
23 Otchet Zemskogo upravleniia Kievskoi gubernii po narodnomu obrazovaniu za 1907 god (Kiev, 1908), 1.
while the number of children of school age in the Russian Empire was 12,549,068. Consequently, the enrollment rate in Russia in 1904 was 40.5 percent. Though the financial crisis caused by the Russo–Japanese War and the revolutionary turmoil retarded the expansion of primary education between 1904 and 1906, public passion for education did not diminish. In 1906–07, seventy-nine district zemstvos and city self-governments submitted petitions for the ME’s subsidy to make primary education in their territories generally accessible (obshchedostupnoe). Indeed, some districts of Moscow, St. Petersburg, Olonets, Viatka, Samara, Saratov, Nizhgorod, and other provinces had nearly realized universal (generally accessible) primary education.

The ME prepared a project for the introduction of universal primary education in Russia. The project continued the idea of reliance on zemstvos, city self-governments, and peasant communes financially, especially in regard to the construction of schools, while the ME worked to standardize teachers’ salaries with its own budget (360 rubles a year for teachers and sixty rubles for teachers of Divine Law, that is, priests). Meanwhile, the ME changed the organizational principle or criterion to expand school networks. Previously, the educational districts decided whether to finance the creation of a new school, considering whether the petitioning community was ready to bear the appropriate burden for the institution. This method saved the ME’s money and stimulated public interest in primary education, but it was problematic from the viewpoint of the spatially uniform distribution of schools. In some localities, there were multiple two-class schools, while in others even one-class schools were few and far between. In 1908, the ME requested district zemstvos and city self-governments to submit plans for constructing school networks in their localities that would enable the realization of universal education in the future. The educational districts began to finance local self-governments and communities based on these general plans.

24 TsDIA Ukrainy, f. 707, op. 229, 1908 rik, spr. 103, ark. 16.
25 TsDIA Ukrainy, f. 707, op. 229, 1908 rik, spr. 103, ark. 162v.–17.
In the same post-1905 period, the population’s growing interest in education resulted in new petitions to the ME requesting financial aid for advanced primary education, particularly four-class city-style schools, based on the Provision of May 31, 1872. The ME faced a difficult choice. The planned, steady realization of universal education required the even distribution of resources, while popular requests for advanced primary education were pulling the ME back to the previous preferential distribution of resources. This contradiction was especially serious in Right-bank Ukraine. On the one hand, the late-coming zemstvos in the region desperately needed the swift expansion of their school networks, however elementary they were. Moreover, the “Russian” population’s low literacy, inferior to that of the

Table 1. Changes in the Issue Structure before and after (approx.) 1905

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26 The ME proposed this type of school to substitute district (uezd) schools based on the Provision of 1828. See *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossii Imperii*, Sobr. 2, Tom 47 (1872) (St. Petersburg, 1875), No. 50907. According to I. V. Zaichenko, the transformation of district schools into city-style schools went slowly, and 147 district schools continued to function as late as 1894. At the same time, city-style schools enjoyed a certain amount of popularity, and their number amounted to 527, at which almost eighty thousand pupils throughout the empire studied in 1898 (see his *Osvita i pedagogichna dumka*, 202–203).
Polish and Jewish populations, also prioritized lower elementary education. On the other hand, the Right Bank’s industry and commerce, which was more developed than other parts of the Russian Empire, cultivated a progressive strata of the rural population that began to request advanced primary education for their children. Ben Eklof has paid attention to this phenomenon, but he equates the upgrade from two-class to four-class city-style schools to the upgrade from one-class to two-class schools.27 The former implied a challenge to the ME policy of even geographical distribution of schools.

The ME responded to the requests for upgrade from two-class to four-class schools restrictively because it was concerned that the upgrade, which was often accompanied by the preferential allocation of resources to a few communities in a district, would probably violate the already-adopted plan for the introduction of universal primary education. The Kiev educational district required the communities requesting the upgrade from two-class to four-class schools to inform them of: (1) the number of the people living in the community; (2) the size of territory the requested school would cover; (3) how many schools existed in the same and neighboring communities; (4) whether the community or organizations supporting the request for the advanced school were ready to provide the school with sufficient land; (5) the expected number of pupils; (6) how much state subsidy was needed to build and maintain the school; and (7) whether the community had kept its promises in the past.28 The following section examines the administrative processes around the upgrade of schools.

The Administrative Process of Upgrading Primary Schools

The first case is from Murafa Town (a mestechko which presently belongs to the Sharhorod district of Vinnytsia oblast’), Iampol’skii district, Podoliia Province. In 1912, this town and its surrounding villages had about a 7,300-strong “native [i.e., Ukrainian] peasant population,” while about

27 Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools*, 438–44.
28 RGIA, f. 733, op. 179, d. 80, ll. 27–28.
2,000 people of other estates lived in Murafa. Among the 7,300 natives, about seven hundred were school-age children. In 1908, when Iampol’skii district Zemstvo Committee composed its plan for universal primary education, Murafa Town and its surrounding villages had a two-class primary ministerial school with two full groups (komplekty) and a two-class parish school. Four teachers were working at the ministerial school: the schoolmaster, his wife who was a teacher, an unmarried teacher, and a teacher of Divine Law (zakonouchitel’), the last of whom was a local priest.

To teach all children of the territory elementary literacy, it was necessary to expand primary education by organizing twelve groups of pupils in various places in the territory in addition to the two existing groups of pupils. During the following four years, only two one-class ministerial schools with two groups and one two-class zemstvo school were introduced, while the other nine planned groups of pupils had not been organized. A reason for this delay was the population’s attachment to advanced primary education. In these years, a clientelist group took shape, guided by the local peace arbitrator, Iarmolovich, and a State Duma member from the locality, Vasili K. Pakhal’chak.

In 1907, instead of using the preexisting wooden school building, the Murafa community, under the leadership of Peace Arbitrator Iarmolovich, began to build a stone-made school with six classrooms appropriate for advanced primary education, expecting that the full construction would cost about 8,000 rubles. Yet this expectation proved to be extremely optimistic. In 1907 and 1908, the ME subsidized the community to the tune of 1,200 and 3,000 rubles respectively. This was not sufficient, and the community repeatedly petitioned to receive 7,329 rubles to complete the building. The ME gave 1,500 rubles more to complete the classrooms in the building. The Provincial Zemstvo Committee issued 2,400 rubles to complete the other

29 RGIA, f. 733, op. 179, d. 80, l. 40.
30 RGIA, f. 733, op. 179, d. 80, ll. 180b.–39.
31 RGIA, f. 733, op. 179, d. 80, l. 106.
parts of the building on the condition that, first, the community organize a “special commission” that included a zemstvo technician to supervise the construction process. The second condition was that the community allow the zemstvo committee to use some of the classrooms for two groups of the one-class zemstvo school, which was going to be opened soon. The community, perhaps because it was interested in using the new building exclusively for advanced primary education, resisted this modest condition. Only after Iamolovich resigned from the post of peace arbitrator did the community agree with the zemstvo committee. In 1910, a one-class zemstvo primary school with one group opened in this building, and this school quickly developed into a two-class zemstvo school, but the problem of teachers’ apartments remained unsolved.33

In January of the same year, the precinct inspector of popular schools asked the Murafa community whether it was ready to support the opening of a four-class city-style school and whether it could temporarily provide land for the school’s construction. The community joyfully adopted the agreement (prigovor) and submitted it to the precinct school inspector. Yet, the inspector did not respond at all to the community’s answer but, instead, after several months sent the same query, to which the community responded in the same manner, proposing to transform the existing two-class school into a four-class school. The inspector repeated the same query again, which convinced the Murafa population that he was intentionally delaying the new school. In 1912, the plenipotentiaries of the community petitioned State Duma member Pakhal’chak, who in turn submitted a memorandum together with numerous documents accumulated during 1910–12 to the minister of education. In their petition, the peasant plenipotentiaries proudly noted that “the local population’s cultural level rose so significantly that the real need for the advanced type of school has matured.”34

33 RGIA, f. 733, op. 179, d. 80, ll. 105ob.–107. Later, the overseer of the Kiev educational district argued that the school building could not be completed because the school precinct inspector did not allow the special commission to spend the zemstvo subsidies to pay off the debts despite the requests of parliamentarian Pakhal’chak and his group. The second reason was that Iamolovich was alienated from the affair.

34 RGIA, f. 733, op. 179, d. 80, l. 40.
Pakhal’chak remarked that the stone-made school building was too large and extravagant for the present two-class school and that the peasants were complaining about “why we have paid the last bit from our meager means for the construction of this magnificent building.”

The ME requested the overseer of the Kiev educational district to explain the situation. The Kiev overseer, in turn, requested the school inspector of the precinct report to him on the events of the previous four years. The opinion of the inspector significantly differed from that of the peasant plenipotentiaries and provided a factual basis for the Kiev overseer’s counter-argument. The peasant plenipotentiaries noted that the territory of the school site was more than three desiatinas (one desiatina is about 1.09 hectares). The new stone building had six classrooms, a recreation hall, and a teachers’ room. The site had a workshop for handicraft courses, while a wooden building on the site that had been the previous school was also usable. The Kiev overseer corrected the Murafa plenipotentiaries’ optimism by noting that the school site was less than two desiatinas and that the old building required major repairs to make it usable for education. A fundamental problem was the lack of teachers’ apartments. Readers may be impressed to learn that the school inspector was acquainted with such trivial matters when he argued against the local communities’ requests. Concerning the expected enrollment of the requested school, the plenipotentiaries noted that their district had only one advanced primary school in the district seat, so the demand for an advanced school in Murafa would be enormous. The plenipotentiaries added that the future advanced school would absorb pupils presently going to the local parish school. The overseer was a realist here, too, noting that an advanced primary school had opened in Shargorod city in Mogilev district, only ten verstas (one versta is about 1.067 km) from Murafa Town, in 1912, so the need for a similar school in Murafa decreased.

35 RGIA, f. 733, op. 179, d. 80, l. 38ob.
36 RGIA, f. 733, op. 179, d. 80, l. 105ob.
37 RGIA, f. 733, op. 179, d. 80, l. 107ob. Presently, Shargorod/Sharhorod is the seat of the district (raion) to which Murafa belongs.
A fundamental counterargument by the Kiev overseer was that the transformation of the existing two-class school into a four-class one meant nothing but the elimination of the existing school, which would unquestionably impede the realization of universal education in the locality. Therefore, it was desirable to open higher primary schools “not instead of the existing lower schools, but independently from them, in the interests of the poorest group of the local population.” As described below, the ME and the zemstvo committee (since 1911, a full-fledged zemstvo) invested significant money in the construction of the new school building, and its purpose was to further develop existing lower primary education. Therefore, according to the Kiev overseer, the Murafa community should obtain the ME’s special permission and the zemstvo’s consent to use the school building for advanced primary education.

The second example is Rzhishchev Town in Kiev district. As a river port city on the Dnipro, Rzhishchev was one of the most populous settlements in Kiev Province on the eve of World War I. The whole population was 20,154 and the number of children of school age was 2,015. It had a grain-exporting wharf, a sugar factory, two pig-iron factories, two sawmills, two brick factories, a boiler house, three tanneries, and other numerous small enterprises. Nevertheless, Rzhishchev had no more than a two-class ministerial primary school of the rural type, a parish school for girls, a two-class school for Jewish boys, and a private school for Jewish girls. In contrast, for example, Smeila Town (then belonging to Cherkassy district of Kiev Province, presently belonging to Cherkassy Oblast), though similar to Rzhishchev in terms of population and industrial development, had several lower primary schools, one four-class advanced primary school, and boys’ and girls’ gymnasiums.

In 1908, perceiving this situation as unfair, Rzhishchev’s town community discussed the possibility of establishing a four-class city-style school, but there was no building for this purpose. In 1910, the community con-

38 RGIA, f. 733, op. 179, d. 80, l. 106.
39 RGIA, f. 733, op. 179, d. 80, ll. 106ob.–107.
40 RGIA, f. 733, op. 179, d. 80, l. 29.
41 RGIA, f. 733, op. 179, d. 80, l. 4.
constructed a building with six classrooms and a teachers’ room for the existing two-class school. As was the case with Murafa, the construction of a new school building too luxurious for a lower primary school stimulated the population’s yearning for transforming it into an advanced primary school.

When Chairman V. K. Tritshel’ of the Kiev district zemstvo visited St. Petersburg perhaps in late 1912 or early 1913, he petitioned the ME to transform the existing ministerial two-class primary school with four groups in Rzhishchev into a four-class school starting in the autumn of 1913. The ME accepted this request on the condition that the district zemstvo take responsibility for managing the existing four groups of the ministerial school in the autumn of 1913. This response seems confusing. The zemstvo requested to transform the existing two-class ministerial school into a four-class one, but the ME responded that if the zemstvo took responsibility for the existing four groups, that is, if the management of the existing ministerial school could be passed to the zemstvo, the ME would permit the construction of a new ministerial four-class school. The ME’s policy was consistent with the Murafa case; the ME did not support upgrading the existing lower elementary school into an advanced one because this would impede early realization of universal education. Instead, the ME proposed the creation of a new advanced primary school parallel to the existing lower primary school.

The Kiev district zemstvo regarded this condition as acceptable since the regular zemstvo assembly of 1911 had already decided to establish a one-class primary school with two groups in 1912, so the zemstvo only needed to add facilities and programs for another two groups. In April 1912, the zemstvo assembly petitioned the ME to continue to deliver the same amount of subsidies that the ministry was giving to the ministerial school, even after control over the school was transferred to the zemstvo. The merit of Rzhishchev in comparison with Murafa was that the district zemstvo and the township paid attention to the issue of teachers’ apartments, allocating 360 and 300 rubles a year respectively for this purpose.  

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42 RGIA, f. 733, op. 179, d. 80, l. 4.
43 RGIA, f. 733, op. 179, d. 80, ll. 4–40b and 29–29ob.
The third example is Shuliavka Village, located in the suburbs of Kiev City with a population of forty thousand. The villagers decided to open a four-class primary school to celebrate the tricentennial of the Romanov Dynasty and, they allocated 850 square sazhens of land for this purpose. Councilor I. N. Denisiuk of the district zemstvo proposed a plan for the construction of the school to the zemstvo assembly on April 6–7, 1912. Based on the assembly’s decision, the district zemstvo board sent a petition to the Kiev educational district. The office of the Kiev educational district responded to the zemstvo, noting that the petition only proposed to allocate 850 square sazhens (one sazhen is 2.13 meters) of land, but mentioned neither participation in construction nor monetary support. On July 4, 1912, the zemstvo board replied and justified the lack of contribution—other than land—by noting that issue was discussed at an extraordinary session of the zemstvo, which was not authorized to decide on budgetary issues. The board remarked that since the Kiev district zemstvo had recently spent much money on the education of the populace, it would agree to support the Shuliavka school after the ME decided positively on this matter. This attitude of “leaving things to others” did not move the overseer, who shelved the issue without even responding to the zemstvo. In November 1912, the Monarchist Party “Kievan Union of the Russian People” took up this issue and petitioned the ministry; party leaders emphasized that the anniversary of the dynasty was approaching, and that it was “quite desirable to realize the population’s patriotic desire to open the school on this day of celebration.” Yet the “patriotism” of the population was not enough to move the Kiev overseer. Responding to the ME’s query, he replied curtly that the school in Shuliavka might be included in the future general plan of the network of advanced schools in Kiev Province.

The final example comes from the Cossack Ivangorod town of Borzensk district, in Chernigov Province. Though Chernigov Province did not belong to the Southwest Governor-Generalship, it belonged to the Kiev educational district. As early as November 2, 1908, the Ivangorod Cossack

44 RGIA, f. 733, op. 179, d. 80, ll. 134–1340b. and 161–1610b.
Community adopted a resolution requesting the transformation of the two-class ministerial school in the town into a city-style four-class school based on the 1872 Provision. The agreement stated that advanced primary schools were superior to two-class schools in terms of their teaching program, the quality of teachers, and possibilities for graduates’ further education and employment. According to the agreement, the demand for advanced primary education was so high in this provincial town that parents sent their sons to city-style schools in surrounding cities. Ivangorod itself had a population of ten thousand and it was the center of gravity for the surrounding five townships, the total population of which surpassed fifty thousand, all of which had only lower primary schools. The community promised to dedicate the existing communal two-storied house of the existing two-class school to the future advanced school.45

In May 1912, the community repeated the request. The Kiev overseer provided a portrait of the situation that stood in diametric opposition to the community’s own description. According to the overseer, the Ivangorod population was not distinguished by their desire to give their children maximally advanced education. Evidence for this was the fact that the population did their best to send their children to the zemstvo school in the town. The reason was that necessary attendance at zemstvo schools was shorter than at ministerial schools, and zemstvo schools distributed textbooks for free. It was true that a four-class school could provide more benefits to children, but it was questionable whether the parents would send their children to a four-class school with a much longer attendance period, which made it far more expensive than the existing two-class school. The overseer referred to the Ivangorod community’s past insincere behavior. When it petitioned for the two-class school, it promised to dedicate one desiatina of land, but in fact allotted only eight hundred square sazhens, namely, about three times less than promised. Moreover, the community opened two communal stores in the schoolyard to earn profits, and it was necessary to remove them to build teachers’ apartments. Despite the situa-

45 RGIA, f. 733, op. 179, d. 80, ll. 35–36.
tion described above, the Kiev overseer supported the idea of transforming the existing two-class school into a four-class one precisely because of the present school’s miserable situation. The only way to pump more resources out of the Ivangoerd community was to upgrade the existing school into a four-class school. Yet, the ME did not support its Kiev agent’s suggestion of a “flight to the front,” and ordered the overseer to reject the request.46

Orthodox Clericalism and Clandestine Polish Schools

After the zemstvo committees were introduced in 1904, there were three kinds of primary schools in Right-bank Ukraine: ministerial, zemstvo, and parish institutions. ME and zemstvo officers felt a deep disdain for the poor quality of lessons given at parish schools, their coarse and insanitary buildings, and the reactionary ideology clerics impressed on pupils.47 In response, the ROC clergy and pro-ROC intellectuals argued that parish schools had merits that the secularized education provided by ministerial and zemstvo schools lacked. First, a significant portion of zemstvo schools were two-class schools; parish schools were overwhelmingly one-class schools and requested neither longer attendance nor heavier financial burdens from parents for education. Considering the differing period of attendance, the pedagogical effectiveness of parish schools should not be underestimated. Christian ethics supported parish schools, which meant that schools were not beholden to one or another pedagogue’s individual influence; rather, the community’s Christian environment undergirded the schools’ educational effect. This was exemplified by the teaching of Church hymns at parish schools, a subject lacking at secular schools. Choruses sung by children not only enhanced their spiritual development; it also made an extraordinary impression on their family members.48

Another reason for the ME’s and the zemstvo’s negative opinion of parish schools was that, in their view, in multi-confessional Right-bank

46 RGIA, f. 733, op. 179, d. 80, l. 760b.
Ukraine, Polish and other non-Orthodox parents did not wish to send their children to Orthodox parish schools. This also motivated the Poles to establish their own clandestine schools. ME officers remarked that Polish parents’ desire was just knowledge and the social promotion of their children, so if the network of secular schools managed by the ME and zemstvos became sufficiently dense, Polish parents would send their children to these schools. Volodymyr Pererva introduces countless examples where, in Right-bank Ukraine, Polish, Jewish, and other non-Orthodox parents resigned themselves to sending their children to Orthodox parish schools. This phenomenon makes us question why the same Polish parents supported the activities of clandestine Polish schools. Pererva suggests that Polish parents sent their children to Orthodox parish schools to demonstrate their loyalty to Russia, while they had their children educated at clandestine Polish schools for the future restoration of Polish statehood. However, this interpretation seems to overestimate Polish parents’ political consciousness.

Indeed, in the Western Provinces after the abolition of serfdom, the Poles often established their national schools without asking the permission of the authorities. The Criminal Codex identified this deed as a misdemeanor (prostupok), and the punishment was too light to have a preventive effect; the fine was seventy-five rubles (in cities) and five rubles (in rural areas), neither of which was accompanied with a prison sentence. On April 3, 1892, the emperor’s decree “On the Punishment of Clandestine Education in Vil’na, Kovna, Grodna, Minsk, Vitebsk, Mogilev, Kiev, Podolia, and Volynia Provinces” made punishments stricter, imposing on those who founded clandestine Polish schools a fine of three hundred rubles or a three-month prison sentence. In August 1906, this decree was abolished and the ineffective light punishment was restored. Unsurprisingly, the Poles began to establish illegal schools without permission.

49 Report of the Director of Popular Schools in Kiev Province to the Overseer of the Kiev educational district, March 15, 1907 (TsDIA Ukrainy, f. 707, op. 229, 1907 rik, spr. 112, ark. 17).
50 Pererva, Tserkovni shkoly, 63–64, 131, 188–91.
51 Ibid., 63–64.
52 Pulae sobranie zakonov Russiskoi Imperii, Sobr. 3, Tom 12 (1892) (St. Petersburg, 1895), No. 8486.
53 TsDIA Ukrainy, f. 707, op. 229, 1907 rik, spr. 112, ark. 22; Rozhidestvenskii, Istoricheskii obzor, 689–90.
In 1907, the government began to adopt countermeasures. They searched and closed such schools and punished the founders. According to the files preserved by the Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine, the Kiev educational district continued to record these discoveries and repressions until 1910, which seems to indicate that the Polish movement for clandestine schools declined after 1910. I identified one hundred and thirteen cases of clandestine Polish schools revealed in 1907.54 Their locations are included in the following chart.

Table 2: Cases of Clandestine Polish Schools Recorded in 1907

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Settlements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kiev</td>
<td>Radomysł</td>
<td>Colony: Guta-Zabrochskaja; Villages: Krymska, Berkozovka, Ostrov, and Romanovka; Towns: Malin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Berdichev</td>
<td>City: Berdichev; Towns: Dziun'kov, Pogrebishche, Makhnovka; Villages: Pustakha, Zarudintsy, Pikovtsy, Polichintsy, Bogudzen'ka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vasiľkov</td>
<td>Towns: Shamraevka, Rokitno, Belaia Tserkova; Villages: Venrik, Prishivan'ń, Leshchanka, Yankovka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tarashcha</td>
<td>Villages: Ianishovka, Tetiev, Burkovtsy, Shuliaki, Aleksandrovka, Bagva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skvira</td>
<td>Towns: Volodarka, Khodorkov; Villages: Prichepovka, Berezianka, Volitsa-Zarubinskaja, Ivan'ki, Khmelevka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uman'</td>
<td>Village: Peregonovka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podolie</td>
<td>Kemenets</td>
<td>Towns: Kupino; Villages: Bogushovka, Malaia Karabchiev, Skotyniaki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proskurov</td>
<td>Towns: Fel'shtin; Villages: Zarech'ye, Moskalevka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Letichev</td>
<td>Villages: Mashkovtsy, Korolevka, Mikhalpol', Svinnaia, Fashchievka, Slobodka, Korzhovtsy, Popovtsy, Grimiachka</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

54 I reviewed TsDIA Ukrainy, f. 707, op. 229, 1907 rik, spr. 112. Further descriptions in the text derive from my comprehensive analysis of this file. Therefore, I will not put archival sheet (list) numbers as a source for each statement. The source of a particular statement is the whole file, not one or another sheet.
Politics around Universal Education in Right-bank Ukraine in the Late Tsarist Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balta</td>
<td>Town: Krivoe Ozero</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vinnitsa</td>
<td>Town: Ianov; Villages: Uладovka, Piliava (2 cases)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Litin</td>
<td>Colony: Guta-Chernelevskaia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaisin</td>
<td>Town: Kunia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ushitsa</td>
<td>Village: Shchebutintsy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oľgopol'</td>
<td>Town: Bershad', Village: Checheńnik</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Volyn’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rovno</td>
<td>Townships: Voronukha, Khutor Zurno</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vladimir Volynskii</td>
<td>Colony: Romanovka; Villages: Biidiug, Błydow</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutsk</td>
<td>City: Lutsk (4 cases); Colonies: Gubinskie Budki, Keremenets; Town: Vladimirtsy; Villages: Lavrov (2 cases), Nesvichi, Podberezë, Romanov, Biskupichi</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaslavă</td>
<td>Village: Gorodischche</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhitomir</td>
<td>Town: Krasnopol’ (2 cases); Villages: Motrunki, Motovilovka, Torchin, Korytyshche</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rovno</td>
<td>City: Rovno; Colonies: Voronukha, Zurno</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starokonstantinov</td>
<td>Towns: Teofipol’, Krasilov, Bazaliia, Kupen’; Villages: Zapadintsy, Lonki, Krasilovskaia Slobodka; Sloboda Novomeiskaia</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duben’</td>
<td>Towns: Olynka, Mlynov; Villages: Kosarevskia-Rudka</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kremenets</td>
<td>Towns: Shumsk, lampol’</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novograd-Volynskii</td>
<td>Villages: Tadeushpol’, Khrobuznaia, Brazhintsy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovruch</td>
<td>Sloboda: Khrinia; Villages: Shashalovka, Kalinovka, Buda-Golubievskaia, Novaia Guta, Klitka, Pelcha, Mechnaia Rudnia</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown by this chart, Polish clandestine schools emerged most frequently in Volyn’ Province and second-most frequently in Kiev Province. The counties of Radomysł’, Verdičev, Vasil’kov, Skvira, Tarashcha (Kiev Province), Letichev (Podoliia Province), Lutsk, Starokonstantinov, and Ovruch (Volyn’ Province) recorded numerous cases of Polish clandestine schools. Obviously, the local number of Polish clandestine schools reflects ethnic Poles’ demographic weight in these localities. Yet, this number
possibly also depended on local Russian notables’ tolerance towards Poles. For example, I. S. Matiets, the schoolmaster of a two-class parish school in Lipki village, Skvira district, Kiev Province, was famed for his professionalism. As the director of popular schools in Kiev Province reported to the overseer of the Kiev educational district, the Kievan bishop visited the school in May 1910 and was satisfied with the school’s facilities, as well as by the pupils’ answers when he examined them. The bishop was especially fascinated by the pupils’ choral singing. A member of the Kievan Zemstvo Committee joined this appraisal when he visited the school. However, the director of popular schools lamented that when this “ideal schoolmaster” noticed the existence of a clandestine Polish school in his village, he not only failed to report it to the authorities; he even allowed his Orthodox pupils to attend it. The director of popular schools gave Matiets a strict reprimand for his “indifferent attitude toward the breeding of moral-religious and national feeling among Russian children.” The director warned Matiets that he would be removed if he repeated this behavior.55 It appears that the schoolmaster was an advocate of inter-confessional dialogue in a multiethnic society. By making a show of accusing the schoolmaster, the director, in fact, protected one of his best subordinates from receiving an even more severe punishment. Further, let us discern the general tendencies of clandestine schools in the three Southwest provinces.

Founders

In most cases, clandestine schools were founded either by local Polish notables, such as landowner-nobles, owners of sugar factories, pharmaceutical chemists (*provizor*), lawyers (*prisiazhnyi poverennyi*, two cases in Lutsk City), or Catholic priests. These two categories could work together, as was the case with Grimiachka Village, Letichev district, Podolia Province, where a landowner, the owner of a brewery, and a priest cooperated to open a school at a peasant’s house. Founding a school could also be a collective action, as was the case with the Catholic parish guardianship in Vorodarka

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Town, Skvira District, Kiev Province. There were cases of more democratic management of schools. In Ovruch District, Volyn’ Province, for example, donations by local Catholic believers maintained three of the schools established by priests; in one of them, parents provided lunch to a female teacher instead of salary. Meanwhile, landowners often opened a school in their estate office building to educate the children of agricultural workers and tenant farmers. There were three cases where schools developed from orphanages (priiut).

In most cases, notables or priests on the same settlements founded schools, yet they sometimes opened schools in neighboring settlements. There was a case in Letichev District of Podoliia Province, where a Catholic priest named Antonii (Grzhmailo), in tandem with landowner Kovnatskii, itinerantly opened schools in four villages: Mashkovtsy, Korol’vka, Mikhal-pol’, and Svinnaia. A relevant portion of the founders were women—female nobles and nobles’ daughters or widows; I identified seven women among the thirty secular founders.

Teachers and Contents of Teaching

Women made up a significant proportion of teachers; of forty-three teachers who taught secular subjects, twenty-five were women (58%). Teachers of Divine Law were Catholic priests and accordingly men. The contents of the education provided by Polish schools were poor: Divine Law, Polish language and sometimes Russian language courses, and handicraft and sewing courses. They are, at best, comparable to one-class Orthodox parish schools. Noble and peasant girls, often younger than twenty years old, devoted themselves to educating children, but they often lacked a pedagogical license, as was also the case with Orthodox parish schoolteachers.

Pupils

Polish schools were small and could not accept many children mainly because of the lack of space. Schools were often opened at nobles’ or peasants’ houses, parsonages, and sometimes in estate out-buildings, the last of which were relatively large. Among the forty-one schools whose enroll-
ments could be identified, seven schools had fewer than eleven pupils, fifteen schools had from eleven to twenty pupils, thirteen schools had from twenty-one to thirty pupils, and only six schools had more than thirty-one pupils. The authorities became extremely sensitive if pupils included Orthodox children. I was able to identify eight such cases, among which four were observed in Ovruch Uezd of Volyn’ Province.

Exposure

There seemed to be three channels to disclose clandestine Polish schools: first, the line of officials moving from police—governors—governor-general; second, the ME’s local agents (inspectors and directors of popular schools); and third, local Orthodox priests (often teachers of Divine Law), who reported the existence of Polish schools in their parishes to the bishopric. When local police officers found clandestine schools, they reported it to the governor, who independently took the necessary measures to close them. When local agents of the ME or local priests found clandestine schools, they reported it to the provincial director of popular schools, who in turn asked the governor to close them.

The characteristics of clandestine Polish schools emerging after the 1905 Revolution seem to indicate that they sought no more than to reproduce Polish and Catholic identity. Poor and disorganized, Polish schools could at best be compared to one-class Orthodox parish schools, and they were far from breeding young rural intellectuals who would embrace Polish ideas. Obviously, Polish parents, Catholic clerics, and social activists (volunteer teachers) did not expect advanced secular knowledge to emanate from Polish schools. Yet, the Russian authorities interpreted these schools as rural Poles’ attempt at strengthening Catholic propaganda.56

On May 12, 1907, when Polish clandestine schools began to be disclosed, the overseer of the Kiev educational district sent a petition to the minister of education, in which he argued that Polish enlightening societies at-

56 See, for example, Kievskii eparkhial’nyi missionarskii komitet, Katolicheskaia propaganda v Kievskoi eparkhii posle darovaniia svobody veroisipovedanii 17 aprelia 1905 goda (Kiev, 1908).
attempted to Polonize not only the Russian population who espoused Roman Catholicism, but also Orthodox Russians if possible. To deter this, the overseer asked the Southwest governor-general to pursue criminal charges against the founders of the Polish schools. However, prohibitive measures alone would not be able to impede the “new onslaught of Polish-Catholic propaganda.” The most effective positive measure would be to establish a network of primary schools in places “where Polish schools emerged.” For this purpose, the Kievan overseer requested funds to accomplish this from the ME: 120,000 rubles at first and then 34,000 rubles every year. According to the Kievan overseer, the most appropriate form of school for the task of promoting the “Russian cause” in the Southwestern Region was two-class primary schools, which should be established everywhere. He added that, for the time being, local communities would not be ready to deliver subsidies for such schools. In the future, the procedure of delivering government subsidies should be simplified to build school networks quickly.\(^{57}\)

I could not find any evidence that the ME supported this petition requesting that schools be built wherever illegal Polish schools emerged. Such a position was improbable because, first, this policy would provoke furious protest from other local communities that had already borne the heavy burden of opening and running a school in their territory. Second, the core idea of universal education, which the ME was then preparing, was spatially even networks of schools. The speedy establishment of one or another school for confessional reasons would have damaged this attempt at uniformity. Indeed, I have not found any argument advanced by either the ME or the Kievan overseer that two-class schools were more advantageous than four-class advanced schools in the struggle against Polonism, when they criticized local communities’ petitions for four-class schools. As I described above, their main concern was spatial uniformity of school networks.

\(^{57}\) TsDIA Ukrainy, f. 707, op. 229, 1907 rik, spr. 112, ark. 8–82v.
Conclusion

When it began to modernize, the Russian Empire was already a world power. To sustain its vast territory, the government spent a huge amount of money. As a result, in contrast to other countries belatedly modernizing, such as Japan and Germany, the available funds for modernization was severely limited in the Russian Empire. The government had no alternative but to rely upon public resources and initiative for modernization, while public institutions such as the zemstvos, the ROC, and local communities exploited the government’s reliance on them in order to achieve their own goals. Thus, constant negotiation between the government and local institutions characterized modern Russia’s public administration. Moreover, the geographical uniformity in the allocation of resources—easily achievable in state-led modernization efforts—became a serious issue in the contestation over modern Russia’s public administration. The introduction of universal education should be understood in this context. One must bear in mind that primary education was not a priority area among the government’s modernizing projects after 1905, while agricultural aid enjoyed the generous financial support of Petr Stolypin’s government. This added another layer to the ME’s policy; under any pretext, be it Polish clandestine schools or the introduction of universal education, it tried to increase its share of the government’s budget.

Another unexpected challenge to the geographical uniformity of budget allocation was the Polish question. The softening of the prohibition of unauthorized Polish schools after the 1905 Revolution caused these schools to mushroom in Right-bank Ukraine. Although the local Poles’ request for their own national schools was defensive and philanthropic as this chapter has demonstrated, the overseer of the Kievan educational district used this movement as a pretext for requesting an increased budget allocation for primary education in the region. Yet at the same time, his office never adopted the discovery of an unauthorized Polish school as a criterion for establishing a new school in the locality. This would have violated the geographic uniformity of budget allocation for school construction and, accordingly,
the ME’s effort to introduce universal primary education. To put it differently, measures aimed at universal education could not become an instrument of anti-Polish policy in Right-bank Ukraine because the former developed in the contradiction between the need for administrative optimization (spatially even distribution of schools) and requests by local communities which, as a rule, had become more aspirational in terms of social and economic modernization and less obedient to the authorities than they had been in the pre-1905 period. Consequently, the imperial government’s struggle against clandestine Polish schools could only be accomplished by “prohibitive measures.”