

**RADICALS INTO EXPERTS:
THE CASE OF THE POLTAVA PROVINCIAL *ZEMSTVO*'S
STATISTICAL BUREAU, 1881–1914**

By
Denys Tereshchenko

Submitted to
Central European University
Department of History

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Supervisor: Professor Balázs Trencsényi

Second reader: Professor Ostap Sereda

Vienna, Austria
2024

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Copyright in the text of this thesis rests with the Author. Copies by any process, either in full or part, may be made only in accordance with the instructions given by the Author and lodged in the Central European Library. Details may be obtained from the librarian. This page must form a part of any such copies made. Further copies made in accordance with such instructions may not be made without permission of the Author.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the transformation of a generation of intellectuals stemming from the *narodnik* circles who worked at the Poltava provincial *zemstvo*'s statistical bureau between the 1887 and 1914. The entanglements between their politics and their statistics are in the focus of this research. The thesis argues that these intellectuals never resigned from their previous *narodnik* politics but sought other means to pursue them, including progressivist activism based on the “theory of small deeds” that helped invigorate local public sphere in Poltava by the end of the 19th century. Driven by idealist beliefs, the group embarked upon *zemstvo* statistics, i.e., a close quantified study of the peasant population of the region and its economic and social conditions. This made them local agrarian experts *sine qua non* in the *zemstvo*, with an extended network of suppliers of data all over the province. As such, they became more pragmatic than their own youthful selves, and developed something akin to an agrarianist development ideology that favored the middle peasant for his combination of willingness to modernize (and accept *zemstvo* services) and preservation of traditions – at the cost of both the countryside wealthy and the poor. In a case study of the statisticians' treatment of the issue of land scarcity and peasant outmigration, the thesis finds that, in the late 1890s and early 1900s, the Statistical Bureau entertained an idea of solving the crisis of overpopulation by encouraging resettlement of poorer and landless peasants to Siberia. Although the idea was eventually rejected as impractical, the statisticians played an increasingly important role in the *zemstvo* on the eve of the First World War.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would not have been possible without an unlikely overlap of good luck and good company. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of those people who helped me tremendously within the last two years.

First and foremost, I thank Professors Balázs Trencsényi and Ostap Sereda, my supervisor and second reader, respectively, for the unwavering support and encouragement during this program, and both within and without the Invisible University for Ukraine initiative. Their work and previous research partly inspired me to pursue the topic that I eventually did, and their advice has been highly valuable. I also thank Professor Karl Hall whose classes and advice were of particular importance for me when thinking about and writing this research.

I also thank the Armed Forces of Ukraine and particularly my father who volunteered to join the army in the first days of Russia's full-scale invasion – without them I would not have been able to come to CEU Vienna in the first place. You serve to me as a paradigmatic example of principled bravery.

I cannot but thank my grandmother Asia, who always lovingly greeted my every achievement. She often kindly made fun of me and my studies by calling me a “professor” for a certain pretentious aura. She did not understand much of what I was ever doing, but she also had a kind heart and a wise soul. Although she did not live long enough to see me complete yet another Master's degree, this time – finally – in history, I keep the warmest memories of her and dedicate this thesis to her. After all, she taught me one of the key things: to never think too much of oneself.

I also thank my dear Borys, who, despite all the hardships, has always remained my closest friend.

I am grateful to Polina Baitsym, who not only advised me on applying for and studying at CEU, but also always readily agreed to help me in thinking about and writing my thesis.

Grateful I am also to Jonáš Jánky and Marta Haiduchok, who, patiently or impatiently, endured me talking ceaselessly either about my statisticians, or on the broader topics pertinent to this thesis (but not only).

Special thanks go, of course, to all the archivists and ordinary workers of all the archives and libraries in Ukraine that I consulted to obtain primary sources while working on this research – even doubly so, since they have been doing their job under the constant danger of Russian missile attacks.

And thanks to you, unknown reader. Only your participation, right now, is making the whole endeavor meaningful.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SETTING THE STAGE: STATISTICS IN POLITICS OR POLITICS IN STATISTICS?.....	1
<i>State of the art</i>	4
<i>Primary sources</i>	10
<i>Notes on the conceptual and methodological framework</i>	12
<i>Thesis outline</i>	17
CHAPTER 1. STATISTICS AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT	20
<i>Radical roots of zemstvo statistics in Poltava</i>	22
<i>Exercising public sphere in Poltava</i>	32
<i>The double lives of Poltava statisticians</i>	41
CHAPTER 2. POLTAVA STATISTICIANS AT WORK.....	51
<i>The emancipatory promise of statistics and its contradictions</i>	52
<i>The problem of reaching out to peasants</i>	60
<i>Poltava agrarian ideal</i>	67
<i>Statisticians as experts: the problem of malozemelye and resettlement</i>	74
CONCLUSIONS.....	83
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	89

**SETTING THE STAGE:
STATISTICS IN POLITICS OR POLITICS IN STATISTICS?**

In June 1918, as the newly proclaimed Ukrainian monarchy, supported by the German Army, passed the first month of its existence, the businessman and long-time financial supporter of the Ukrainian movement Yevhen Chykalenko pondered over the future government's composition. Seeing in the new government a chance to promote his vision of Ukraine, he drafted a list of candidates, some of whom were a compromise with the German military authorities, while some others were his old friends from the Ukrainian movement or, taken broadly, from the early-20th century Ukrainian public sphere.

Perhaps unexpectedly, Chykalenko's candidate for the Minister of the Interior of the Ukrainian State was Hryhorii Rotmistrov, who by that time had been the head of the Poltava statistical bureau of the Poltava *zemstvo* (provincial self-government) for more than ten years. An experienced *zemstvo* bureaucrat and an activist of the Ukrainian *hromada* (community) in Poltava, Rotmistrov was a low-key person and remained largely unknown to the broader Ukrainian circles. Chykalenko, however, claimed that Rotmistrov "had for a long time managed everything in Poltava provincial *zemstvo*, even [the regional self-government's head]."¹

Indeed, by 1918, the Poltava Statistical Bureau constituted not only a powerful unit within the regional government, but also the "brain center" of the province relying on one of the most developed statistics-gathering machines in the South of the Russian Empire. *Zemstvo* statistics rose from the neo-*narodnik* attempt to study the peasantry by legal means to a bureaucratic enterprise helping establish a proto-welfare-state institutions within the provinces,

¹ Chykalenko, *Shchodennyk (1907–1917)*, 96. Note: hereafter, I am using Chicago short note for citations since this chapter is already taking more than ten pages with singular space.

aimed at promoting economic development and alleviating inequalities. As the Empire lapsed into the February Revolution, and later descended into an array of civil wars, the Poltava Bureau's importance could be measured by the amount of incoming correspondence after 1917, with requests from numerous newly created ministries and other provincial governments, from Kyiv to Rostov-on-Don, to provide the raw data, model questionnaires, and yearly or monthly statistical digests.² This is even more striking, given that in 1881, when the *zemstvo* and the Statistical Bureau were founded, Poltava had around 50,000 residents and no university. The city comprised largely two- or three-story brick buildings in the center and the countryside-like traditional white clay-and-straw houses in the outskirts. Poltava was a small town that (perhaps accidentally) was also the center of the eponymous gubernia, i.e., province, in the European part of the Russian Empire. Situated on the hills overseeing one of the tributaries of the Dnipro on the river's right bank, the town did not occupy a particularly favorable position either for trade or military purposes. However, perhaps advantageously, of all the provincial centers in the Ukrainian provinces of the empire, Poltava, together with Chernihiv, was the most closely connected to its countryside, and enjoyed well-developed *zemstvo* infrastructure.

Rotmistrov did not become a minister: neither in 1917, nor in 1918, not even later. He and part of his statistician team continued working in the Bureau throughout the politically and economically unstable years well into the Soviet rule till the mid-1920s. However, his appearance on the political radars was indicative of the ambivalent nature of statistical research in modern societies – more specifically, of its ambiguous relations with objectivity and politics. On the one hand, the statistics' main pretense and ambition at the turn of the century were impartiality and comprehensiveness. The numbers were to be used as the “mirror” reflecting

² See Correspondence between the Statistical Bureau of the Poltava provincial *zemstvo* and the statistical bureaus of other provinces, DAPO, F. 723, Op. 1, No. 3.

the society's real state of affairs.³ On the other hand, as has been repeatedly remarked by the historians of statistics within the last few decades, statistical research with its data collection, processing, and interpretation, was and is a “human, all too human activity,” which has relied, as knowledge production in general, on a community of specialists and the connecting tissue of trust. Arguably, organization of statistical research also profited much from leaning on power structures. It may well have been so that to some statisticians, it was exactly the political concerns which were the driving force behind their intellectual activity.

This thesis, thus, will deal with the modalities of interrelationships between the politics and statistical research in the workings of Poltava statisticians between 1881 and 1917. Guided by the framework of contemporary research on statistics, such as political-historical epistemology, I will inquire on the sources and reasons of the Poltava statistical project by following the statisticians' individual and collective biographies, as well as on the implications of their research for their politics as manifested in their dealings with the crisis of *malozemelye* (land hunger) in the province. What were the politics that drove them to statistics? How did these politics inform their intellectual output? How did the political translate into the statistical and vice versa? By analyzing *zemstvo* statistics as a kind of policy-oriented social research, I will also aim to trace the ways in which the statisticians' neo-*narodnik* but also Ukrainian allegiances led them to the promotion of stronger (local) governmental intervention and the endorsement of a specific agrarianist agenda which had some political promise between 1905 and 1914 but got eventually marginalized during the Soviet period.

At a less theoretical and more historiographical level, this thesis aims to address the double lack of attention to the Ukrainian dimension of *zemstvo* statistics as both a social movement and an intellectual phenomenon. As I will demonstrate below, the literature on the

³ Imshenetskii, Iakov. “*Khutorianin*” i ego chitateli: doklad, chitannyi v godichnom zasedanii Poltavskago obsch-va s-kh 23 noiabr. 1900 g. [“*Khutorianin* and its readers: a report presented at the annual meeting of the Poltava Agricultural Society, November 23, 1900”] (Poltava, 1901).

Russian imperial *zemstvo* statistics remains surprisingly blind to the importance of regional diversity in *zemstvo* statistical research, which was particularly enhanced by the statisticians' entanglements with the Ukrainian national movement in the southern provinces of the Russian Empire. This research would thus contribute to the growing movement for the decentralization of Russian imperial history. But also, in the Ukrainian historiography, the intellectual phenomenon of *zemstvo* statistics has been largely subject to local historical, fact-gathering studies, without attempts to embed these statistics into broader developments in political and economic debates taking place at the turn of the 19th century. I will tie these two problems together by exploring the workings of the Poltava *Zemstvo* Statistical Bureau between 1881 and 1914.

State of the art

The study of statistics as a historically conditioned intellectual endeavor rather than a mere source taken for granted within economic or social history is a relatively recent phenomenon, dating back to the 1980s and 1990s. The impetus came from the field of the history of science, which began questioning the fundamental presumptions of modern science in the West, such as the issue of objectivity or fact. Coupled with Michel Foucault's critique of biopolitics as a new, modern form of power dwelling on the "large numbers," the field exploded with the seminal works on the emergence of statistics as a tool designed to cope with "uncertainty" in growing and urbanized societies of the 19th-century Europe. Such works as Stephen Stigler's *The History of Statistics*, Alain Desrosières' *The Politics of Large Numbers*, Ian Hacking's *Taming the Chance* as well as Theodore Porter's *The Rise of Statistical Thinking 1820–1900* have considerably shaped the field and their impact is felt till now. The overarching argument that was more or less shared by these authors was that statistics as a method and, later, as a discipline, was born at the intersection of various disciplines and, according to Porter,

remarkably epitomized a successful transfer from the social sciences to physics, and not vice versa, which would be a conventional pattern in the history of science at the time.⁴ Almost all of these works bring into focus the statisticians' sometimes rather intimately close cooperation with the state bureaucracies. This is why writing a history of statistics of the 19th century feels like walking a long tightrope, putting one in danger of falling into the profound (in terms of the number of works written) historiographical abyss of economic history or the history of bureaucracies.⁵

However, a major drawback of the classics of the field is their heavy Eurocentric, or maybe West-centric focus. The case studies have traditionally included almost exclusively Britain, France, Prussia, and the United States. Meanwhile, other scholars, such as Robert L. Johnson, Martine Mespoulet, or Esther Kingston-Mann, noted that even if statistics were adopted in the Russian Empire significantly later than in the West (from around the 1850s), the end of the century witnessed a remarkable growth of statistical studies – mostly agrarian statistics, unseen in that scope anywhere else – across the European part of the empire.⁶ Within the last decades of its existence, the Russian Empire had two parallel systems of statistics collection. One was a very centralized government-led system under the aegis of the Ministry of the Interior, the other being a by default diverse and “federalist” network of statistical bureaus founded at the regional self-governments (*zemstvos*) in European Russia. Established in the wake of the Great Reforms in the 1860s and 1870s and fueled both by the emancipation of former serfs and the devolution of some powers to the provinces, *zemstvo* statistics managed to attract hundreds of young people who imagined that this enterprise would help them achieve their populist cause by other means. Whatever the motivation, by the early 20th century, the

⁴ Theodore M. Porter, *The Rise of Statistical Thinking, 1820–1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), xv.

⁵ I am thankful to Tetiana Zemliakova for this beautiful metaphor.

⁶ The return of attention to the Russian imperial space was driven partly by the revival of the Russian imperial history in the late 1990s and early 2000s. As the archives opened following the borders, the ground was prepared for the expansion of the field.

corpus of studies produced by these bureaus was so immense and often incongruent that it remained largely unstudied until recently – well, at least until the 1980s. Robert L. Johnson, writing in 1982, claimed that the vast workings of the *zemstvo* statisticians had been untouched.⁷ Johnson was the one suggesting a sketchy periodization of *zemstvo* statistics, with 1902 and 1905 being two breaking points between the decades of intensive methodological innovation within the bureaus from the 1870s till the late 1890s and the steady bureaucratization, routinization, and “normalization” under the government control after 1905.⁸ Martine Mespoulet, in her *Statistique et révolution en Russie: Un compromise impossible (1880–1930)* [Statistics and Revolution in Russia: An Impossible Compromise (1880–1930)], extended the periodization boundaries further into the early Soviet times, depicting the ways the statistical profession both sought to adapt to the new authorities and was eventually brutally crushed with the rise of Stalinism. This research also put a strong stress on the coalescence of *zemstvo*’s bureaucratic power and statistics – something that, in my opinion, still requires further elaboration in more detail.

Kingston-Mann was the first scholar to clearly put the *zemstvo* statistics into comparative perspective together with the Western European developments in statistics. However, more importantly, she pointed to the underlying political program – besides mere populism – which can help us read *zemstvo* statistics as a sort of political movement akin to the German *Verein für Socialpolitik*.⁹ Despite its decentralization, the *zemstvo* statistics movement

⁷ Robert E. Johnson, “Liberal professionals and professional liberals: the *zemstvo* statisticians and their work,” 341–364, in *The Zemstvo in Russia: An Experiment in Local Self-Government*, eds. Terence Emmons and Wayne S. Vucinich (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 343.

⁸ Johnson, “Liberal professionals and professional liberals: the *zemstvo* statisticians and their work,” 348–350.

⁹ *Verein für Socialpolitik (VfS)* was an organization founded by a number of prominent German (political) economists in the 1870s with an aim of advocating social reform via research in economics. Coming from the left-liberal political positions and criticizing the excesses of “Manchester-like” industrialization and ensuing growth of social inequalities, the economists such as Gustav von Schmoller and Lujo Brentano argued in favor of introducing industry regulations in the interest of workers – only to preclude the more radical Socialists from taking over the parliament. Predictably, VfS was criticized from both flanks, by classical liberals and socialists at the same time. Steven Leon McClellan, “German Economists and the Intersection of Science and Politics: A History of the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*, 1872 – 1972” (PhD diss. University of Toronto, 2022), 38–45.

always had its center of gravity in Moscow, in the circles of the economists Alexander Chuprov, Alexei Fortunatov, Vladimir Posnikov, and others.¹⁰ This does not mean, though, that the *zemstvo* statistics was a centrally supervised, if not outright controlled, project. Even more, most of the students of Russian imperial *zemstvo* statistics fail to account for the motivational, political, and specialization-wise diversity across various provinces. As I aim to point out in this thesis, in the Ukrainian provinces of the empire, and, more particularly, in Poltava, the *zemstvo* statistics project was very swiftly “captured” by the local networks of Ukrainian activists or sympathizers, and the statistics very soon gained close affiliation with the Ukrainian movement.¹¹

In the recent years, new calls for the study of *zemstvo* statistics as a historically conditioned knowledge production were voiced. Scholars such as Alessandro Stanziani and David Darrow aimed their criticism at the uncritical usage of data produced by the *zemstvo* bureaus, pointing instead towards their very much biased, politically instrumental nature. Darrow, for instance, in his *Tsardom of Sufficiency*, argued that the former populists-cum-statisticians did not differ that much from either tsarist officials or radical Marxists in one fundamental belief about the Russian agriculture: namely, that the most desirable state of affairs in the village will be based upon the more or less equal distribution of landed property, centered around the Russian historically rooted concept of *nadel*, or allotment.¹² In other words, the *zemstvo* statisticians, according to Darrow, were, quite predictably, as opposed to orthodox economic liberalism in agriculture as literally almost everyone else in the empire. However, the important feature of both Darrow’s and Stanziani’s was that both stressed the political

¹⁰ Esther Kingston-Mann, *In Search of the True West: Culture, Economics, and Problems of Russian Development* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 129.

¹¹ This is not to say that the matters of Ukrainian independence or armed resistance to the empire were discussed in these circles – not at all. The statisticians often were quite moderate regarding this issue. However, it still provided the roof for other types of radicals – mostly former revolutionaries who were trying to find the job and evade the police supervision.

¹² David W. Darrow, *Tsardom of Sufficiency, Empire of Norms: Statistics, Land Allotments, and Agrarian Reform in Russia, 1700–1921*, (McGill-Queen’s Press – MQUP, 2018), 94–130.

foundations of the statisticians' work and opened the door to a re-reading of the whole phenomenon as an intrinsically politicized intellectual project, which this thesis sets out to do, too.¹³

The politics, quite remarkably, were not scarce, and the populist communities and groups that numerous *zemstvo* statisticians stemmed from have received significant scholarly attention within the last half-century. Among the seminal works on the Russian populists, published still in the 1960s, were Andrzej Walicki's *Controversy over Capitalism* and Richard Wortman's *The Crisis of Russian Populism*. Those were attempts to revive the almost forgotten tradition of Russian populism, by that time, which predated and eventually clashed with Bolshevism. The Russian populists are often portrayed as young romantic intellectuals who, driven by highest moral and socialism-inspired ideals, ended up involved in futile political action, losing to the better-organized and much more resolute Marxists. Apparently, in the 1960s, in the midst of the Cold War, the revision of the populist tradition's legacy signaled attempts to consider the other paths not taken by the Russian Empire – where the policies of forced collectivization leading to the famine of the early 1930s would not be imaginable.¹⁴ The ideological diversity of “Russian” populists is, however, mapped better than in the case of *zemstvo* statisticians. Since the populists constituted the backbone of the Ukrainian movement in the Russian Empire since the 1860s and 1870s, the issue has been addressed in the Ukrainian historiography, most notably by Tetiana Portnova in *Liubyty i navhcaty* [To Love and To

¹³ “Intrinsically politicized” does not mean, however, that the statisticians necessarily manipulated their data to get the conclusions advantageous to them. As I will note below, the approach of political-historical epistemology does not work within a dichotomy between the “political” and “objective” / “real.” Rather, knowledge can be both political and produced in bona fide.

¹⁴ Perhaps a similar rationale undergirded the recent resurgence of interest towards Alexander Chaianov, a Russian economist and agronomist, who, inspired by the Italian and Swiss agrarian cooperatives, designed an alternative theory of agricultural reform, which made him target of Stalinist repressions. Please see an informative article on him: Katja Brusch, “Historicizing Chaianov: Intellectual and scientific roots of the Theory of Peasant Economy,” in *Transforming Rural Societies Agrarian Property and Agrarianism in East Central Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, eds. Müller, Dietmar, and Angela Harre (StudienVerlag, 2011). The same was true of the movement of agronomists and other agriculture specialists closely associated with the *zemstvos* in the black-soil region (i.e. including Poltava) that was documented by Ilya Gerasimov in *Modernism and Public Reform in Late Imperial Russia*.

Teach].¹⁵ As also other scholarship suggests, the populists' main concern, also in Ukraine, was that the advent of capitalism to the Russian Empire would most surely impoverish and deteriorate the peasantry, their main target of enlightenment efforts. Their reaction to modernity was very often – but not always – to conserve the status quo or, alternatively, to make a leap “over” capitalism directly to socialism or communism, with the Russian peasant *obshchina* (commune) being the main vehicle for doing so.¹⁶

Summing up this overview, there is a double blindness in the existing historiography towards the Ukrainian, more nationally-minded, *zemstvo* statisticians. On the one hand, the scholars' attention towards the Russian imperial *zemstvo* statistics phenomenon all too often misses the diversity of the rank-and-file statisticians, especially considering their other, non-Russian imperial affiliations. All were presumably coming from the Russian pan-imperial populist circles, and the developments in the South of the Russian Empire, i.e., in Ukraine allegedly would not differ much from the bureaus' activities in Saratov or Nizhnii Novgorod. This was not the case, which I aim to prove in this thesis – aligned with the recent effort to de-center Russian imperial studies. On the other hand, the historiography on the Ukrainian populists and intellectual history has largely overlooked the *zemstvo* statistics dimension, omitting an important bulk of studies from the analysis. As I will demonstrate, the reintroduction of the *zemstvo* statistics in Poltava will shed some light on the important intellectual developments in the turn-of-the-century Ukraine, with significant ramifications for the post-1917 political transformations.

¹⁵ There is, however, no proper treatment of the *zemstvo* statistics phenomenon in Ukraine – at least not to my knowledge.

¹⁶ The issue of the East- and Central European intellectuals addressing the problems posed by the West's modernization is tackled in the volume Balázs Trencsényi, Maciej Janowski, Mónika Baár, Maria Falina, and Michal Kopeček, *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe: Volume I: Negotiating Modernity in the “Long Nineteenth Century,”* (Oxford University Press, 2016). In particular, please see Chapter 11 “The Left and the Ambiguity of the Marxist Package” (pages 431–494), and particularly the subsection 11.3 “Agrarian Populism: An East Central European Local Tradition?” (co-authored by the team) on the agrarian thinkers, among which the Russian populists' impact was especially remarkable.

Apart from these misgivings of the existing literature, there seems to be a growing momentum for a nuanced re-reading of the *zemstvo* statistics as an inherently political enterprise performed by a loose network of more or less devoted specialists doing so out of quite divergent considerations. Where they converged in Poltava was an introduction and enforcement of a policy-oriented social research which loosely aligned both with the Ukrainian movement and the agrarianist economic and cultural agenda. The challenge of this thesis remains in presenting this research not as undeniably consistent and given as it might appear from a classical interpretation of the *zemstvo* statistics. I aim to account for the internal diversity of the statisticians, including both their individual trajectories and biographies.

Primary sources

The thesis draws on a number of sources pertaining to the activities of the Poltava statistical bureau and its members. They can be divided into three larger groups, by provenance and publicity.

One group is the array of *ex officio* publications of the Poltava statistical bureau from the 1880s till 1917 that are in most cases available digitally and online at the website of the Poltava Regional Library named after Ivan Kotliarevskyi. This group includes yearly reviews of the region's agriculture, but also special, self-standing research conducted by the Bureau's specialists, such as the one on the peasant resettlements, the review of economic measures applied by other *zemstvos*, a close-up survey of a town fair, or a study on the movement of land property between social groups etc.

The second group of sources includes the archival documents pertaining to the Bureau's day-to-day workings. Those are outstandingly scarce and fragmentary, and cover only the last decade of the Bureau's functioning. The prevailing majority of them was irretrievably lost

during the German occupation of Ukraine in the Second World War. Large chunk of the Bureau's everyday correspondence with the informers in various villages, for instance, was turned into cover papers for registry books. Those left are mainly technical documentation, but also some official correspondence with other public institutions – mostly from the last years of the period under study and even beyond, between 1913 and 1918. All of these were retrieved from the State Archive of the Poltava Oblast (Fond 723). Importantly, due to the mentioned wartime losses, this group does not include questionnaire cards and other materials used for data collection and evaluation. This considerably restricts any attempts to analyze this part of the statisticians' research.

The third group consists of published memoirs, diaries, correspondence of the Bureau members or their relatives and/or colleagues, and of other external observers. To these belong the memoirs of Sofiia Rusova (written years after the Rusov couple's stay in Poltava, under the influence of later Ukrainian national movement activity), Nikolai Kuliabko-Koretskii (written in the late 1920s in Leningrad, under the Soviet rule), Dmitrii Ivanenko (published in 1909 – quite close to the events covered), and Iulii Bunin's brief memoir notes on Poltava life in the 1890s (written around the 1910s) etc. I acknowledge the fact that these sources were sometimes produced considerably later than the events they address; in order to compensate for this, I cross-check the information they provide wherever possible.

The fourth group is made up of individual publications, by the Bureau members but also by some other figures. Such, for instance, are the books by Mykhailo Rklytskyi, who published them individually, as personal notes on the region's statistics, and not under the aegis of the Bureau. To these also belong: the work of the German economist Schulze-Gaevernitz on the Russian Empire's economy which includes a chapter on Poltava written in consultation with the Poltava statisticians; Lev Padalka's summary of the ethnographic survey of Poltava peasantry organized by Oleksandr Rusov; Iakov Imshenetskii's summary of the poll of the

readership of the Poltava agricultural magazine *Khutorianin*, and others. These all are available digitally and online either at the website of the Poltava Regional Library named after Ivan Kotliarevskiy or on the websites of other public libraries.

The fifth and the last large group comprises the sources from personal archival collections of individual statisticians stored in the archives in Ukraine. While Lev Padalka's can be found in the Central State Historical Archive in Kyiv, Oleksandr Rusov's and Nikolai Kuliabko-Koretskii's were retrieved from the Institute of Manuscript at the National Library of Ukraine named after Volodymyr Vernadskiy. Among these sources prevail draft articles and other miscellaneous private documentation. The most significant to my research was the archival fond containing letters from Rusov to Kuliabko-Koretskii between the late 1880s and the early 1910s. Together with Kuliabko-Koretskii's later comments to these letters, this archival collection proved particularly helpful while conducting this research. As I will show, personal semi-formal communication between the statisticians sheds some light on the more intimate aspects of their statistical work.

Wherever required, I also rely on other contemporary publications that help add more details and contextualization to the picture of Poltava statistics between 1887 and 1914. These, as all the other, are listed in the section on primary sources in bibliography.

Notes on the conceptual and methodological framework

With the breakthrough of social constructivism, the historians of science, and, more particularly, the historians of statistics have increasingly paid attention to the historically conditioned nature of science and scientific ideas, statements, and methods. An approach of historical epistemology, developed largely around the Max Planck Institute of the History of Science as, has sought – alas, predictably – to historicize epistemology, i.e., to trace the ways

in which the conventional but fundamental scientific concepts such as “objectivity” or “scientific fact” have in fact been malleable and not necessarily destined to have formed as they have. This effort to indicate and build a certain “genealogy” of external sources of knowledge is also present in a recent suggestion to explore the “political-historical epistemology.” The new drive is to uncover the normative assumptions, either political, cultural, or economic, that exercise an impact upon the knowledge production. Put shortly, the political-historical epistemology starts off with the recognition that “knowledge has an intrinsic political dimension” and seeks to establish how exactly the political framework is influencing the knowledge produced.¹⁷

Closer to the ground, in the study of statistics, an important conceptual and methodological point of departure was what Alessandro Stanziani calls the avoidance of the strict dichotomy between the “facts” and “opinions” in the study of scientific texts.¹⁸ The aim of a historian, according to him, should rather be to trace the development (evolution) of statistical knowledge, reconstruct its historical meaning for contemporary actors, and explore the role of statistics and, importantly, statisticians in historical dynamics. Put simply, this is a call to read statistics as first and foremost a social phenomenon and statisticians as social actors, an approach shared also by the already mentioned David Darrow and Theodore Porter. This approach is ultimately programmatic for this thesis.

The thesis also draws one on the burgeoning studies of expertise and knowledge production in bureaucracies. The relatively recent surge of historiographical attention to experts has resulted from the mounting critique of governmentality and science-based expertise that appear immune to democratic criticisms and thus provoke backlash.¹⁹ But more broadly, the

¹⁷ “Political Epistemology. Workshop Series 2016-17.” *Max Planck Institute for the History of Science*. <https://www.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/event/political-epistemology-2016-17>.

¹⁸ Alessandro Stanziani, “European Statistics, Russian Numbers, and Social Dynamics, 1861–1914,” *Slavic Review* 76, no. 1 (2017), 1–6.

¹⁹ See, for instance, Gil Eyal, *The Crisis of Expertise* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019).

linguistic and cultural turns have broadened the scope of what can be thought of as “the intellectual,” extending it beyond the studies of the writings and doings of the “great minds.” In sociology, this new optics is emblemized by Pierre Bourdieu’s introduction of the concept of the intellectual field, which can help analyze any intellectual intervention, even of minor actors, when their relative “weight” is properly accounted for.²⁰ This opened a way for exploring modes of thinking of those involved in governance, such as bureaucrats and experts – and not only the scholars in the universities. Recent interventions, such as those by Theodore Porter or Sebastian Felten and Christine von Oertzen, suggest studying bureaucracies as loci of knowledge production *per se*.²¹ The scholarship has applied these approaches to new regions and time periods, including, for instance, the late Habsburg monarchy or the interwar East-Central Europe.²² Even closer to the timeframe and geography of my research, there have been studies of the agronomists’ role in rural modernization in the late Russian Empire spilling over into the Soviet period.²³

The radical expansion of the intellectual has also touched the field of the history of the political thought. The famous Cambridge school advanced a more “democratic” understanding of the matter: not only “great thinkers,” in Strauss’s parlance, have been having conversations among each other; each of them was responding to their immediate surroundings and challenges, and to what may be called a current state of the “intellectual field.” It is, thus, not only desirable to locate the great political thinkers within such contexts, but also possible to trace the vestiges of the “political language” of various kinds in the “speech acts” of less

²⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, “Intellectual Field and Creative Project,” *Social Science Information*, vol. 8 (1969): 89–119.

²¹ Porter, Theodore M. “Revenge of the Humdrum: Bureaucracy as Profession and as a Site of Science.” *Journal for the History of Knowledge* 1, no. 1 (2020): 18, 1–5. Felten, Sebastian, and Christine Von Oertzen.

“Bureaucracy as Knowledge.” *Journal for the History of Knowledge* 1, no. 1 (2020): 8, 1–16.

²² Martin Kohlrausch, Katrin Steffen, Stefan Wiederkehr. “Introduction,” in *Expert Cultures in Central Eastern Europe: The Internationalization of Knowledge and the Transformation of Nation States since World War I*. Einzelveröffentlichungen des DHI Warschau, Volume 23, 2010, 9–30.

²³ Katja Bruisch, “Contested modernity: A. G. Doiarenko and the Trajectories of Agricultural Expertise in Late Imperial and Soviet Russia,” in *Scientists’ Expertise as Performance*, eds. Joris Vandendriessche, Evert Peeters, and Kaat Wils (Routledge, 2015), 99–114.

prominent actors.²⁴ By turning to the text and applying the tools designed and suggested by the Cambridge school, it is possible to analyze the speech produced by the *zemstvo* experts and identify certain patterns that may indicate the presence of this or that political language. Although the statisticians in Poltava did not openly engage in political thinking, they still expressed normative opinions about the desirable development of the Poltava countryside – something which may be identified as a development ideology. Such ideology might not be framed in a clear and open manifesto but be still inherent to a certain terminology or a set of assumptions about social reality endorsed by the author.

Two more instrumental conceptual contributions come from sociology. I treat most of the statisticians as belonging to the same, or consecutive, *generations*. Along with Karl Mannheim, I treat the concept of the generation neither in a positivist-biological or romantic-historical, but rather in a sociological way.²⁵ What united these people – but, of course, was not pre-determining them – was their socialization within imperial universities and belonging, due to the beliefs and participation in public press, to the imperial public sphere, “glued” together by often shared principled beliefs in higher social ideals. Some of them participated in the nascent alternative Ukrainian public sphere. It is crucial to acknowledge that one could eventually “opt out” from either of them by making certain life choices.

Additionally, since the work in the *zemstvo* statistics was organized around statistical bureaus, and even mobile, “itinerant” statisticians, such as, for instance, Oleksandr Rusov, had to rely on the assistance of larger working groups of statisticians, the notion of “thought collective,” introduced by Ludwik Fleck, appears helpful.²⁶ Fleck was one of the first to point

²⁴ J. G. A. Pocock, “The concept of a language and the *métier d'historien*: some considerations on practice,” in Anthony Pagden, ed., *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 19–38.

²⁵ Karl Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations,” in: *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. Paul Kecskemeti (Routledge & K. Paul: 1968), 276–322.

²⁶ Ludwik Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

out that knowledge production cannot be attributed to single individuals (i.e. to say that “X discovered Y”) and that it has its roots in pre-existing systems of thought which he called “styles” (*Denkstil* in German). The knowledge, in his view, is produced by organized collectives who are often competing among each other. These collectives, or “communities of people mutually exchanging ideas or maintaining intellectual interaction,” he dubbed *thought collectives*.²⁷

Last but no less significant is the issue of identities in the imperial context. In the discipline of history, the process of ascribing identities retrospectively runs into a risk of labelling an actor in a way different from how they self-perceived at the time. I am particularly attentive to the issue of identities since the period of Russian imperial history under question is subject to contestation both by the Russian (neo)imperial(ist) historiography as well as the Ukrainian national(ist) one. In an attempt to treat the issue carefully, I resort to the recently developed solutions in the field of nationalism studies. First and foremost, I endorse Rogers Brubaker’s understanding of ethnic identities as more performative and action-based than something inherent to the subjects. “Identities” might manifest contextually, and the very same people might exhibit various (aspects of) identities in various situations; such identity use patterns could also change over time.²⁸ Following Brubaker, I also aim to discard any presumptions of groupness wherever one is not proven. However, the use of the terms referring to groups is still unavoidable: one still speaks of Ukrainians, Russians, *narodniki* etc. Wherever I use these terms, I do not imply any essential characteristics of the actors in question and rather refer to their relative positions within the specific context I am writing about. Moreover, some of the actors might have been less sensitive to the issue of ethnic or national identities than others; the notion of national indifference, introduced by Pieter Judson, can be of use for treating

²⁷ Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, 39.

²⁸ Brubaker, Rogers. *Ethnicity without Groups*. Harvard University Press, 2004, 7–20.

these.²⁹ Although Judson (and Tara Zahra) developed the term to account for the uneducated countryside dwellers in the Habsburg monarchy, I would argue that the idea stemming from the situational understanding of identities can be applicable to the intellectuals, too. Some Bureau members, as I mentioned, might have felt Ukrainian, other Russian imperial, but some did not leave any particular trace of their self-identification – therefore, it would be unfair to attribute to them this or that identity judging only by certain external characteristics. Instead, I will presume their indifference unless the opposite is proven.

Thesis outline

This thesis is organized as follows. After this introduction, I start with the first chapter that covers the individual trajectories of the statisticians in their heterogeneity, tracing their eventual settlement in Poltava by the early 1890s after – for some of them – years of student activism and radical politics. Firstly, I trace the radical past of some of the Poltava statisticians, pointing out how the atmosphere of the Great Reforms’ era contributed to their eventual refusal of liberalism and embracement of populism. In the “Ukrainian” provinces of the empire, student radicalism sometimes obtained also Ukrainophile overtones. However, after the decade of populist activism of the 1870s, the 1880s and the 1890s saw the generation settle down and change gears to accept the “theory of small deeds,” i.e., continuous locally grounded work for the people’s benefit. As I further elucidate, this development led to the emergence of the vibrant public sphere in Poltava in the 1890s, manifested in the numerous civic organizations and initiatives. Poltava Statistical Bureau offered a platform for self-organization for the town’s intellectuals, who were never content with statistics only and persistently aimed to reach out to

²⁹ Pieter M. Judson, “Nationalism and Indifference,” in *Habsburg Neu Denken: Vielfalt und Ambivalenz in Zentraleuropa. 30 kulturwissenschaftliche Stichworte*, eds. Johannes Feichtinger and Heidemarie Uhl. Böhlau Verlag, 2016, 148–55.

broader audiences with media publications and public reading initiatives. The chapter ends with an analysis of the ambiguous position of the Poltava statisticians, whom the state needed to conduct crucial research but constantly suspected of anti-government views and activities. Since most statisticians never fully discarded their strong dislike of the central government and some aspects of radical politics, I contend that the government's fears were not unfounded. I also show how the Poltava *zemstvo* and its Statistical Bureau became a hotbed of the Ukrainian national movement in the town since the second half of the 1890s – which only helped fuel the government's suspicion and prompted repressive actions in the early 1900s.

The second chapter, covering the period squarely from the late 1890s till 1914, treats in more detail the statistical project developed in the Poltava *zemstvo*. While perhaps the most intriguing matter of data collection and evaluation cannot be addressed due to the scarcity of the relevant primary sources, I pay more attention to how the Bureau members instrumentalized statistical research to both elaborate a “development ideology” for the Poltava countryside as well as to establish connections with the peasantry of the region. Firstly, I draw on the existing scholarship to stress the primary emancipatory promise of the *zemstvo* statistics, modeled after the German *Verein für Socialpolitik*. I then analyze the data-gathering machine maintained by the Bureau and stress the role of the agricultural magazine *Khutorianin* in establishing reciprocal communication between the Bureau and correspondents – its data suppliers. I also delineate the agrarianist development project that combined some traits of populism with Ukrainian national movement elements as well as the modernization-through-public-agronomy agenda. Finally, I take up a case study exemplifying the statisticians' eventual transformation into local experts. I trace the statisticians' treatment of the problem of *malozemelye*, or land scarcity, whereby their numerical study of the region led them to discard the policy of land redistribution as suggested by the Socialist Revolutionaries. They suggested instead the resettlement of poor peasants to Siberia as a solution. I argue that although that proposal was

eventually rejected as impractical, too, the case study helps demonstrate the growing “gardening” potential of the *zemstvo* statistics – the trait that might explain its cohabitation with the Soviet rule after 1918 and throughout the 1920s. I do, however, deliberately avoid stepping into the muddy waters of the wartime *zemstvo* statistics, from 1914 onwards, for this period saw the attempts at increasing centralization of the Russian imperial state, wherein the *zemstvos* were heavily involved. The analysis of this period would necessarily require bridging it with the ensuing Soviet context – which reaches far beyond the scope of this thesis.

CHAPTER 1. STATISTICS AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Historiography has conventionally treated *zemstvo* statisticians as faceless counters, dozens of dozens of whom flooded the newly opened and burgeoning *zemstvo* institutions across the European part of the Russian Empire after the 1860s. The statistician corps is generally depicted as an endlessly laboring swarm of bees or an ant colony, leaving the prevalent number of statisticians to appear anonymous technocrats. While contemporaries, such as Marxists and arguably statisticians themselves, saw statistics as a highly politicized project, relatively recent historiography has tried to highlight professionalism and downplay more radical anti-government activities in and around statistical bureaus.³⁰ Moreover, historians often name only several prominent itinerant statistician professionals, stressing instead the rise of the professional culture and mentioning their *narodnik* origins.³¹ This chapter intends to provide the main characters of this thesis with names, faces, and political standpoints. My study suggests rereading *zemstvo* statistics in Poltava as an intrinsically political project, implying its never-ceasing effort to seek transformations in the countryside, entangled with civic activism of the Bureau members and their opposition to the central government. This particular chapter

³⁰ On labeling of *zemstvo* statisticians as “populist”: Kingston-Mann, “Statistics, Social Science, and Social Justice: The *Zemstvo* Statisticians of Pre-Revolutionary Russia,” 131–132. Robert E. Johnson, again, seems to have put particular efforts to prove that most statisticians were politically reliable, in opposite to what the authorities thought of them. Johnson, “Liberal professionals and professional liberals: the *zemstvo* statisticians and their work,” 353–356. Two important exceptions to this trend are more recent works of Esther Kingston-Mann (“Statistics, Social Science, and Social Justice: The *Zemstvo* Statisticians of Pre-Revolutionary Russia”) and Alessandro Stanziani’s “European Statistics, Russian Numbers, and Social Dynamics, 1861–1914.” However, even these scholars, who stress the political motifs behind statisticians’ work, do not usually acknowledge the degree of subversory activities the statisticians might have been engaged in and do not account for a possible variation within their corps in terms of political beliefs; the Ukrainian (or any other ethnic/national) aspect of *zemstvo* statistics is thus usually left out.

³¹ Such was the case, for instance, with the pioneer in the field of history of *zemstvo* statistics, Robert E. Johnson, who sought to capture it as a social phenomenon, at a macro level. Johnson, “Liberal professionals and professional liberals: the *zemstvo* statisticians and their work.” Similar is the description of statisticians in other works, such as in Darrow, *Tsardom of Sufficiency, Empire of Norms*, 111–128; On professionalization, too: Mespoulet, *Statistique et révolution en Russie. Un compromis impossible (1880–1930)*. Kingston-Mann, “Statistics, Social Science, and Social Justice: The *Zemstvo* Statisticians of Pre-Revolutionary Russia.” Stanziani, “European Statistics, Russian Numbers, and Social Dynamics, 1861–1914.”

sets out to provide an account of biographical trajectories and generational dynamics among the members of the Poltava Provincial *Zemstvo* Statistical Bureau.

While proving this, the chapter will also attempt to answer a set of questions about particularities. Why, by the early 1890s, did prominent *zemstvo* activists gather in Poltava, a relatively small town with some 50,000 residents lacking even a university? Why did statistics appeal to them? How do these particularities align with the habitual representation of the *zemstvo* statisticians as being in constant opposition to the central authorities? My research indicates that the flamboyance of Poltava statistics in the 1890s was possible thanks to the overlapping of several factors. Firstly, there was a pool of professionals who, due to their opposition to the government or even overt revolutionary activity, either willingly denied profitable jobs for the central government or were denied employment by the police suspecting diversionary action and sabotage. Opposition could be based on various platforms, but for the statisticians it was often *narodnik* beliefs. Secondly, *zemstvos*, the post-reform local government institutions seeking to study their subjects for policy planning, provided a growing job market for such “gray zone” activists and professionals. Thirdly, the persecution of suspicious professionals in the large university cities forced many of them to seek employment in smaller towns. Poltava, with its relatively liberal local government and developing institutions, was one of those. However, even though the former radicals received space for their activism in Poltava under the broader and more “tamed” platform of *zemstvo* liberalism, they still remained vulnerable to punitive administrative interventions, such as those that happened in 1898 and 1902 when the Statistical Bureau was effectively decapitated. Moreover, the sources from Poltava suggest that civic engagement and para-political affiliations were more primary to the statisticians than statistics as such.

This chapter will focus more on the developments in Poltava statistical bureau before 1905, i.e., before the revolution of 1905 and the ensuing October Manifesto that established, at

least formally, a constitutional monarchy with a parliament in Russia, promising civic freedoms to the emperor's subjects.

Radical roots of zemstvo statistics in Poltava

Most of the intellectuals who ended up in Poltava by the early 1890s did so exactly due to the administrative punitive actions applied by the police, who held the presence of young, educated lads with opposition background in the cities as politically problematic. This external pressure was complemented with the power of “old-tie”-like networks preserved by former *narodniki*, which meant that recruitment to the statistical bureau was often assisted by personal connections. Coming from quite diverse professional backgrounds and already diverging in terms of political leanings, *zemstvo* statisticians united on a broad liberal progressivist platform of active work for the people's benefit as well as the opposition to the central government and conservatives in the *zemstvo* board in the late 1880s and 1890s.

The generation that pioneered in the *zemstvo* statistics was the youth of the 1860s and 1870s – perhaps one of the most famous and well-studied generations of Russian imperial history.³² Born into families of relatively privileged backgrounds, such as those belonging to the noble or clerical estate, and educated in the imperial institutions, they were quick to get disappointed with the prospects of Western-like modernization in the Russian Empire. While the more conservative among them opted for Slavophile negation of Westernization, other *narodniki* turned to the more left-wing, para-socialist teachings and writings for solutions.

³² See Andrzej Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism: Studies in the Social Philosophy of the Russian Populists* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969). Richard Wortman, *The Crisis of Russian Populism* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1967). Arthur P. Mendel, *Dilemmas of Progress in Tsarist Russia: Legal Marxism and Legal Populism* (Harvard University Press, 1961).

The formerly imprisoned or exiled students or young intellectuals were the primary pool from which the Poltava statistical bureau, like many other statistical bureaus, drew its cadres.³³ These cadres included, for instance, a young *narodovolets* and a former student of Kyiv university Nikolai Aaronskii, but also a more moderate Mykhailo Rklytskyi, a graduate of Kharkiv university who also had to spend a couple of years in an exile in Irkutsk, Siberia, in the late 1880s and 1890s before coming to Poltava as a statistician.³⁴ There were several exceptions: Hryhorii Rotmistrov joined the Bureau almost immediately after the university, apparently lacking time for any revolutionary activity – the life choice that perhaps helped him to become a low-profile long-term head of the Bureau after 1905.³⁵ The same was true of Lev Padalka, who joined the *zemstvo* work almost immediately after graduating, though not in Poltava but in Kherson.³⁶ Prevalently, these young intellectuals were men from more or less privileged backgrounds, the families of poorer nobility, bureaucrats, or clergy, who could still afford higher education for their children. I keep stressing the noble origins of the characters since belonging to social estate was one of the most crucial factors defining one’s position with Russian imperial society. Being noble by origin already meant a different set of rights and duties than those available to a merchant or a peasant. Lacking other independent sources of income and socialized into socialist, *narodnik*, and/or Ukrainophile ideas during their university years,

³³ They did so since the educated strata in the Russian Empire were scarce, and the pool of those willing to work for the *zemstvos* was not as disproportionately large compared to the country’s population.

³⁴ In this thesis, I will occasionally refer to St. Vladimir Imperial University of Kiev as Kyiv university, and the Imperial University of Kharkov as Kharkiv university. *Narodovolets* is a member of *Narodnaia Volia*, radical organization that emerged from the *Land and Liberty* in 1879. *Narodnaia Volia* was involved in the assassination of tsar Alexander III. On Aaronskii: “Aaronskii (Aronskii) Nikolai Viktorovich,” in *Deiateli revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Rossii: Bio-bibliograficheskii slovar: Ot predshestvennikov dekabristov do padeniia tsarizma* [Activists of revolutionary movement in Russia: Bio-bibliographical dictionary: From predecessors of Decembrists to the fall of tsarism], *Tom 3. Vosmidesiatyie gody* [Volume 3. The Eighties], *Vypusk 1, A–B* [Issue 1, A–B], edited by M. M. Klevenskii, E. N. Kusheva, A. A. Shylov, (Moscow: Vsesoiuz. o-vo polit. katorzhan i ssylno-poselentsev, 1933), 1. Mykhailo Rklytskyi, “Iz spohadiv pro Pavla Hraba ta ioho dobu” [From the memories about Pavlo Hrab and his times], in *Literatura. Zbirnyk pershyi* [Literature. First Collection], eds. Serhii Yefremov, Mykola Zerov, and Pavlo Fylypovych (Kyiv: Vseukrainska Akademiia Nauk, 1918), 196–208.

³⁵ Kuliabko-Koretskii N. G. “Foreword” and “Notes” to the letters of A. A. Rusov (1927), F. 84 (N. G. Kuliabko-Koretskii Collection), Op. 1., No. 76, Institute of Manuscript of Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine (hereafter cited as “Foreword” and “Notes,” N. G. Kuliabko-Koretskii Collection), Page 14.

³⁶ “Foreword” and “Notes,” N. G. Kuliabko-Koretskii Collection, Page 9.

these people turned to public intellectual work as a source of their funding and, often, the meaning of their life. As an alternative elite, they participated in the development of alternative cultural, social, and economic projects of different degrees of radicalism. At some point in their lives, the *zemstvo* statistics appeared as an activity fitting their aspirations within the existing system.

The first generation of statisticians in Poltava were mostly former *narodniki* and Ukrainophile activists, from Kyiv or Kharkiv student environment. The younger generation of statisticians underwent its own cycle of radical activities in the late 1870s, wherein they often participated in secret societies or other para-revolutionary activities during their university years. One could position oneself as a pan-imperial revolutionary or opposition, but also as an advocate of Ukrainian, Jewish, Polish national rights (linked mostly to the language issues). This does not mean, though, that the worlds of Russian *narodniki* and Ukrainian activists never met – after all, Ukrainian activism stemmed from the *narodnik* tradition, too, and was deeply entangled with it.

One of the prominent Ukrainian activists, Yevhen Chykalenko, recalled that in 1883, the students who had been expelled from the Moscow university, including a young noble Yuly Bunin, entered his university in Kharkiv. The newcomers were quite active politically, and Bunin, according to Chykalenko, persistently sought to integrate Chykalenko's circle into his own *narodnik* organization. Although this did not succeed, the Ukrainian activist preserved warm relations with Bunin, whom he called “talented and smart” and praised for publishing Ukrainian articles in the journals that he edited later in Moscow.³⁷ Bunin would join the statistical bureau in Poltava upon the advice of Oleksandra Yefymenko, a renown Ukrainian historian with *narodnik* background, after a couple of years in an “illegal situation [nelegalnoie

³⁷ Yevhen Chykalenko, *Spohady (1861–1907)* [Memoirs (1861–1907)] (New York: Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in the US, 1955), 136–137.

polozheniie], in jail, and under the overt surveillance by the police.”³⁸ Hence, the pan-Russian and Ukrainophile revolutionary student circles were entangled.

Let us have a look at characteristic trajectories of two people from the first generation from among future Poltava statisticians, Nikolai Kuliabko-Koretskii and Oleksandr Rusov. They epitomize two of the possible life trajectories of the thinking youth of the time.

In 1868, Nikolai Kuliabko-Koretskii, a young graduate of the Imperial University of St. Vladimir in Kyiv, ventured on his first three-month-long round journey throughout Western and Central Europe. He paid visits to a few major cities in Austria, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland. In the memoirs written in Leningrad in the late 1920s, Kuliabko-Koretskii confessed that, before 1868, he had not seen either railway or streetlights, even in Kyiv, which he called “picturesque, but not well-maintained [*blagoustroiennyi*],” having lots of dirt in the outskirts and poorly dressed population. Upon crossing the border to Austria, he beheld the “benefits of Western modernization” for the first time in his life and immediately came to revere them. Impressed by the buildings on Ringstrasse in Vienna and the “neatly dressed policemen,” rich museum collections, and active and free newspaper debates, Kuliabko-Koretskii stated the relative backwardness of Russia vis-à-vis Western Europe. He became a fervent admirer of Western European civilization with its “recently born capitalism and constitutional political regime.”³⁹ To become akin to the West, he reasoned, Alexander II rightly introduced liberal reforms and new public institutions. Kuliabko-Koretskii hoped they would bring justice, prosperity, and enlightenment to the society. Trusting the liberal press, he joined the civil service as a court investigator in Kyiv, at the place that he soon came to hate as a “cesspool of tyrants,

³⁸ Iulii Bunin, “Iz zhizni provintsii v 90-kh godakh.” [From the life in the province in the 90s] *Moskva*, 2016. https://moskvam.ru/publications/publication_1495.html (no pagination).

³⁹ Nikolai Kuliabko-Koretskii, *Iz davnikh let: vospominaniia lavrista* [From the old days: memoirs of a Lavrovian] (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politkatorzhan, 1931), 16–17.

ignorami, bribe-takers and crime-coverers,” very much alike to those he encountered in Gogol’s novels.⁴⁰ The ground for the fractures in his worldview had been laid.

The disappointment with reforms in Russia coincided with a major geopolitical catastrophe in Western Europe – the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871. It shook Kuliabko’s liberal humanist belief in progress since this progress apparently could not prevent war, even at its heart in Western Europe.⁴¹ However, Kuliabko-Koretskii’s first encounter with the works of Pëtr Lavrov, a prominent *narodnik* who published in Russia under the pseudonym of Mirtov, proved even more crucial. Mirtov (i.e., Lavrov), who was widely read by the youth in Kuliabko-Koretskii’s milieu, pointed to the unjust foundations of the society, propitious for Kuliabko himself. Instead of liberalism and radical progressivism, Kuliabko now leaned toward much more critical social and political views. He doubted the “outstanding” humanist civilization, which, as he came to realize, was built on the labor and suffering of millions of less privileged people – the serfs and the workers. The reform perpetuated the suffering of these people, to whom Kuliabko felt incredibly indebted after reading Mirtov’s publications.⁴² Before coming to Poltava as a zemstvo statistician, Kuliabko underwent a phase of radicalization that brought him to the revolutionary circles operating in Zürich, where he went to study, and in Russia, where he helped distribute illegal literature in Chisinau.⁴³ In the early 1880s, after an imprisonment for fourteen months, he was ordered to move to Poltava and stay there under open police surveillance. He also was barred from teaching or occupying civil service positions. In Poltava, Kuliabko started unofficially working for the Statistical Bureau, one of the few public institutions on-site that could welcome former revolutionaries.

⁴⁰ Kuliabko-Koretskii, *Iz davnikh let: vospominaniia lavrista* [From the old days: memoirs of a Lavrovian], 21.

⁴¹ Kuliabko-Koretskii, *Iz davnikh let: vospominaniia lavrista* [From the old days: memoirs of a Lavrovian], 18, 23.

⁴² Kuliabko-Koretskii, *Iz davnikh let: vospominaniia lavrista* [From the old days: memoirs of a Lavrovian], 23–24.

⁴³ Kuliabko-Koretskii, *Iz davnikh let: vospominaniia lavrista* [From the old days: memoirs of a Lavrovian], 272–273.

Kuliabko-Koretskii's history of transformation illustrates the situation of a young intellectual in the Russian Empire of the 1860–1880s. Disappointed with the official discourses, either conservative tsarist or liberal imperial, these men and women sought alternative ways to explain and amend the backwardness of their country and alleviate the suffering of “their” people. The trajectory they chose could be similar to Kuliabko's case — through radicalization in a Western or even Russian university — but sometimes it gained an additional “national” specificity because of the Ukrainian environment.

Another future Poltava statistician, Oleksandr Rusov, did not leave such an exhaustive description of his worldview transformation as Kuliabko. However, there are fragments of his memoirs that indicate his break with the existing order of the Great Reform era. In his piece “A Misfortune of Three Kyiv Students in the Last Century,” published in the Ukrainophile journal *Kievskaia starina* (Kyivan Antiquity) in 1904, Rusov recollected a story about a peculiar episode that happened to him in May 1868, a few months before his graduation from Kyiv university.⁴⁴ Having heard about the construction of a railway line in Kyiv not far from the district where he lived, he took two of his university peers to wander around the construction site. While walking there, they ended up being kicked into a pit by a group of railway construction workers, instructed to do so by a French train driver [mashinist]. Deeply offended personally but also as students (student body was a privileged corporation), the trio decided to appeal to a court, which had to abide by the newly introduced public procedure. Although the court eventually ruled in their favor, Rusov was not entirely content with the procedure. Firstly, the officials attempted to bribe them by offering hush money from the railway company, which the students rejected out of honor. This incident alone shook their faith in the fairness of the “new” court. Secondly, Rusov was remorseful for putting a person under arrest. Was this an

⁴⁴ The piece was published again in a collection of memoirs by Rusov, see Oleksandr Rusov, “Zlokliucheniia trëkh kievsikh studentov v proshlom stoletii” [“A Misfortune of Three Kyiv Students in the Last Century”] in *Shchodennyky ta spohady* [Diaries and memoirs] (Chernihiv: Desna Polihraf, 2011), 138–165.

adequate and proportionate way to expiate the offense when the offender already started regretting his deeds during the process, he inquired.

However, Rusov did not follow Kuliabko-Koretskii's trajectory to join a revolutionary circle. Upon graduation from the St. Vladimir University in 1868 (the same year as Kuliabko), he managed to find a job as a teacher of Latin in Zlatopil classical gymnasium. Later, he transferred to Kyiv, to the Kyiv-Podil gymnasium, where he got into the *Hromada* — a semi-legal Ukrainophile movement that started as an effort to offer education in Ukrainian for city residents in evening and Sunday schools.⁴⁵ This Kyiv circle profited from the government's anti-Polish cultural policies unleashed in response to the January Uprising of 1863. Some *Hromada* members also effectively captured — with the governor's acquiescence — the Southwestern Branch of the Russian Geographical Society, which functioned between 1873 and 1876.⁴⁶ The whole circle, including Oleksandr Rusov, actively engaged in ethnography and set out to conduct, on the initiative of the governor, a one-day census in Kyiv in 1874. One of the most contested questions was the language spoken by Kyiv residents, which, the *Hromada* members hoped, would be largely Ukrainian.⁴⁷ After the census, Drahomanov, Rusov's university professor and *Hromada* organizer, as well as other *Hromada* members, encouraged the young man to continue working on statistics, which was supposed to provide evidence for claiming that the Ukrainian people's difference from Great Russians.⁴⁸ After a brief teaching career, Rusov and his wife Sofiia Lindfors, in a paradigmatic *narodnik* move, decided to settle in a small village in the Chernihiv province to live closer to the people. After failed attempts to perform local clerk's functions (in the setting of ignorance and bribe-taking alike to those seen by Kuliabko-Koretskii) and maintain the household, Rusov accepted an invitation to work for

⁴⁵ Rusov, *Shchodennyky ta spohady* [Diaries and memoirs], 6–7.

⁴⁶ Johannes Remy, *Brothers or Enemies: The Ukrainian National Movement and Russia from the 1840s to the 1870s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 175, 184–185.

⁴⁷ Remy, *Brothers or Enemies: The Ukrainian National Movement and Russia from the 1840s to the 1870s*, 188–189.

⁴⁸ Rusov, *Shchodennyky ta spohady* [Diaries and memoirs], 114.

a newly opened statistical bureau in Chernihiv.⁴⁹ His path to statistics lay through disappointment with the “official Russia” and was considerably mediated by his participation in Ukrainian circles.

The informal networks of *narodniki*, Ukrainophiles, or both, which were still there by the late 1880s, proved crucial for recruitment to statistics. When the already mentioned Nikolai Kuliabko-Koretskii, by this time a veteran of revolutionary movement and almost a decade-long covert member of the Bureau, was entitled by the governor to become the Bureau’s head in 1889, the power of his contact networks was vital for staffing the Bureau throughout the 1890s.⁵⁰ In the spring of 1890, Iulii Bunin joined Kuliabko. He was a beginner statistician with a degree in mathematics who received an invitation to enter the Bureau via his professor at Kharkiv University, Oleksandra Yefymenko (her brother Luka Stavrovsky had been officially working for the Bureau since 1892).⁵¹ Among the old university and revolutionary peers of the core group, there was already Iakov Imshenetskii who briefly worked as a statistician before transferring to civil service.⁵² Precisely in the early 1890s, Kuliabko first contracted Oleksandr Rusov to outsource the processing of data from various Poltava counties (*uezdy*) that had been collected under the previous Bureau had Tereshkevich.⁵³ Rusov then proved crucial for recruiting a couple of other statisticians, mostly associated with the Ukrainian activist networks. He suggested his old-time comrade statistician (and historian) Lev Padalka, Rusov’s colleague in the Kherson statistical bureau. Hryhorii (Grigoriy) Rotmistrov joined sometime in the early 1890s, upon obtaining his degree in law. First, he was a registrar in a city census; by 1895, he

⁴⁹ Oleksandr Rusov, “Khutor Robinzon pod Shapovalovkoiu” [“The Robinson Farm near Poltava”] in *Shchodennyky ta spohady* [Diaries and memoirs] (Chernihiv: Desna Polihraf, 2011), 23–40.

⁵⁰ “Foreword” and “Notes,” N. G. Kuliabko-Koretskii Collection, Page 7.

⁵¹ Bunin, “Iz zhizni provintsii v 90-kh godakh” [From the life in the province in the 90s] (no pagination).

⁵² Ivan Pavlovskii, *Kratkii biograficheskii slovar uchēnykh i pisatelei Poltavskoi gubernii s poloviny XVIII veka* [Brief biographical dictionary of scholars and writers of the Poltava province since the second half of the 18th century], 78.

⁵³ “Foreword” and “Notes,” N. G. Kuliabko-Koretskii Collection, Page 3–5.

had become a full-fledged Bureau member.⁵⁴ Similarly, it seems also due to Rusov's recommendation, the Bureau invited Mikhail Rklitskii (Mykhailo Rklytskyi) in the late 1890s, after his return from the exile in Siberia.⁵⁵ In the 1890s, the Poltava statistical bureau benefitted both from the town being an imperial backwater with little public life, politically secure in the eyes of the police, and from the active reliance on old *narodnik* connections.

The social composition of the Bureau reflected the society's inequalities. Similarly to other bureaus, there were several mobile and well-connected intellectuals on top of it who, coming from noble families and educated backgrounds, had a revolutionary or at least oppositional experience behind their backs by the time of the recruitment.⁵⁶ Such were Kuliabko-Koretskii (head of the Bureau from 1889 till 1895), Bunin (head of the Bureau in 1896–1898), Rusov (1901), Sergei Balabukha, and Luka Stavrovsky. Except for Rusov, who had been a devoted statistician throughout most of his life since the 1870s, most of these figures supposedly never considered *zemstvo* statistics as their main occupation. They also freely shifted to other fields as soon as some pressure was exercised administratively, or an opportunity availed itself. It partially explains why this circle was never satisfied with mere statistics, concurrently initiating and supporting several parallel civic initiatives in Poltava. For most of the Bureau's affiliates, civic activism and a desire to change society were of primary importance when compared to the tedium of the statistics gathering.

A journalist Dmitrii Ivanenko, who authored extensive memoirs about the public life in Poltava in the 1890s and 1900s, denominated the circle as “Kadet” in political terms.⁵⁷ It was a

⁵⁴ “Foreword” and “Notes,” N. G. Kuliabko-Koretskii Collection, Page 14.

⁵⁵ Ivan Pavlovskii, *Kratkii biograficheskii slovar uchënykh i pisatelei Poltavskoi gubernii s poloviny XVIII veka* [Brief biographical dictionary of scholars and writers of the Poltava province since the second half of the 18th century] (Poltava: Tipo-litografiia preemnikov Dokhmana, 1912), 168.

⁵⁶ Johnson, “Liberal professionals and professional liberals: the *zemstvo* statisticians and their work,” 352–353.

⁵⁷ Dmitrii Ivanenko, *Zapiski i vospominaniia 1888-1908 gg. Izdanie redaktsii “Poltavskii golos.”* [Notes and memoirs 1888-1908. Published by the editors of the “Poltavskii golos”] (Poltava, Otdeleniie ekektrich. tipogr. D. N. Podzemskago, 1909), 71.

deliberate anachronism: the liberal centrist Constitutional Democratic (Kadet) Party was only founded in the wake of the First Russian Revolution in 1905. However, any presumption of political homogeneity within this circle — the same as in the Kadet Party — would be far-fetched since the statisticians' political views were rather contingent. Kuliabko-Koretskii was disappointed with liberal progressivism and sought the solutions to the problems of the empire on the left; Sergei Balabukha in the early 1900s became a Socialist Revolutionary (an SR);⁵⁸ Iakov Imshenetskii, notably, was an active member of the Kadet Party who was elected into the State Duma in 1906;⁵⁹ Rusov, who, by his profile, would generally fit the image of a Kadet, in reality, despised St. Petersburg and any kind of centralism so much that deemed moderate left-leaning Ukrainian autonomism as closer to him than pan-imperial political projects.

Apart from the privileged core, the Bureau also had to rely upon less qualified workers, such as assistants to statisticians, counters, and clerks, who were often recruited from lower social estates (*sosloviia*): burghers (*meshchane*), such as Mikhail Selitrennikov (see below), Cossacks like Viktor Vasylenko, and peasants such as Semen Nyanchuk. Their inclusion into the Bureau was a necessity, and it additionally symbolized the openness of the liberal public sphere to incorporate skilled representatives of lower estates. Some calculations were also delegated to women, often the statisticians' spouses, like the first Bureau head's wife Vera Tereshkevich, or Ivan Bunin's (Iulii's brother) partner Varvara Pashchenko. Remarkably, although the Bureau had quite a few Russians, as well as, naturally, Ukrainians, there were no Jews — quite surprising given that in Poltava one-fifth of the population was registered as

⁵⁸ “Balabukha, Sergei Pavlovich,” in *Deiateli revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Rossii: Bio-bibliograficheskii slovar: Ot predshestvennikov dekabristov do padeniia tsarizma* [Activists of revolutionary movement in Russia: Bio-bibliographical dictionary: From predecessors of Decembrists to the fall of tsarism], *Tom 3. Vosmidesiatye gody* [Volume 3. The Eighties], *Vypusk 1, A–B* [Issue 1, A–B], edited by M. M. Klevenskii, E. N. Kusheva, A. A. Shylov, (Moscow: Vsesoiuz. o-vo polit. katorzhan i ssylno-poselentsev, 1933), 166–168.

⁵⁹ Pavlovskii, *Kratkii biograficheskii slovar uchënykh i pisatelei Poltavskoi gubernii s poloviny XVIII veka* [Brief biographical dictionary of scholars and writers of the Poltava province since the second half of the 18th century], 78.

Jewish in 1897. This double exclusivity (vis-à-vis women and Jews) helps demonstrate the limits of democratism and equality that the *zemstvo* statistics project could boast.

*Exercising public sphere in Poltava*⁶⁰

I argue that the *zemstvo* platform of progressivist activism, relying on the idea of public sphere, or *obshchestvennost'* in Russian, plus on the growing professionalization of statistics as a field, constituted the ideational glue that kept such a diverse staff of the Bureau together.⁶¹ The bureau team assumed the stance of public activism and progressivism that will be addressed in this section and that functioned as the umbrella framework for their activities – all liberal and hence oppositionist vis-à-vis the conservative and centralized government in St. Petersburg. However, after some centripetal pressure was levied and the public sphere opened with the revolution of 1905, the differences and divisions within the opposition camp resurfaced and the “liberal” center ended up exposed and vulnerable.

By the mid-1880s, the atmosphere in the Russian Empire regained a conservative tilt with the enthronement of the new emperor Alexander III. The tsar was raised as a devoted anti-

⁶⁰ By referring to public sphere in this chapter section, I mean to stress the participation of Poltava statisticians in what is often referred in Russian as *obshchestvennost'* – both a figure of speech and a sociological group of people involved in public debates in “thick journals.” The basic of the public sphere concept is Habermas’s. What is important in it, is not only the relatively egalitarian institutions providing platform for public debates, but also their almost invisible restrictiveness – as the uneducated, poorer, and unprivileged are usually left out. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Polity Press, 1989), 27–31.

⁶¹ The scholarship on the public sphere in the Russian Empire includes Edith W. Clowes, Samuel D. Kassow, and James L. West (eds.), *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia* (Princeton, 1991); Denis Sdvizhkov, “Ot obshchestva k intelligentsii: istoria poniatii kak istoria samosoznania” [From society to intelligentsia: a history of notions as history of self-awareness], in “*Poniatia o Rossii*”: *K istoricheskoi semantike imperskogo perioda* [Notions of Russia: To the history of historical semantics of the imperial period] (Moscow: NLO, 2012), vol. 1, 382–427. In the late 2000s and 2010s, a group of historians of late imperial Russia suggested applying the term *obshchestvennost'* to denote the public sphere in the Russian Empire – since the term was used by the historical actors themselves. As Ilya Gerasimov wrote, “a very considerable number of educated Russians behaved *as if* they were part of an invisible sphere of public debates of the most important issues of the day, which acquired a certain political influence, or even authority.” This invisible sphere was regularly referred to as *obshchestvennost'*. Ilya Gerasimov, *Modernism and Public Reform in Late Imperial Russia: Rural Professionals and Self-Organization, 1905–30* (Springer, 2009), 23.

liberal, the stance in which he only became more confident after the murder of his father, relatively liberal Alexander II.⁶² Very soon, the government launched a number of repressions against the actual and prospective radicals, commencing thus a protracted period of reaction which also meant harsher restrictions on the public sphere. Russian populism, moderate or radical, seemed to undergo a period of crisis, with its models of thought and political action failing both in the “movement of going to the people” and in the anticipation of the lightning revolution after the effective decapitation of the country by regicide.⁶³ None of these methods helped: the peasants did not appreciate the benevolent effort of young nobles radicalizing village lads and readily reported them to the gendarmes; and the successful assassination of the tsar did not disorient the government but led instead to even more autocratic control, aided by the top-down, government-led industrialization.⁶⁴

Disenchanted with radical politics, a group of former *narodniki* and participants of revolutionary circles that ended up in Poltava by the early 1890s chose the path of legal populism and progressivism – an attempt to reach the *narodnik* goals with legal, institutional means.⁶⁵ While the political closure meant that the horizon of any political action was rather limited, many *narodniki* across the empire decided for the so-called “theory of small deeds,” a rationalized belief that consistent industrious work for the benefit of individual “really existing” peasants in Russia’s numerous villages and khutors (farms) would help alleviate the situation of a peasant at least somehow. A similar solution was developed by Polish intellectuals who also rejected “the conspiratory tradition in favor of organic social and economic development,

⁶² The political murder was organized by *Narodnaia volia* (People’s Freedom/Will), the same organization that one of Poltava statisticians, Nikolai Aaronskii, belonged to. On the sources of Alexander III’s conservatism, see Richard S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy. Volume Two, From Alexander II to the Abdication of Nicholas II* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 164–169.

⁶³ Richard Wortman, *The Crisis of Russian Populism*, 157.

⁶⁴ Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: A Book of Essays* (Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), 16–17, 126.

⁶⁵ Arthur P. Mendel, *Dilemmas of Progress in Tsarist Russia: Legal Marxism and Legal Populism*, 3.

which was compressed into the notion of ‘organic work’ (*praca organiczna*).⁶⁶ The capitalism was already there, with the railway piercing through the countryside and connecting large cities in European Russia to the seaports and thus to world trade. Standing to international competition, the peasants were set to either win or perish. The former *narodniki*-cum-legal-populists set out to help the masses by living with the peasants and helping to educate them, prepare them for a life in the modern world.⁶⁷ Many a *narodnik* ended up as a teacher, a doctor, an insurance inspector, or an agronomist. Statistics was one of the options to join this movement and to effectively counter the crisis of Russian populism.

Kuliabko-Koretskii, Bunin, and others from the Bureau occupied a relatively privileged position since they worked in the provincial center and not in a remote village. They formed thus the backbone of the so-called “third element,” i.e., the hired specialists of the local government that effectively ran it after the properly political decisions by the *uprava* were made.⁶⁸ In the spare time left after work, the “third element” very soon began thinking about other ways to manifest activism. Iulii Bunin recalled sometime after 1905 about his early years in Poltava,

*In our spare time, we often visited each other, regularly gathered in certain houses, dreamt about the revival of the radical movement, read ideological [ideinyie] books and magazines, but we did not take and practical steps within the first years of my stay in Poltava. We did not have, however, any despondency or pessimism, and we strongly believed that the emancipatory movement would soon begin again so that our efforts would come in handy.*⁶⁹

However, the activization of civil life demanded some point of ignition. In the early 1890s, large territories of the Russian Empire were struck with a cholera epidemic, ensued by

⁶⁶ Trencsényi et al., *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe: Volume I: Negotiating Modernity in the “Long Nineteenth Century,”* 318–322.

⁶⁷ V. V. Zverev, “Evolutsiia narodnichestva: ‘teoriia malykh del’” [Evolution of populism: “the theory of small deeds”]. *Otechestvennaia istoriia* 4 (1997): 87–90.

⁶⁸ Gerasimov, *Modernism and Public Reform in Late Imperial Russia: Rural Professionals and Self-Organization, 1905–30*, 29.

⁶⁹ Bunin, “Iz zhizni provintsii v 90-kh godakh” [From the life in the province in the 90s] (no pagination). Hereafter, translation from Russian is mine.

a famine of 1891–1892 which, within Russia’s liberal public sphere, was traditionally considered a milestone in the intelligentsia’s troubled relations with the imperial authorities.⁷⁰ The government’s actions, both at the central and local levels, were widely perceived by the intellectuals as lagging behind the needs and lacking in appropriateness. The intelligentsia, instead, launched their own charities and activism that was meant to stand up where the government failed. Although neither cholera nor famine did particularly strike Poltava, the enthusiasm about activism and self-organization reached the town quite soon – as Bunin claimed, by the autumn of 1893.⁷¹

According to Bunin’s memoirs, in the early 1890s, the *zemstvo* in Poltava was still the main locus of self-organization and activism for the local intelligentsia and liberal nobility. The progressive faction in the *zemstvo* board, supported by the “third element,” sought to increase the productivity of the regional economy, perhaps not least because the higher productivity meant more taxes and hence more public activities. The *zemstvo* launched a number of economic measures aimed to support local agriculture, ranging from the regulation of trade in grain to the draining of swamps. After the anti-cholera and anti-famine campaign, activism very soon began to spill over the more or less narrow confines of the *zemstvo* activities. The group around the *zemstvo* that, according to Bunin’s estimates, amounted to a few dozen people, launched an initiative to open the first public library in the town and organized a series of public lectures and people’s readings [narodnyie chteniia]. Other activities included opening public canteens, organization of consumer cooperatives and physical education for children, as well as public symphonic orchestra concerts.⁷² The target audience for these activities might have been limited, but the effective consequence of much of this activism was a dense network of

⁷⁰ Gerasimov, *Modernism and Public Reform in Late Imperial Russia: Rural Professionals and Self-Organization, 1905–30*, 13.

⁷¹ Bunin, “Iz zhizni provintsii v 90-kh godakh” [From the life in the province in the 90s] (no pagination).

⁷² Bunin, “Iz zhizni provintsii v 90-kh godakh” [From the life in the province in the 90s] (no pagination).

mushrooming organizations with intermingled membership and alliances of liberal and radical intelligentsia.

The year 1894 saw the expansion of the statisticians' activities into the sphere of public media. The local journalist Dmitrii Ivanenko (Dmytro Ivanenko) obtained an agreement in principle from the Poltava governor Aleksei Tatishchev, an aged man of highly conservative views. Ivanenko persuaded Tatishchev to allow to transform the governmental provincial newspaper *Gubernskiiie vedomosti* (Provincial Gazette) into a daily one. The newspaper had two parts: "official" and "unofficial," the former reporting the government's decisions and legal updates, while the latter functioned as a kind of normal local newspaper responding to local needs. Ivanenko also ensured the consent of Kuliabko-Koretskii, the Bunin brothers, and of other *zemstvo* activists to become contributors to the new project. The first, trial issue of the newspaper was published on November 30, 1894, with an extended editorial by Kuliabko-Koretskii that set out the goals of provincial press. Kuliabko argued that its aims were, naturally, local needs, which in Poltava meant the public concerns with primary and professional education, an opening of an institution of higher education specializing in agronomy etc. Kuliabko and some from the Statistical Bureau's team kept providing the newspaper with informative articles both about domestic and foreign affairs. Although the editors worked ceaselessly without expecting any payments, the final product, as Ivanenko noted, was of much higher quality than the local consumer could swallow. This discrepancy eventually led to the newspaper's lack of profitability. However, the newspaper was closed in 1895 not because it had low sales, but after a scandalous polemics with *Yuzhny krai*, a conservative newspaper published in Kharkiv. The provincial government's bureaucracy instrumentalized this opportunity to shut down the outlet.⁷³

⁷³ The whole episode is covered in Ivanenko, *Zapiski i vospominaniia 1888-1908 gg. Izdaniie redaktsii "Poltavskii golos."* [Notes and memoirs 1888-1908. Published by the editors of the "Poltavskii golos"], 71–78.

Having in disposal a media outlet for influencing public opinion in Poltava and the province seems to have been of high importance to the Statistical Bureau's team and their associates among other *zemstvo* workers. After the closedown of the unofficial part of *Gubernskiiie vedomosti*, the statisticians led by the energetic Kuliabko-Koretskii sought an alliance with Dmitrii Kvitka, the head of Poltava Agricultural Society – a branch of pan-imperial network of agricultural societies initially organized as voluntary associations of nobles seeking ways to increase efficiency and productivity of their farming.⁷⁴ Together, they engaged in what Ilya Gerasimov labeled “agrojournalism” and in 1896 founded a magazine *Khutorianin*, which later became one of the most widely circulated agricultural magazines in the region.⁷⁵ The very same editorial team as in *Gubernskiiie vedomosti* now pursued a similar agenda under a new label, until the Statistical Bureau's demise in 1898 resulting from yet another row with the town's central government officials (see below).⁷⁶ As will be shown in Chapter 2, the case of *Khutorianin* was a clear attempt of the former *narodniki* at establishing a new alliance with the peasantry. This time, they intended to do so under a more reliable progressivist framework, deeply entangled with agrarian statistics, the introduction of economic measures by the *zemstvo*, and general efforts aimed at improving the efficiency and productivity of agriculture in the province.

The statisticians' connections and public activities were not limited by the province's borders and were in fact noticeable at the pan-imperial level. In 1893, the Poltava statistical bureau addressed the mastermind of *zemstvo* statistics, Moscow university professor Alexander Chuprov, with a request to organize a gathering of *zemstvo* statisticians from across the empire

⁷⁴ Bunin, “Iz zhizni provintsii v 90-kh godakh” [From the life in the province in the 90s] (no pagination). On the first of such societies, Moscow Agricultural Society, please see Joseph Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia: Science, Patriotism, and Civil Society* (Harvard University Press, 2009), 72–85.

⁷⁵ *Khutorianin* was actually one of the most widely circulated magazines in the genre of agrojournalism, having 8,000 copies distributed annually. This was way above the average of between 800 and 3,000. Gerasimov, *Modernism and Public Reform in Late Imperial Russia: Rural Professionals and Self-Organization, 1905–30*, 16.

⁷⁶ Despite this, the Bureau statisticians occasionally published in *Khutorianin* even after 1905.

to exchange experience and discuss methodological issues.⁷⁷ Such a gathering was indeed organized under the auspices of the 9th Congress of Russian naturalists and doctors that took place in Moscow between 3 and 11 January 1894. Formally, it was a subsection of statistics within the section of geography, headed personally by Chuprov. A whole delegation from Poltava was present there, including Kuliabko-Koretskii, Bunin, Rusov, Vera Tereshkevich, Dmitrii Zverev (the author of the voluminous study of peasant resettlement, see Chapter 2) and Mikhail Selitrennikov.⁷⁸ While I have not managed to come in the possession of the minutes of that subsection, we know of the topics that Rusov planned to bring up on the eve of the Congress, which were quite ambitious and even reached out of the conventional borders of statistics *per se*.⁷⁹ The Poltava statisticians were quite pro-active at the imperial level and were not alien to theorizing about the methods of statistical inquiry as well as the topics of economic development of utmost importance. The workings of the statistical subsection of the 9th Congress of Russian naturalists and doctors were later published by Rusov among Chernihiv statistical bureau's publications, on Chuprov's request, which I read as a sign of Rusov's closeness to Chuprov and established and trusted position among the other *zemstvo* statisticians of the empire.⁸⁰

While the mobile statisticians such as Kuliabko-Koretskii, Bunin, or Rusov maintained pan-imperial contacts with other statisticians and economists, especially with those in the neighboring provinces such as Kharkiv, occasionally, more global contacts happened, too.

⁷⁷ "Foreword" and "Notes," N. G. Kuliabko-Koretskii Collection, Page 25. Bunin also mentioned this episode. Bunin, "Iz zhizni provintsii v 90-kh godakh" [From the life in the province in the 90s] (no pagination).

⁷⁸ I am very thankful to Professor Karl Hall for providing the valuable materials about the attendees of the 9th Congress of naturalists and doctors.

⁷⁹ These were: 1) the inclusion of the study of agricultural instruments and hence agricultural "culture" into research programs; 2) the study of the movement of workers from the black soil region to the south [Novorossiiskii stepi]; 3) discussion of the projects of organization of current *zemstvo* statistics and the existing forms of this organization, where Rusov defended highest degrees of decentralization and the concentration of different *zemstvo* statistical bureaus on their provinces' needs, without any forced centralization. Letter of Oleksandr Rusov to Mykola Kuliabko-Koretskyi, 2 December 1893, F. 84, Op. 1, No. 53, Institute of Manuscript of Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine.

⁸⁰ Letter of Oleksandr Rusov to Mykola Kuliabko-Koretskyi, 29 July 1894, F. 84, Op. 1, No. 60.

During his trip across Russia, a German economist Gerhart von Schulze-Gaevernitz, Lujo Brentano's disciple, visited Poltava and Kobelyaky (a smaller town to the south of Poltava). His reminiscences and reflections on the region's economy were published in his study *Volkswirtschaftliche Studien aus Rußland* (1899), or in the Russian edition *Ocherki obshchestvennago khoziaistva i ekonomicheskoi politiki Rossii* (1901) (Essays on the national economy and economic policy of Russia). Judging by the fact that Bunin as the Bureau had kindly shared with him all statistical materials, the trip must have happened sometime between 1896 and 1898. Schulze-Gaevernitz was offered information about Kobelyaky Cossack economy by Viktor Vasylenko and in turn shared with the Poltava statisticians his thoughts about German social democracy.⁸¹ This and other contacts demonstrate the statisticians' inclusion into broader, sometimes trans-imperial intellectual networks.

Poltava Statistical Bureau was one of the focal organizations where the town's two nascent public spheres, Ukrainian/Ukrainophile and the more empire-oriented Russian one, intermingled. The Ukrainian circles were represented by Oleksandr Rusov and his wife Sofiia, who, during their stay in the town while Oleksandr worked as the Bureau's head, managed to organize the Ukrainian activists and often invited them over to their house near the *zemstvo uprava*.⁸² It was Rusov who arranged Lev Padalka's move to Poltava and thus increased the presence of the "Ukrainians" in the Bureau. Other Ukrainian activists working for the Bureau were Hryhorii Rotmistrov (the Bureau's head from 1905 until the 1920s), Mykhailo Rklytskyi, and Viktor Vasylenko. The pan-imperial "Russians" included: Kuliabko-Koretskii, who stemmed from Little-Russian nobility but never claimed any particular sympathies for the

⁸¹ Gergart Shultse-Gevernits, *Ocherki obshchestvennago khoziaistva i ekonomicheskoi politiki Rossii* [Essays on the social economy and on the economic policy of Russia] (St. Petersburg: Tipo-lit. A. Leiferta, 1901), 354. Bunin, "Iz zhizni provintsii v 90-kh godakh" [From the life in the province in the 90s] (no pagination).

⁸² Sofiia Rusova, *Moi spomyny* [My memoirs], in *Za sto lit: Materiyaly z hromadskoho i literaturnoho zhyttia Ukrainy XIX i pochatkiv XX stolittia. Knyha druha* [Materials from public and literature life of Ukraine of the 19th and the beginning of 20th century. Book Two], ed. Mykhailo Hrushevskyi (Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1928), 181–182.

Ukrainian movement, Iulii Bunin, his brother Ivan, Sergei Balabukha, Luka Stavrovsky, and Iakov Imshenetskii, who became a Kadet and was initially quite reluctant about Ukraine's independence during the revolution of 1917.⁸³ While the early 1900s saw the departure of the Russians from the Bureau, the 1890s seem to have been the time of productive cooperation, remembered warmly by all participants whose memoirs I encountered. Of course, the sense of ethnic belonging was not yet so strictly articulated as in the 20th century and being Ukrainian in Poltava could mean both being Russian (being part of the empire) and Ukrainian (by language, political views, autonomism etc.). However, there does not seem to have been any ethnic tension within the Bureau, and the "Russians" there did not have troubles with the Ukrainian movement activities despite, or perhaps aided by, its suspiciousness in the eyes of the central authorities and the police. Strangely, there are also no mentions about interactions with the Jewish public sphere, apart from the brief note by Bunin about the existence of Zionist organization in Poltava at the time.⁸⁴

Poltava Statistical Bureau was well-integrated into the Russian imperial public sphere and demonstrated some connectivity reaching even far beyond. A whole bouquet of civil initiatives and organizations that flourished in Poltava in the 1890s were also signs of the re-emerging contestant to the existing autocratic order and was perceived so by the central authorities and their representatives in the province, as will be demonstrated in the next subsection. Perhaps only temporarily resigning to the "theory of small deeds" and progressivism, the *zemstvo* intelligentsia co-created and was enveloped within the dense networks of activists, often combining functions in state and non-state institutions. After all, the whole *zemstvo* statistics project was never only about statistics and "boring" calculations,

⁸³ Golostenov, "Imshenetskii Iakov Kondratievich," in *Politicheskie deiateli Rossii 1917: Biograficheskii slovar'* [Political activists of Russia 1917: biographical dictionary], ed. P. V. Volobuev (Moscow: Nauchnoie izdatelstvo "Bolshaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia," 1993), 125.

⁸⁴ Bunin, "Iz zhizni provintsii v 90-kh godakh" [From the life in the province in the 90s] (no pagination).

even when designed by the Chuprov circle as a left-liberal neo-*narodnik* research enterprise aimed to promote policy-oriented social research (see Chapter 2).

The double lives of Poltava statisticians

The *zemstvo* statisticians were in a doubly suspicious and hence vulnerable political situation. Firstly, as workers of local governments, they were suspected of potential opposition to the central government, perhaps correctly. The government in St. Petersburg treated any cooperation between individual *zemstvos* as potentially dangerous and thus sought to restrict it.⁸⁵ However, the government exercised control over the *zemstvos* via the tools of local supervision, performed by the central government's representatives on the ground – the governor and the police. Secondly, the police along the whole vertical of power up to the Ministry for Internal Affairs in St. Petersburg suspected the statisticians, merely by the merit of their background but also due to the suspicion toward statistics as a politically dubious activity. The conservatives in the government perceived statisticians as potential instigators of social unrest and anti-government sentiments among the peasantry.⁸⁶ In the eyes of the police, the hiring of former members of revolutionary circles, university expellees, and the former exiled by the public institutions must have appeared as most illogical and almost sabotaging – but also inevitable sometimes, since the job outsourced to the *zemstvos* by the central government still had to be carried out. More broadly, one can read about this permanent atmosphere of paranoia in the numerous documents of the era: whenever an official celebration was held and the tsar was expected to come, like in Poltava and Kyiv in 1909 (for the celebration of 200-year anniversary of the Battle of Poltava), all the “politically unreliable” were asked to leave the town or, even worse, were temporarily detained by the police – without any proper procedure

⁸⁵ Johnson, “Liberal professionals and professional liberals: the *zemstvo* statisticians and their work,” 347.

⁸⁶ Johnson, “Liberal professionals and professional liberals: the *zemstvo* statisticians and their work,” 353–355.

or a court decision.⁸⁷ Given the ascendant radicalization among some on the left and the fact that the extremists eventually managed to assassinate one tsar and one prime minister, the government's fears do not appear to have been completely unjustified, while the measures do indeed appear as paranoia and overreaction.

All of this meant that most of the *zemstvo* statisticians were continuously subject to administrative interventions and thus had to exist in the ambiguous area of covert opposition to the regime, reserving their more critical opinions to private sphere and upholding a more “reliable” image for the public and police. Rusov repeatedly feared the perustration of his letters by the officials, which is quite noticeable in his letters to Kuliabko-Koretskii throughout the 1890s.⁸⁸ He, along with Kuliabko-Koretskii, depended on governors' personal decisions for his appointment to this or that bureau. Kuliabko-Koretskii himself had to wait for the expiration of his overt surveillance by the police before being allowed to become the Statistical Bureau's head or even official member.⁸⁹ However, sometimes it was possible to circumvent the strictness of such control by finding a right person with connections in St. Petersburg who would put in a good word for you in the ministry or would talk in private to a highly positioned bureaucrat.⁹⁰

The statisticians' fragile position epitomized also the vulnerability of their progressivist paradigm of the “theory of small deeds.” The first decade of active development of Poltava statistics and civic activism ended very soon and abruptly in 1898, after an (apparently minor)

⁸⁷ In his diary, Chykalenko recounted how his son Levko was detained exactly due to the celebrations that had to take place in Kyiv. Yevhen Chykalenko, *Shchodennyk (1907–1917)* [Diary (1907–1917)] (Kyiv: Tempora, 2011), 67 – 74. Vladimir Korolenko wrote a polemical piece underlining the inner contradictions of official celebrations and the government's repressive policies in 1909. Vladimir Korolenko, “Poltavskiiie prazdnestva” [Poltava festivities]. In *V. G. Korolenko. Sobranie sochinenii. T. 4.* [V. G. Korolenko. A collection of works. Volume 4] (Moscow: Pravda, 1953), 368–371.

⁸⁸ Such as in Letter of Oleksandr Rusov to Mykola Kuliabko-Koretskyi, 2 December 1893, F. 84, Op. 1, No. 53.

⁸⁹ “Foreword” and “Notes,” N. G. Kuliabko-Koretskii Collection, Page 3–5.

⁹⁰ In 1893, Rusov and Kuliabko-Koretskii asked their friend Petr Shkliarevich, an established, well-connected noble, to ask the Police Department in St. Petersburg to provide permission to Rusov to become member of the Poltava Statistical Bureau – and thus override the locally issued prohibition. “Foreword” and “Notes,” N. G. Kuliabko-Koretskii Collection, Page 22, 24.

scandal between the Statistical Bureau team and local administration. The details are unknown to me and all of the witnesses whose notes and memoirs I have inspected bypassed the discussion of its reasons or claimed to have forgotten them. However, what is important is that the administrative intervention, silently or actively supported by the conservative part of bureaucratic corps, easily led to a wave of layoffs. In 1898, the entire “star team” of Poltava statistical bureau effectively dispersed in all possible directions: Kuliabko-Koretskii entered Free Economic Society for the Encouragement of Agriculture and Husbandry in St. Petersburg, Bunin moved for Moscow and began editing one of the journals/magazines there; Balabukha’s exact trajectory is unclear.⁹¹ Among those remaining in Poltava were Rotmistrov and Padalka who kept contacts with Kuliabko-Koretskii and later sought his help in hiring Rusov to replace him and Bunin, which they all managed to achieve by 1899.⁹² Rusov did not stay long in Poltava: after the massive peasant revolt in Poltava and Kharkiv provinces in 1902, Rusov’s statistical work was reported to the government as causing separatist and revolutionary sentiments among peasantry. Shortly after, Rusov and his wife were forced leave Poltava for St. Petersburg, once again proving the vulnerability of the whole *zemstvo* statistics enterprise.⁹³

Side activities of the statisticians were surveilled, too. One of the Bureau’s low-profile members, Mikhail Selitrennikov, a *meshchanin* (burgher) by estate, was an experienced *zemstvo* bureaucrat, but also a bursar of the Political Red Cross in Poltava. He was also, it seems by a mere chance, a close friend of Vladimir Korolenko and in the late 1890s rented the same house where later, from 1900, Korolenko’s family resided and that is now a literary museum dedicated

⁹¹ Ivanenko, *Zapiski i vospominaniia 1888-1908 gg. Izdaniie redaktsii “Poltavskii golos.”* [Notes and memoirs 1888-1908. Published by the editors of the “Poltavskii golos”], 85. Bunin, “Iz zhizni provintsii v 90-kh godakh” [From the life in the province in the 90s] (no pagination). Kuliabko-Koretskii, however, changed a few jobs in Poltava before leaving for St. Petersburg in May 1897. “Foreword” and “Notes,” N. G. Kuliabko-Koretskii Collection, Page 31.

⁹² “Foreword” and “Notes,” N. G. Kuliabko-Koretskii Collection, Page 29.

⁹³ Rusova, *Moi spomyyny* [My memoirs], 184–185.

to his life and work.⁹⁴ Selitrennikov appears to have been quite unremarkable as a statistician – not being one of the advanced and research-oriented statisticians, he perhaps helped with the more organizational part of work, such as conducting calculations, sending out questionnaires, and authoring some of the entries in the Bureau’s publications. However, Selitrennikov and his wife proved quite outstanding and well-known among the town’s students – those exiled to Poltava and those studying in the gymnasia and *Realschulen*, who, naturally, were often suspected by the police to be potential or actual revolutionaries and thus resided in town under open or covert surveillance. Selitrennikov’s wife, whose name I unfortunately do not know, was allegedly famous for her culinary skills and opened a semi-public canteen for the poor students in her house. In 1915, already during the war, Selitrennikov was suspended from his position in the Bureau and arrested – all allegedly by a fiat and the decree by the Poltava governor. It took an active involvement of Korolenko to get his friend out of prison.⁹⁵ He returned to his position as a member of the Bureau afterward, proving that the Bureau and *uprava* were not particularly ashamed of the police allegations against its workers.

The statisticians were constantly exposed to administrative pressures also in one another significant aspect. Poltava was no regular Russian Empire’s province – not only because it had a relatively liberal and “progressive” *zemstvo* willing to cooperate with the “third element” but also since it was a *Ukrainian* province. By this I do not imply any formal or imagined autonomy of Ukraine, however. Poltava was one of the centers of the Ukrainian national movement. Quite complicated relations of both the central and local authorities with the Ukrainian movement

⁹⁴ Although a minor detail, the fact that several Poltava *zemstvo* statisticians had also at some point resided in that house points to two characteristic facts: that Poltava was indeed a very small town and that its public sphere – its *obshchestvennost’* – must have been genuinely compact and well-knit together by an array of *Jours fixes*, such as those in Korolenko’s or Rusov’s houses. Rusova, *Moi spomyny* [My memoirs], 182. *Adres-kalendar i Spravochnaia knizhka Poltavskoi gubernii na 1896 god* [Address-calendar and a reference book of the Poltava province for 1896], ed. D. A. Ivanenko (Poltava: Tipo-Litografiia L. Frishberga, 1896), 19.

⁹⁵ P. P. Rotach, “Istoriia odnoi druzhby: Epizod iz zhizni V. G. Korolenko v Poltave” [A history of one friendship: an episode from the life of V. G. Korolenko in Poltava], in *Pobornyk pravdy. Do 155-richchia vid dnia narodzhennia V. H. Korolenka* [An advocate of truth. For the 155th anniversary of V. H. Korolenko], ed. L. V. Khliestkova (Kharkiv, 2008), 12–23.

have been richly covered in the historiography of the recent decades.⁹⁶ However, it is still the early decades of these relations, namely, the 1860s and 1870s, that are being debated most – quite naturally, since it was the period when the government took active measures to inhibit the movement’s development, ranging from various prohibitions on the publications in the Ukrainian language to the expulsion of certain most outstanding leaders of the movement from the country. Despite all the interdictions, it is obvious that the movement continued to exist and even develop via various channels – mostly through educational and other public institutions. Although the movement’s total numbers are not estimated as high in the last decades of the empire’s existence, there appears to have been a significant overrepresentation of the movement’s participants among the intelligentsia – and especially so, in Poltava province.⁹⁷ Being part of the Ukrainian movement meant participation in loose networks of acquaintances centering around different institutions, such as *Kievskaiia starina* magazine or Shevchenko Scientific Society in Lviv (essentially a Ukrainian “flying” academy of sciences pre-1918). However, being part of the Ukrainian movement in the Russian Empire also meant cultivating and maintaining at least two public personae, one connected to the empire and imperial institutions, the other linked with the Ukrainian semi-underground public sphere.⁹⁸ For the statisticians, this only added to their multifaceted “grey zone” profiles somewhere between the official and the underground.

The multiplicity and even playful flexibility of personae reached also to the sphere of language. Rusov used Ukrainian extensively in his correspondence with Kuliabko-Koretskii.

⁹⁶ Johannes Remy, *Brothers or Enemies: The Ukrainian National Movement and Russia from the 1840s to the 1870s*. Alexei Miller, *The Ukrainian Question: The Russian Empire and Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century*. (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2003).

⁹⁷ Andreas Kappeler, “The Ukrainians of the Russian Empire, 1860–1914,” in *The Formation of National Elites: Comparative Studies on Governments and Non-Dominant Ethnic Groups in Europe, 1850-1940*, eds. A. Kappeler, F. Adanir, A. O’Day (New York: 1992), 116, 119.

⁹⁸ Serhy Yekelchuk extensively treats the topic of imperial and national ambiguities in Serhy Yekelchuk, *Ukrainofily: Svit ukrainskykh patriotiv druhoi polovyny XIX stolittia* [Ukrainophiles: The world of Ukrainian patriots of the second half of the 19th century] (Kyiv: K.I.S, 2010).

He would occasionally drop a phrase or two which would make his speech sound closer to the popular way – lowering the register, but also perhaps freeing himself from the excessive bureaucratism of Russian. Thus, when justifying his decision – as he was quite reluctant to work outside the “Ukrainian” provinces of the empire – to decline the job offer from Simferopol and choose Poltava instead even though the latter offered twice as little in remuneration, he put it poetically, switching from Russian to Ukrainian in the middle: “...k vam poidu..., chtob ne ukhodit’ ot naroda pravoslavnago v nekhreshchenu Ordu Tatarskuiu” [... I will go to you... so that not to leave the Orthodox people for (switching to Ukrainian) the unbaptized Tatar Horde].⁹⁹

Rusov wrote some letters entirely in Ukrainian, with a characteristic stylization of speech in the way that some of the folk songs would be composed.¹⁰⁰ Some letters even contained Rusov’s poetry in Ukrainian – often complaints about things not being done in time or about the lack of communication on the part of the bureau, quite sarcastically framed as folk songs, too.¹⁰¹ Take, for example, this poem composed by Rusov after a prolonged pause in communication on the part of the Bureau, when he resided in Kyiv:

*Oh, there is not a wind nor a wave coming
From glorious Poltava:
Whether they are conferring to decide on how to make a census of towns –
I do not hear here, in a foreign land!
Oh, blow, the wind, from the broad steppe,
All over the Dnieper, Trubizh, and Supii,¹⁰²
And bring me some news from the statisticians:
Have they been chopped there, or shot, or taken captive?¹⁰³*

⁹⁹ Letter of Oleksandr Rusov to Mykola Kuliabko-Koretskyi, 2 May 1890, F. 84, Op. 1, No. 3.

¹⁰⁰ For instance: Letter of Oleksandr Rusov to Mykola Kuliabko-Koretskyi, 7 September 1891, F. 84, Op. 1, No. 22. Letter of Oleksandr Rusov to Mykola Kuliabko-Koretskyi, 1 October 1891, F. 84, Op. 1, No. 24. Letter of Oleksandr Rusov to Mykola Kuliabko-Koretskyi, 9 January 1892, F. 84, Op. 1, No. 29.

¹⁰¹ Letter of Oleksandr Rusov to Mykola Kuliabko-Koretskyi, 4 November 1893, F. 84, Op. 1, No. 52.

¹⁰² Those are rivers situated squarely between Kyiv and Poltava.

¹⁰³ In the letter, it runs as follows: ““Oi nema nema ni vitru ni khvyli / Ta iz slavnoi Poltavy: / Chy tam radu radiat’, iak horody spysuvaty – / Ne chuiu ia na chuzhyni! / Oi povii, vitre, ta zi shyrokohe stepu / Ta po nad Dniprom-bat’kom, Trubezhom ta Supojem, / Ta nesy meni visty od statystykyv: / Chy iik tam porubano, chy postriliano, chy v polon zabrano?”” Letter of Oleksandr Rusov to Mykola Kuliabko-Koretskyi, 7 September 1891, F. 84, Op. 1, No. 22.

Quite surely in the Ukrainophile Shevchenkoite tradition, Rusov, in some of his “Ukrainian” letters, repeatedly expressed his strong prejudice against St. Petersburg as the ultimate epitome of modernity in Russia that only helped spread syphilis and bedbugs.¹⁰⁴

The activation of the Ukrainian public sphere in Poltava of the 1890s happened to a large degree due to the connectivity of Oleksandr Rusov and his capacity to arrange appointments for his associates in the *zemstvos* of the empire. He himself, as mentioned already, was a veteran of Kyiv *Hromada*, and thus was the direct heir of the Ukrainophile tradition. Wherever he and his wife moved, they tended to organize Ukrainian public life. They did so already in Kherson in the late 1880s, where Sofiia opened a private Ukrainian kindergarten for the intelligentsia’s children, and Rusov, apart from his ethnographic work for the *zemstvo*, published in the Ukrainophile magazine *Step* (Steppe), organized literary and musical evenings, as well as regular *Jours fixes*.¹⁰⁵ They did so in Poltava, too, and Rusov did not hesitate to move his most loyal disciples and colleagues as well as trusted Ukrainophile colleagues there.

Padalka was one such Rusov’s loyal disciple and also a devoted adherent of the Ukrainian movement – which can be seen from his archive but also as judged by the contemporaries. When Bunin wrote that in his time being in Poltava a potent Ukrainian movement reemerged in the town, and that its more radically oriented participants were cooperating with Galicians and imported Ukrainian books from there, it was also about Padalka.¹⁰⁶ Padalka graduated from the department of history in Kyiv university and, apart from his statistical work, wrote on the Ukrainian history, entirely in accordance with the movement’s

¹⁰⁴ Letter of Oleksandr Rusov to Mykola Kuliabko-Koretskyi, 23 August 1899, F. 84, Op. 1, No. 72.

¹⁰⁵ Rusova, *Moi spomyny* [My memoirs], 163–164.

¹⁰⁶ Bunin, “Iz zhizni provintsii v 90-kh godakh” [From the life in the province in the 90s] (no pagination). Peregiska L. V. Padalki s Glavnym upravleniim po delam pechati o razreshenii vypisyvat galitsyiiskie zhurnaly... [Correspondence between L. V. Padalka and Main Directorate of the Press about the permission to receive Galician magazines...], June-July 1895, F. 266, Op. 1, No. 1, CDIAK.

canon: on the democratic traditions of the Zaporizhzhian Host, and on the *hromada* (communal but, importantly, not *obshchina*) land property in South Russia (i.e. Ukraine).¹⁰⁷

The Ukrainian circle in the Bureau also included Mykhailo Rklytskyi (Mikhail Rklitskii) and Hryhorii Rotmistrov (Grigorii Rotmistrov), its longtime head after 1903, who also was a senior in the Ukrainian Club in Poltava after 1913.¹⁰⁸ All of these names can be found in the collective congratulatory address from the Poltava *zemstvo* workers to Mykhailo Hrushevskyyi, a Ukrainian historian, organizer of (Ukrainian) science and a central figure of Ukrainian public life in the 1910s. As it appears to have been common for inner semi-official communication within the Ukrainian circles, the address was written in hand and styled as a Cossack charter, using special handwriting style and elevated semi-archaic language. One could argue that the persistence of this style in similar communicative situations was a form of a counterculture, or, in the vein of Yekelchuk's analysis of Ukrainophile culture, a specific bodily self-fashioning.¹⁰⁹

Such activism, imbued with nationalist or at least ethnic colors, could not go unnoticed by the police and government officials. Especially disturbing for the authorities must have been the fact that even "ethnic" Russians, i.e., Russians by origin and upbringing, often were not hostile or even, on the contrary, were susceptible to a certain degree of Ukrainophilia. Such was Rusov who was born to an ethnically Russian family but turned into a devoted Ukrainian activist. Bunin, for instance, was more than kind and supportive towards the movement while still occupying an external position to it. The issue of the Ukrainian language as a distinct one from Russian was so sensitive to the authorities that the fact that Rusov instructed statisticians

¹⁰⁷ Lev Padalka, Rabota "O nachale i proiskhozhdenii kazakov" [Paper "On the origins of Cossacks"], F. 266, Op. 1, No. 6, CDIAK. Lev Padalka, Stattia "Gromadskoie (obshchestvennoie) zemlevladienie na Iuge Rossii" [Article "Communal land property in the South of Russia"], F. 266, Op. 1, No. 9, CDIAK.

¹⁰⁸ V. O. Mokliak, T. P. Pustovit, O. B. Suprunenko. *Budynok Ukrainskoho klubu v Poltavi: pamiatka istorii doby natsionalnoho vidrodzhennia ta Ukrainskoi revolutsii* [The House of the Ukrainian Club in Poltava: a monument of history of the period of national revival and Ukrainian revolution] (Poltava: TOV "ASMI," 2016), 13.

¹⁰⁹ Serhy Yekelchuk, *Ukrainofily: Svit ukrainskykh patriotiv druhoi polovyny XIX stolittia* [Ukrainophiles: The world of Ukrainian patriots of the second half of the 19th century] (Kyiv: K.I.S, 2010), 19–50.

and registrars to ask peasant questions to in peasants' language (i.e. Ukrainian) was allegedly sufficient for the gendarmes to start prosecution and arrest him, for his alleged separatism.¹¹⁰ Rusov's response to such allegations, in quite characteristic humorous vein, was that he lacked "army and strength" to conduct such a complex operation.¹¹¹ Of course, the police did not trust him; after all, Rusov indeed *was* a Ukrainian nationalist – and it is quite visible from his publications ever more in the last decades of his life, until his death in 1916.

The birth of *zemstvo* statistics from the spirit of Russian populism is no news – neither is its birth from the populism's Ukrainophile version (yet, the latter has been covered far less extensively). However, this chapter has argued that it is important to keep in mind that the *narodnik* and particularly Ukrainophile politics did not simply end with the statisticians' "taming" and "sedentarization" within the *zemstvo* infrastructure. As the statisticians later claimed themselves, civic engagement and public initiatives were of no less significance to them than statistics proper. In Poltava of the 1890s, the Statistical Bureau became one of the hotbeds of activism, entering alliances with civil organizations and media, as well as other progressive actors, in Poltava and beyond. Nevertheless, despite its "daylight" public sphere, it also kept connections to more radical actors, serving as a shelter for some of them – providing them with a job and a good company. Clandestine or at least semi-secret were also the Ukrainian activities, deemed as separatist and hence inherently dangerous by the government. Allegations of inducing peasant unrest during data collection across the countryside eventually served as a premise for the suspension of whatever statistics in the region for several years after 1902.

¹¹⁰ Oleksandr Rusov, "Kak ia stal chlenom 'Gromady'" [How I became a member of *Hromada*], in *Shchodennyky ta spohady* [Diaries and memoirs] (Chernihiv: Desna Polihraf, 2011), 175.

¹¹¹ Rusova, *Moi spomyny* [My memoirs], 184.

However, the government never “purged” the statisticians as it might have been done during Stalinism. The educated and willing to do statistics were few, which perhaps made the eventual compromise between them and the government possible. A relatively poor country with narrower educated strata when compared to Western European counterparts, the Russian Empire could not afford to simply get rid of its scarce specialists – and so the government, be it a central ministry or local police, often tolerated *zemstvo* statistics. By expelling the most disobedient and “dangerous” by the mid-1900s, it managed to turn *zemstvo* statistics into a less methodologically creative and rather more bureaucratic enterprise, complementing its lack of capacity on the provincial level.

The fact that *zemstvo* statistics was heavily informed by the *narodnik* thinking was no surprise to the contemporaries: both the government and the Marxist critics knew it way too well. Some scholars, such as Esther Kingston-Mann and Alessandro Stanziani, have recently brought this observation up again, stressing the historical, social, and political embeddedness of the knowledge produced in the *zemstvo* statistical bureaus. This should be taken seriously, but not only for demonstrating that the *zemstvo* statistical data cannot be taken at a face value. It is not satisfying to just say that *zemstvo* research should be treated as a source and not as secondary literature. As some researchers, such as David Darrow, have successfully demonstrated, one could also start inquiring about the sources of the statisticians’ biases by tracing them in their involvement with numbers. What did the *zemstvo* statisticians achieve with their research? How much was their thinking influencing its contents? How was their transformation from the oppressed itinerant researchers into the *zemstvo* bureaucrats and potential technocrats of the modernizing empire after 1905 resembled in their writings and publications? These are the questions that I am going to address in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2. POLTAVA STATISTICIANS AT WORK

Chapter 1 sought to cover the institutional preconditions of statistics' development in Poltava between 1881 and 1902 as well as to trace the individual trajectories of statisticians in their parallels and intermingling. This chapter will dedicate more attention to the statistical project developed in Poltava *per se*, both in its organizational-political and knowledge-production dimensions, mostly (but not exclusively) in the second half of the Bureau's existence, between 1902 and 1914. The choice of Poltava appears as quite fortunate since the Statistical Bureau there was particularly active in both research and "extracurricular" activities, leaving a range of sources to inspect.

After "landing" in Poltava, former *narodniki* embarked on the project of *zemstvo* statistics, which initially was an attempt to emulate the model of reform-oriented social research done by the German *Verein für Socialpolitik*. The statisticians' new "movement of going to the people," armed now with scientific knowledge and *zemstvo* (i.e. mainly large landowners' tax) resources, can be read as an attempt to build a system of loyalties between the farmers and urban elites, mediated by the *zemstvo* infrastructure. This project envisaged the deployment of *zemstvo* means to establish correspondence networks and a readership of an agrarianist media outlet, while targeting a very particular audience that the statisticians deemed a paragon for the whole of the countryside. The statisticians were not alien to various imaginaries of a desirable order in the countryside and managed to develop something akin to their own development ideology, close to agrarianism – of course, in conversation with or under influence from similar projects in the region. Their ideal farmer necessarily had to be neither too poor nor too wealthy but sufficiently productive and responsive to the *zemstvo*'s propaganda. This middle peasant, or *serednyak*, was expected to both preserve the Ukrainian traditions while being open to modernization – quite in line with contemporary agrarianist thought. This "wager on the

middle,” borrowing David Darrow’s wording,¹¹² left open the question about the rich and the poor. While the open hatred toward the rich might have become one of the premises for the statisticians’ post-1917 partial rapprochement with the Bolshevik government, the problem of the poor, coded through the issue of *malozemelye*, or land shortage, led the statisticians, in the early 20th century, to endorse the program of peasant resettlement to the Far East and Central Asia.

The period of Poltava *zemstvo* statistics between the early 1900s and 1914 highlighted a perhaps unnoticed transition of the emancipatory project of the 1880s and 1890s to a closer cooperation of the statisticians with the power structures. With the levying of governmental pressure on *zemstvo* statistics after 1905, the Bureau saw a drastic inflation of its staff and developed certain professionalization in regular censuses and other genres of reiterative data collection. The development of proto-welfare state infrastructure of the *zemstvo* favored the emergence of more totalizing visions of statistics and policy imaginaries about population movement. Instead of providing a critical gaze on the peasant economy and governmental policies, *zemstvo* statistics in Poltava came to more and more help the *zemstvo* to see like the state.

The emancipatory promise of statistics and its contradictions

The whole *zemstvo* statistics enterprise was initially designed by the group around Alexander Chuprov, a professor in political economy and statistics at the university of Moscow. Chuprov was an advocate of a pragmatic approach in social research. His main bid was on the claim that current economics knew very little about the real situation in the peasant economy of the empire, hence any simplistic solutions offered by varying political parties were doomed

¹¹² Darrow, *Tsardom of Sufficiency, Empire of Norms: Statistics, Land Allotments, and Agrarian Reform in Russia, 1700–1921*, 165–167.

to fail. First, the research had to be done. For this, Chuprov set out to copy after the German *Verein für Socialpolitik*.¹¹³

Verein für Socialpolitik (VfS) was a German non-governmental organization established by a group of German political economists representing the so-called Historical School in economics. As opposed to the classical, “Manchester” liberals, representatives of the Historical School believed that the English pathway to industrialization could not be taken for granted and simply replicated in other countries – especially so in Germany. Discarding both classical liberal prescriptions as well as Marxist revolutionary doctrine, some professors like Gustav von Schmoller, Adolf Wagner, and Lujo Brentano suggested conducting research to specifically look for ways to alleviate the downsides of fast industrialization that Germany had been undergoing at the time.¹¹⁴ The professors’ plan was to address the workers’ concerns before those would be mobilized in a radical way by the socialists. Regardless of whether this was a realistic goal, the VfS members were criticized from all sides, for being bourgeois by the left, and for being too socialist, or rather *Kathedersozialist*, by the right and center. However, they still managed to produce influential research which might have eventually influenced the government’s policies vis-à-vis the workers.¹¹⁵

The research done by VfS highlighted the use of statistics and, more broadly, quantified research not only for pure governance but also for advocating social reform. After all, statistics, as its name suggests, was initially conceived and practiced as a state-centered discipline, aspiring to “see like the state”¹¹⁶ and was inseparable from the governmentality and the

¹¹³ Kingston-Mann, *In Search of the True West: Culture, Economics, and Problems of Russian Development*, 129.

¹¹⁴ Kingston-Mann, *In Search of the True West: Culture, Economics, and Problems of Russian Development*, 115–116. Steven Leon McClellan, “German Economists and the Intersection of Science and Politics: A History of the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*, 1872 – 1972,” PhD diss., (University of Toronto, 2022), 28, 32.

¹¹⁵ Steven Leon McClellan, “German Economists and the Intersection of Science and Politics: A History of the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*, 1872 – 1972.”

¹¹⁶ James C. Scott, *Seeing like the State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998).

practices of biopolitics.¹¹⁷ At first, statistics developed as a descriptive genre in its German tradition, but later, in the 19th century, it became increasingly quantified in the hands of the English, French, and Belgians, including, most notably, Adolphe Quetelet. Throughout the 19th century, statistics as a widely used method developed at the intersection of various disciplines, ranging from astronomy through thermodynamics, hereditary biology, criminology, anthropology to economics.¹¹⁸ In a narrower sense, statistics as centralized and highly coordinated data collection and preparation of a quantified summaries describing entities and processes within a polity was entangled with the top-down perspective adopted by some statisticians and demographers aligning with the state's or rulers' interests. However, by the mid-19th century, a more critical, social-reformist application of statistical research, close to sociology, was commenced.¹¹⁹ VfS was one such project, aiming to employ statistics for the purposes of social improvement. In France, a remarkable example was that of Frédéric le Play, who embarked on a study of conditions of workers in order to advocate social reform that would lead to “social peace.”¹²⁰ As the scholarship suggests, the Russian response to *Kathedersozialisten* and Le Play was Chuprov's master project of *zemstvo* statistics.¹²¹

The choice of statistics aligned well with the rise of strength of the positivist paradigm and the social prestige of quantification practices. In the new era of positivism, numbers were supposed to provide trustworthiness. Positivism, as a “new intellectual style,” gained traction in Eastern and Central Europe in the 1860s and developed even more actively in the ensuing

¹¹⁷ Alain Desrosières, *The Politics of Large Numbers: A History of Statistical Reasoning* (Harvard University Press, 1998). Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76* (New York: Picador, 2003), 239–264.

¹¹⁸ Theodore M. Porter, *The Rise of Statistical Thinking, 1820–1900* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 7–11.

¹¹⁹ Kingston-Mann, *In Search of the True West: Culture, Economics, and Problems of Russian Development*, 116.

¹²⁰ Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 135–140.

¹²¹ Darrow, *Tsardom of Sufficiency, Empire of Norms: Statistics, Land Allotments, and Agrarian Reform in Russia, 1700–1921*, 135. Kingston-Mann, *In Search of the True West: Culture, Economics, and Problems of Russian Development*, 129.

decades.¹²² The new paradigm preached a firm belief in the scientific fact and “positive” knowledge – something which was meant to fight the preceding paradigm of Romantic idealism. This extended as well to social knowledge, leading to an effort at quantifying social research and giving birth to such disciplines as statistics. The introduction of positivism brought with it and aligned well with the construction of “national economy,” promoted also by the VfS members.¹²³

The adoption of the VfS model, naturally, had to account for Russia’s difference from Germany. While for the VfS, workers in the emergent German industries were the main subject of research, the *zemstvo* statistics project, set in a predominantly agrarian country, sought to produce reform-oriented social research on peasants. Chuprov and his colleagues and former students at the Moscow university Nikolai Kablukov and Aleksander Posnikov curated the opening of the first *zemstvo* statistical bureau, headed by Vasilii Orlov, in the Moscow province. It was this bureau that Nikolai Tereshkevich worked for before heading the newly opened bureau in Poltava in 1881. Overall, Chuprov had an impressive impact over the staffing of provincial *zemstvo* statistical bureaus with his disciples or associates.¹²⁴

The tension between statistics as emancipatory or reformist research and as a centralized governance practice constituted the nexus that persisted throughout the whole period of Poltava *zemstvo* statistics existence. Before the mid-1870s, the main producer of statistics in the Russian Empire was the central government: its Ministry for Internal Affairs presided over the empire-wide net of provincial statistical committees, accountable to the respective governors and the ministry. This system of statistics collection was, of course, highly centralized and served the

¹²² Balázs Trencsényi, Maciej Janowski, Mónika Baár, Maria Falina, and Michal Kopeček (eds.) *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe: Volume I: Negotiating Modernity in the “Long Nineteenth Century,”* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 318.

¹²³ Trencsényi et al., *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe: Volume I: Negotiating Modernity in the “Long Nineteenth Century,”* 318–355.

¹²⁴ Darrow, *Tsardom of Sufficiency, Empire of Norms: Statistics, Land Allotments, and Agrarian Reform in Russia, 1700–1921*, 116.

purposes of governance as envisaged from St. Petersburg. For this, as well as for its inefficiency and blindness toward intra-imperial diversity, it was harshly criticized. *Zemstvo* statistics, on the contrary, had a laxer approach to methodology: almost every *zemstvo* had its own set of questions and its own research program. Some established economists and university professors criticized *zemstvo* statistics exactly for this: because of a certain methodological anarchy, comparisons between provinces or any summarization of *zemstvo* data appeared unfeasible – and the *zemstvo* data appeared useless at the level of the empire. Although methodological diversity was *zemstvo* statistics' feature that stemmed from its decentralized organization, in some moments it still had to be defended. When the question of a possible unification of statistical programs was debated during the 9th Congress of doctors and naturalists in 1894, Rusov strongly advocated for a methodological diversity practiced in various provinces. Elsewhere, yet in 1886, Rusov defended the decentralized principle in *zemstvo* statistics as following naturally from their goals as they were first designed in the 1870s. *Zemstvo* statistics were from the very beginning meant to help prepare policies planned by this or that *provincial* government; since some of the provinces abounded with forests and had poorer soils, others had more fisheries and yet others, factories, statistics could not be, for Rusov, one and the same for the vast space across the empire. The principles of local government and self-standing statistical enterprise were organically linked, and their separation only meant further attempts by the government to enforce centralization.¹²⁵ It is only logical that this reasoning came from a committed Ukrainophile – the Ukrainian movement had had a protracted record of opposition to centralized rule in Russia, present in the writings of Mykola Kostomarov, Mykhailo Drahomanov, and others.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Alexander Russov, “Oblastnoie nachalo v zemskoi statistike” [Regional principle in *zemstvo* statistics], in *Step: Khersonskiyi beletrystychyi zbirnyk* (St. Petersburg: Tipografii V. S. Balasheva, 1886), 351–391.

¹²⁶ Nikolai Kostomarov, “Dve russkii narodnosti” [Two Russian nationalities], *Osnova* 3, 1861, 33–80. <http://litopys.org.ua/kostomar/kos38.htm>. Yekelchuk, *Ukrainofily: Svit ukrainskykh patriotiv druhoi polovyny XIX stolittia* [Ukrainophiles: The world of Ukrainian patriots of the second half of the 19th century], 177–190.

One remarkable example of how *zemstvo* statistics paradigm could be renegotiated far from Moscow was the treatment of the category of the commune by the statisticians in Poltava. Chuprov conceived the first *zemstvo* statistics programs in a uniform manner on demand or invitation of various *zemstvos*.¹²⁷ Any such program necessarily presumed the existence of the so-called commune (*obshchina*), i.e. a practice of collective land property, in the province. In traditional Russian populism, from which Chuprovian project emerged, commune was deemed Russia's shortcut to socialism, enabling the countryside's transition to it bypassing the deleterious development of capitalism.¹²⁸ Many a *zemstvo* statistician inherited this belief and approached their rural studies with it in mind – including Moscow bureau's first head Vasilii Orlov as well as his successor Nikolai Kablukov. The idea was to demonstrate the commune's persistence and survival despite capitalism. This presumption about the commune permeated the questionnaires and tables, and the penchant for seeing the commune in the village was initially applied to Ukrainian provinces, too. In the early 1890s, this was strongly objected to by Rusov, who was familiar with the situation on the ground and fiercely attacked the statistical program's fixation on using the category *propriété foncière communale* (communal land property). In one of the letters to Kuliabko-Koretskii, he related his frustration with the program's insistence on communal property while he could clearly see that in “Romny county, they [Cossacks] live exactly like gentry [pany] in farmsteads [khutoramy na otrubakh].”¹²⁹ This was true of many other counties in Poltava and Chernihiv province, too. Rusov generously scolded Tereshkevich for blindly adopting the Moscow research program in what he saw as an inappropriate context. Not only did the application of the concept of communal property to

¹²⁷ Darrow, *Tsardom of Sufficiency, Empire of Norms: Statistics, Land Allotments, and Agrarian Reform in Russia, 1700–1921*, 116–117.

¹²⁸ Some *narodnik* thinkers deemed the preservation of the commune as a chance for Russia to use its “privilege of backwardness.” This was the belief particularly in the so-called “legal populism.” See Andrzej Walicki, *The Controversy Over Capitalism: Studies in the Social Philosophy of the Russian Populists* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 107–132.

¹²⁹ Letter of Oleksandr Rusov to Mykola Kuliabko-Koretskyi, 9 January 1892, F. 84, Op. 1, No. 29.

Cossacks hinder the understanding of the province's economy. The introduction of legal "fictions" such as social estates (*sosloviia*) to social research, according to Rusov, obscured the fact that some nobles tilled the land, too.¹³⁰ The program that was developed in Moscow with clear Russian *narodnik* preconceptions did not fit Poltava countryside.

Despite the emancipatory promise and highly decentralized constellation of *zemstvo* statistics, it still sometimes had illiberal overtones. This illiberal motif, in counterpoint to the statisticians' liberal agenda, was apparently rooted already in the statistics' foundations. As historiography attests, statistics developed as the state's imaginary, and from its very beginning it aspired to construct as comprehensive picture of the studied subject as possible. This produced respective social imaginaries about most comprehensive coverage and the population's complete compliance with recurrent requests to provide data about itself. Already in the late 1890s, some of the Bureau's correspondents dreamt of well-funded statistics that would make "the whole of Russia stand in front of us as if in the mirror," which had apparently already been if not in common parlance, then at least quite widespread in professional literature.¹³¹ I hypothesize that the power of statistics became most tangible after 1905, when the central government's close surveillance and administrative measures against the *zemstvo* statistics were levied, and the Poltava bureau could straighten its shoulders, expand the staff, and normally proceed with its censuses and inventories.¹³² The totalizing social imaginary espoused by some Poltava statisticians can be well demonstrated in a quote describing the conducting of a regular provincial census by Rklytskyi:

¹³⁰ Letter of Oleksandr Rusov to Mykola Kuliabko-Koretskyi, 1 January 1892, F. 84, Op. 1, No. 28.

¹³¹ Iakov Imshenetskii, "*Khutorianin*" i ego chitateli: doklad, chitannyi v godichnom zasedanii Poltavskogo obsch-va s-kh 23 noiabr. 1900 g. ["Khutorianin" and its readers: a report read at the annual meeting of the Poltava Agricultural Society on 23 November 1900] (Poltava, 1901).

¹³² Johnson, "Liberal professionals and professional liberals: the *zemstvo* statisticians and their work," 350. This process was apparently so successful that in 1918 Poltava's advice on this or that type of research was requested by various neighboring *zemstvos* (including the "Russian" ones) and even by the Ukrainian governments' agencies in Kyiv. See *Perpiska statisticheskogo biuro Poltavskogo gubernskogo zemstvo so statisticheskimi biuro drugikh gubernii* [Correspondence between the Statistical Bureau of the Poltava provincial *zemstvo* and the statistical bureaus of other provinces], F. 723, Op. 1, No. 3, State Archive of the Poltava Oblast (DAPO).

*All of us are feeling solemn. Once in ten years, this great endeavor is undertaken, the whole population is rising on its feet in order to give an answer on how much of it is here, what are its productive forces, what do these forces consist of, and where they are directed. A census is being conducted in the province which, by area and population, exceeds many secondary states.*¹³³

Or as he noted down later, “I have to consciously suppress my interest toward living people who are constantly passing by my table. Census is becoming a mechanical, tiring work.”¹³⁴

By the 1910s, statistics in Poltava appears to have lost its purely emancipatory social-research agenda and has instead turned to serve the governmentality of the *zemstvo*. As a social fantasy, endorsed not only by the activists but also by the *zemstvo* bureaucracy, it now acquired a certain totalizing dynamic. Routinized censuses served to levy the taxes regularly and in a well-calculated manner. Partly relying on them, the *zemstvo* further expanded its staff and funding for ever more provincial policies, from new *zemstvo* elementary and craft schools to agronomic aid and resettlement assistance for peasants willing to move for Siberia (see below). In the absence of industrialization, or to be more precise, since industrialization was happening elsewhere to the east and south from Poltava and successfully attracted spare labor from the region already, the Poltava provincial *zemstvo* appeared to be busy with more moderate programs of modernization, still remotely akin to German *Sozialpolitik* (social policy as in VfS). As conceived yet in the 19th century, social policy was directed at mitigating the rising inequalities and social differentiation that resulted from liberal economic settings. Its proponents advocated state intervention aimed at improving social and economic conditions of workers – not to pursue a socialist cause but to prevent it from happening. I would argue that the Poltava *zemstvo* moved somewhat along a similar direction in the 1900s and 1910s, although the target audience were, of course, not workers but Cossacks and peasants. Since there was no

¹³³ Mikhail Rklitskii, *Iz proshlago i nastoiashchego chernozemnoi derevni* [From the Past and Present of the Black-Soil Countryside] (Poltava: Elektricheskaia tipo-litografiia I. L. Frishberga, 1914), 17–25.

¹³⁴ Mikhail Rklitskii, *Iz proshlago i nastoiashchego chernozemnoi derevni* [From the Past and Present of the Black-Soil Countryside] (Poltava: Elektricheskaia tipo-litografiia I. L. Frishberga, 1914), 17–25.

large industry in the region, the *zemstvos* (not only on the provincial but also county level) supported crafts and artisanship and respective education for peasant children. When peasant outmigration to Siberia began threatening with peasant destitution, the *zemstvo* initiated a policy aimed at aiding to those deciding to emigrate or preventing them from doing so (see below). There also was a growing number of agronomists and insurance inspectors roaming around the countryside, seeking ways to help peasants in an organized, coordinated way (and often in collaboration with the central government's structures). The decades preceding 1917 saw surging eagerness of the *zemstvo* officials, including statisticians, to intervene with top-down measures. This might have eventually paved the way for some statisticians' at least partial post-1917 embracement of high modernism and illiberal transformations of society by the Bolshevik government.¹³⁵

The problem of reaching out to peasants

Zemstvo statistics project can and should be conceived not only as an intellectual, but also as a social and organizational enterprise. By this I mean that, apart from production of knowledge, it also served the purpose of building new interpersonal connections and, maybe to some extent, feelings of belonging. The fundamental question when analyzing this project is the one of trust between the correspondents and researchers, which could be established via various means, through the alignment of interests and substantial information exchanges to the more pragmatic means of using the language of the correspondents in communication (i.e. Ukrainian). In a Chuprov-inspired effort to assist willing farmers to improve the faring of their

¹³⁵ Continuities between the *zemstvo* statistics and centralized statistics of in the Soviet times have been commented upon in the literature and are also visible in the case of Poltava bureau. The Bureau's head, Hryhorii Rotmistrov, occupied his office well into the 1920s, working now for the new regime. Some of the Bureau's members stayed there, too. Still, not much detail on the modalities of cooperation is known. Mespoulet, *Statistique et Révolution en Russie. Un Compromis Impossible (1880-1930)*. Dmitrii Solovei, *Reshetilovskaia iarmarka 12-14 oktiabria 1923 g: statisticheskoie issledovanie* [Reshetylivka fair of 12-14 October 1923: a statistical survey] (Poltava: 1924), foreword.

households and thus increase the efficiency of region's agriculture, the Bureau statisticians attempted to create a loyal audience for their messages. Although, out of necessity, the statisticians initially had to rely for data supply on the established and literate village elites, such as gentry landowners, priests, wealthier peasants, and *zemstvo* workers, they later strove to broaden the base of their correspondents and readers among ordinary peasants and Cossacks whom they wished to see as would-be farmers, alike to those in Western and Central Europe. Overall, statisticians had little trust toward the elites – quite predictable given their populist background.¹³⁶ They sought instead to establish trustworthy relations with their core target audience, for which they embarked upon the agrojournalist venture, joining ranks with the experts from the Poltava Agricultural Society and systematically seeking ways to reach out to ordinary farmers via media outlets. This emergent alliance between the “third element” and the farmers was set in a certain tension with the interests of the conservative landowners and central bureaucrats. Given sufficient conducive conditions, this alliance might have been a good breeding ground for an agrarianist movement – and as I will show in the next section, the statisticians developed respective developmental thinking in line with some agrarianist line of thought, though lacking the political component.

However, the reaching-out effort by the Statistical Bureau could be also read from a different, more long-term perspective – as the former *narodniki*-cum-statisticians' yet another “movement of going to the people.” After suffering a humiliating defeat in facing the peasants' misunderstanding, followed by a series of arrests and persecutions, some *narodniki* chose to pursue radical and even extremist politics in the cities, while others went to the village anew, but as rural *zemstvo*-assigned professionals. Seen from such a perspective, the return to the people in the statisticians' clothes made one significantly better-equipped and empowered with the technology of statistics collection and processing. They returned to the people they were so

¹³⁶ Stanziani, “European Statistics, Russian Numbers, and Social Dynamics, 1861–1914,” 10-11.

dedicated towards – this time, well-prepared, and with the local governments, liberal nobility, and the latter’s money (in the form of *zemstvo*-levied taxes) on their side.¹³⁷ Clothed in the thick matter of *zemstvo* statistics, this new project was still within the enlightenment paradigm but sought to approach the peasantry in a more dialogical, pragmatic way. Instead of openly proselytizing anti-government views, the statisticians and many of their *zemstvo* colleagues, including doctors, teachers, agronomists, feldshers, and others, strove to help peasants to meet their needs by using the benefits of modernity and science. This new type of interaction between intelligentsia and peasants was based on a progressivist, much less radical platform, rooted in the so-called “theory of small deeds” which was advocated by a *narodnik* Iakov Abramov in the 1880s (see Chapter 1).

Data collection was a crucial part of the statistics project of reaching out to peasantry. Initially, the only way to collect data was to go to a village in person, assisted by a number of registrars and statisticians, and conduct a household inventory (*podvornaia perepis*) – a genre first developed by Orlov in Moscow and then disseminated in other provinces, including Poltava.¹³⁸ The first Bureau head in Poltava had to travel in person across the province in order to conduct the first few of the planned research pieces, until he contracted a disease during one such trip and died.¹³⁹ On the one hand, seeing peasants and real villages with one’s own eyes must have been genuinely instructive in a way that a thorough ethnography or any research work in the field should be – helping to challenge pre-existing established schemata of thinking. On the other hand, given the limited staff of the Bureau as well as the pressing needs and scarce time, household inventories conducted in such a way could not become the only research genre

¹³⁷ This is not to say that the *narodniki* had been alien to research before; on the contrary, some circles such as the famous Ukrainophile *Hromada* in Kyiv in the 1870s undertook numerous ethnographic research activities in the region, plus the already mentioned one-day census in Kyiv. The personality of Pavlo Chubynskyi was particularly remarkable in this regard.

¹³⁸ Darrow, *Tsardom of Sufficiency, Empire of Norms: Statistics, Land Allotments, and Agrarian Reform in Russia, 1700–1921*, 117.

¹³⁹ Johnson, “Liberal professionals and professional liberals: the *zemstvo* statisticians and their work,” 361.

practiced by the statisticians since the completion of the full cycle of inventories of each county within the province took around a decade.

While the inventory was supposed to primarily serve the purposes of tax assessment, the *zemstvo* also required a more frequent and regular review of the state of affairs in the agriculture of the province. For this, the Bureau launched a series of publications titled *Obzor selskago khoziaistva v Poltavskoi gubernii po soobshcheniiam korrespondentov* (“Review of agriculture in Poltava province according to the messages of correspondents”), one of the rarely consistent publication series throughout the Bureau’s history, appearing in print as early as 1887 and up to 1917. Annually, Bureau members sent out questionnaires asking their correspondents to fill them out based on the information available to them. These included mainly questions on weather conditions, the land tilled, and the harvest collected.¹⁴⁰ Effective and timely delivery of these data required an established and sustainable network of correspondents in the countryside across the whole province – what I argue was part of the **proto-welfare state infrastructure** of the *zemstvo*, on par with the dozens of doctors, teachers, feldshers, insurance inspectors, resettlement agents, and other *zemstvo*’s rank-and-file employees deployed on the ground to conduct day-to-day work and communication with the peasantry.

I do not have exact information on how the contacts with the first correspondents were established, but I presume that their list was organized based on the “snowball” method throughout the whole period under study, i.e., by asking those whom the statisticians already

¹⁴⁰ To my knowledge, the original questionnaire cards used for collecting data for these reviews have not been preserved. The archival collection of the Poltava statistical bureau has only very scarce number of documents, scattered across years and topics, mostly correspondence and other technical materials – but not the questionnaire cards. Most of the materials have been damaged or lost during the German occupation in the Second World War. However, I managed to find some of the questionnaires in a different archival collection related to German occupation period, namely, old house books that served the purpose of the registration of population. These are regular registry books, each per house, where its residents are listed. The covers of most of these books were made out of filled-in Statistical Bureau’s questionnaire cards; however, these are not very susceptible to proper analysis. This is a significant constraint since there is little choice of how to analyze data collection and evaluation performed by the statisticians – things can only be inferred from their publications, where these data are already presented as processed.

knew (the *zemstvo*'s "third element" or landowners, relatives in the villages, etc.) to suggest one or more further people who could be addressed next. The traces of the use of this method are visible in the lists published by the Bureau at the end of their *Obzory* ("Reviews..."), such as when a few people with the same last name Onatskii, each from a nearby village, were listed in a row.¹⁴¹ In this case, a connection was probably made through one of the relatives, with the very same last name, who worked as a *zemstvo* feldsher (paramedic) in the same county.¹⁴²

Judging from the prefaces to the *Obzory*, the statisticians took lots of care about the extension and better representativeness of their correspondents' lists across numerous counties; unfortunately, some of the counties were still not represented. It was important to maintain contact with the older suppliers of information while further extending the networks. The technology proved quite efficient in the 1890s, when the network of correspondents expanded from 309 in 1886 through 740 in 1892 through 1254 in 1895, climaxing with 1915 in 1897.¹⁴³ The abrupt downfall of processed correspondence after 1898 (almost halving to 1030) can be explained by the disruption in the Bureau's functioning when some of its most important members, including the head Bunin, left the town (see Chapter 1).¹⁴⁴ The network size was staying low throughout the early 1900s (682 in 1900) but then resurged by the end of the first

¹⁴¹ *Obzor selskogo khoziaistva v Poltavskoi gubernii za 1894 god po soobshcheniiam korrespondentov* [Review of agriculture in Poltava province for 1894 according to the messages of the correspondents] (Poltava: Tipo-lit. I. A. Dokhmana, 1895), XIX.

¹⁴² *Adres-kalendar i Spravochnaia knizhka Poltavskoi gubernii na 1899 god* [Address-calendar and a reference book of the Poltava province for 1899], ed. D. A. Ivanenko (Poltava: Tipo-Litografiia Gubernskogo Pravleniia, 1899), 21.

¹⁴³ *Obzor selskogo khoziaistva v Poltavskoi gubernii za 1887 god po soobshcheniiam korrespondentov* [Review of agriculture in Poltava province for 1887 according to the messages of the correspondents] (Poltava: Tipo-lit. I. A. Dokhmana, 1887), foreword. *Obzor selskogo khoziaistva v Poltavskoi gubernii za 1892 god po soobshcheniiam korrespondentov* [Review of agriculture in Poltava province for 1892 according to the messages of the correspondents] (Poltava: Tipo-lit. I. A. Dokhmana, 1893), foreword. *Obzor selskogo khoziaistva v Poltavskoi gubernii za 1895 god po soobshcheniiam korrespondentov* [Review of agriculture in Poltava province for 1895 according to the messages of the correspondents] (Poltava: Tipo-lit. I. A. Dokhmana, 1896), foreword. *Obzor selskogo khoziaistva v Poltavskoi gubernii za 1897 god po soobshcheniiam korrespondentov* [Review of agriculture in Poltava province for 1897 according to the messages of the correspondents] (Poltava: Tipo-lit. I. A. Dokhmana, 1898), foreword.

¹⁴⁴ *Obzor selskogo khoziaistva v Poltavskoi gubernii za 1898 god po soobshcheniiam korrespondentov* [Review of agriculture in Poltava province for 1898 according to the messages of the correspondents] (Poltava: Tipo-lit. I. A. Dokhmana, 1900), foreword.

decade of the new century, reaching 1175 in 1910.¹⁴⁵ The statisticians began to actively resort to the help of local governments in rural municipalities since 1901, thus replacing or at least complementing older networks with those collaborators on the ground who could be expected to always be there.

Establishing such connections was most surely not the easiest part of the job. Trust towards statistics-gathering, not only on the receiving but also on the providing side, was no way given and still had to be taken care of. One of the ways to achieve it could be through asking those already prone and ready to answer, i.e., the landowners already acquainted with and benefiting from the *zemstvo*'s activities, *zemstvo* workers in the village, or – more interestingly – those audiences in the countryside that the statisticians considered most susceptible to their reformist messages (i.e. ordinary farmers). Already in the late 1880s, correspondents network stopped being an instrument for one-way transmission of data from the counties to Poltava and became also a tool of transmission of agronomist knowledge to the curious peasantry. Demand for such knowledge, as one of the reports claimed in 1887, came from the correspondents; they asked that the *Obzory* included also “helpful information on agriculture,” for which purpose the Bureau promised to address Poltava Agricultural Society, asking to provide them such information.¹⁴⁶

It seems that it was through this collaboration that a later joint venture of the Poltava Statistical Bureau and the Agricultural Society was conceived of and launched. After suffering the closedown of the unofficial part of the *Gubernskiiye vedomosti*, in 1896, the Bureau team became de facto editors of the newly founded magazine *Khutorianin*. Although later

¹⁴⁵ *Obzor selskogo khoziaistva v Poltavskoi gubernii za 1900 god po soobshcheniiam korrespondentov* [Review of agriculture in Poltava province for 1900 according to the messages of the correspondents] (Poltava: Tipo-lit. I. A. Dokhmana, 1901). *Obzor selskogo khoziaistva v Poltavskoi gubernii za 1910 god po soobshcheniiam korrespondentov* [Review of agriculture in Poltava province for 1910 according to the messages of the correspondents] (Poltava: Tipo-lit. I. A. Dokhmana, 1911).

¹⁴⁶ *Obzor selskogo khoziaistva v Poltavskoi gubernii za 1887 god po soobshcheniiam korrespondentov* [Review of agriculture in Poltava province for 1887 according to the messages of the correspondents], foreword.

Khutorianin would become a paradigmatic example of agrojournalism as defined and described by Ilya Gerasimov, in the late 1890s it published on a broader range of topics that could be of interest to the farmers, including economics and public education. As Bunin claimed, *zemstvo* provided 2,000 rubles annually as subsidies to the Agricultural Society so that the Statistical Bureau's correspondents could receive their exemplars for free.¹⁴⁷ Catering to the farmer audience was an important part of the Bureau's work in the 1890s and 1900s. In 1899 or 1900, the Agricultural Society commissioned a survey and a report, prepared by a former statistician and future Duma member Iakov Imshenetskii. Some of the surveyed readers, predominantly peasants, asked for even more information about agriculture, economy, and life of their counterparts in other countries. Imshenetskii particularly stressed that some respondents even asked that the magazine be published in Ukrainian – in the language much more comprehensible to its core readership who did not normally speak Russian.¹⁴⁸ *Khutorianin* was published in Russian throughout the whole period due to the strict governmental policies towards the Ukrainian language and had a considerable readership that reached also beyond the Poltava province.

It appears that, despite the central government's interventions such as the one during the Rusov incident in 1902, Poltava Statistical Bureau was on its way to establishing a loyal and receptive base in the countryside. Annual cycles of surveys and regularly conducted province censuses seemed effective vehicles for legitimizing statistics among the province's population. However, my contention is that the effective legitimacy of *zemstvo* statistics was rather limited and got further disrupted during the First World War, as the government reached out to the countryside for manpower and produce to ensure the war effort. Whatever had been built before

¹⁴⁷ Bunin, "Iz zhizni provintsii v 90-kh godakh" [From the life in the province in the 90s] (no pagination).

¹⁴⁸ Imshenetskii, "Khutorianin" i ego chitateli: doklad, chitannyi v godichnom zasedanii Poltavskago obsch-va s-kh 23 noiabr. 1900 g. ["Khutorianin" and its readers: a report read at the annual meeting of the Poltava Agricultural Society on 23 November 1900].

1914, if even limited, had to stand to a challenging test – the very same test that the Russian Empire failed, collapsing into the Civil War after 1917.

Poltava agrarian ideal

Landing in Poltava by the early 1890s and having to meaningfully interact both with the *zemstvo* board and the peasantry, the statisticians could not just maintain their old *narodnik* views. First of all, they had to undergo a certain “taming,” agreeing to the moderate, step-by-step work in accordance with the “theory of small deeds.” Secondly, the close study of the countryside in Poltava revealed a number of observations that must have contradicted their old *narodnik* preconceptions. It soon became apparent, for instance, that capitalism had already set foot in the village.¹⁴⁹ One of the first special studies conducted by the Poltava bureau in the 1880s found out that the province had seen quite intensive land market and the rise of an entrepreneurial class of Cossacks that actively bought up lands from the inefficient noble manors throughout the 1870s.¹⁵⁰ Another reality check, which, however, came as no surprise to the Ukrainophiles among the statisticians, was that almost half of the rural population of the region never belonged to communes (*obshchiny*) and had in fact normal individual inheritable land property.¹⁵¹ The conventional *narodnik* plan to rely upon communes as vehicles for bypassing the capitalist phase on the way to socialism thus became unfeasible in Poltava. As will be shown in the next section, the image the statisticians had of the Poltava countryside was that of accumulation of capital rather than of the preservation of the commune. The Moscow

¹⁴⁹ Esther Kingston-Mann, “Statistics, Social Science, and Social Justice: The Zemstvo Statisticians of Pre-Revolutionary Russia,” in *Russian in the European Context 1789–1914: A Member of the Family*, eds. Susan P. McCaffray and Michael Melancon (Macmillan Palgrave, 2005), 128–129.

¹⁵⁰ Nikolai Tereshkevich, *Ocherk dvizheniia zemelnoi sobstvennosti v Poltavskoi gubernii za 8-letii 1870-1877 goda (sravnitelno s Moskovskoi guberniiei)* [Essay on the movement of land property in the Poltava province within eight years between 1870 and 1877 (in comparison to the Moscow province)] (Poltava: Tip. N. Pigurenko, 1881).

¹⁵¹ Mikhail Rklitskii, *Zemlia i zemelnyia otnosheniia v Poltavshchine* [Land and Land Relations in Poltava] (Poltava: Tip. T-va Pechatnago Dela, 1917), 9–12.

zemstvo statistical bureau's studies came to a somehow similarly disappointing conclusion in the 1880s and 1890s, finding that the commune was hardly what the intellectuals imagined it to be. The statisticians in Poltava had then to somehow marry their idealist visions with the exacerbating reality. Their successful landing in Poltava required localization of their thinking.

The statisticians in Poltava never produced coherent or programmatic texts about the transformations that they desired to see in the countryside. It is also hard to presume that the dozens of statisticians changing offices, coming to and leaving Poltava within two decades could also hold uniform and unchanging views. However, I still believe that a few words can be said about their loose rather than coherent set of beliefs. Those can be extracted from the statisticians' less formal publications, such as the collection of essays published by Rklytskyi in 1914 or the survey prepared by Rusov and Padalka by 1905, or the statisticians' correspondence.

The Poltava statisticians kept quite a few of their old *narodnik* concerns about the post-Reform era. They genuinely despised the rich. Rusov in his letters to Kuliabko-Koretskii complained that the rich were wasting the outstandingly fertile black soils in their possession, while the smart but more limited in resources households in Prussia or Bohemia invested more into agricultural technologies and thus could harvest more out of their much less fertile clayish soils.¹⁵² Rklytskyi was outright hostile to the rich landowners, or *kulaki* (*kurkuli* in Ukrainian), who, in his opinion, aimed to grab more land than they could ever work on. The statisticians also suspected the rich peasants of concealing the total amount of land in their possession. The *kulaki*, or *kurkuli* in Ukrainian, allegedly rent it to the poor at disproportionate rates and, of

¹⁵² Letter of Oleksandr Rusov to Mykola Kuliabko-Koretskyi, 17 October 1893, F. 84, Op. 1, No. 49.

course, were not interested in agronomical assistance from the *zemstvo* – since they could profit even without it, due to the sheer economy of scale of their households.¹⁵³

The poor were problematic, too. The former *narodniki* naturally had lots of compassion for the poor’s sufferings, but they also could not help but notice that it was the poorest in the village, who, on par with the wealthiest, were the most susceptible to the capitalist lure of the city.

Poltava statistical surveys of the early 1900s regularly reported that the province had a clear surplus of workforce which found its way to the developing industries of big metropolitan areas of the south, such as in Ekaterinoslav and in the Donbas basin.¹⁵⁴ The results of this seasonal labor migration provided reasons for moral panic in Poltava. Throughout 1896 and 1897, the team of statisticians including Rusov, Padalka, and Vasylenko under the auspices of the Poltava Provincial Statistical Committee (not to be confused with the *zemstvo* statistical bureau) sent out around three hundred questionnaires to the residents of the province. The correspondents were quite diverse, with Cossacks represented at 25%, priests at 20.7%, peasants at 16.7%, and teachers at 15.2%. The questions that interested the researchers were rather ethnographic, such as on how the people in a certain neighborhood called themselves (i.e. ethnonyms), or whether the population was mixed or “pure” in ethnic (“tribal”) terms. But the most interesting was question number three, whereby the researchers asked the correspondents to report on the changes in the old ways of life (such as folklore, accommodation, and clothing) under the influence of modernization and industrialization.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Rklitskii, *Iz proshlago i nastoiashchego chernozemnoi derevni* [From the Past and Present of the Black-Soil Countryside], 23–24.

¹⁵⁴ *Statisticheskii spravochnik po Iugu Rossii*. (Poltava: Elektricheskaiia tipo-litografiia I. A. Dokhmana, 1910). 3–4.

¹⁵⁵ Lev Padalka, “Chto skazalo naselenie Poltavskoi gubernii of svoem starom byte” [“What the population of Poltava gubernia said about its old way of life] in *Trudy Poltavskoi Uchenoi Arkhivnoi Komissii* [The Works of the Poltava Scholarly Archival Commission], Issue no. 2. (Poltava: Elektricheskaiia tipografiya G. I. Markevicha, 1905), 3–5.

Masked in ethnographic terms, this was one of the fundamental questions bothering the *narodniki* and the Ukrainophile circles. They all shared a sincere distrust towards cities and urban culture, since city life meant moral corruption and ruination of traditional values that resulted in alcoholism and diseases. For those among the *narodniki* who also had Ukrainian sympathies, concerns about Russification mattered, too. In Ukraine in the late Russian Empire, especially in Poltava, the village still emblemized the “pure” Ukrainian culture which served as a source of inspiration and provider of material to the Ukrainian writers and activists. Cities, on the contrary, were Russian-speaking and Russian-looking; in the early 1900s, the only modernity available in Poltava was the Russian modernity.¹⁵⁶ The Ukrainophiles among the statisticians particularly feared the assimilating consequences of the rural population’s contact with what they called “foreign elements” (*postoronniie elementy*).¹⁵⁷ This was not at all unique for the Ukrainian populist thought – the Hungarian populists, for instance, also shared a conservative tilt that bordered or sometimes even directly converged with xenophobia – aligning well with the criticism of capitalism and urban modernity.¹⁵⁸

The susceptibility to urban influences was the problem both with the poor and with the rich. Both these groups, placed at the extremes of rural economic life, were suspected of easily surrendering to the pressures of assimilation. The poor went to the cities for better salaries and brought with them back home Russified language, factory-made clothes, and soldier, factory or even prison (“*ostrozhnyie*”) songs. The wealthy, while residing in the village, had enough money to emulate the lifestyle of the urbanites, and hence once again served as transmitters of what appeared as Russian modernity to the countryside. They also – especially so the youth –

¹⁵⁶ Portnova, *Lyubyty i navchaty: selianstvo v uyavlennyakh ukrainskoi inteligentsii druhoi polivyny XIX stolittia* [To love and to educate: peasantry in the beliefs of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in the second half of the 19th century], 167–168.

¹⁵⁷ Padalka, “Chto skazalo naselenie Poltavskoi gubernii of svoem starom byte” [“What the population of Poltava gubernia said about its old way of life], 56.

¹⁵⁸ Péter Hanák, “The Anti-Capitalist Ideology of the Populists,” in Joseph Held (ed.), *Populism in Eastern Europe. Racism, Nationalism, and Society* (Boulder: East European Monographs), 145–161.

gladly bought the factory-made clothes and swiftly came to resemble urban lads and girls. The well-off did no longer build their houses in traditional ways, erecting instead brick homes covered with iron roofs.¹⁵⁹ It is only ironic that the statisticians themselves were epitome of Russian imperial urban modernity. From a privileged position, they exercised their paternalist gaze at the peasantry who had to be kept within the conservation (rural) area of tradition and “old ways of life.”¹⁶⁰

The statisticians’ solution was not, however, the negation of modernity as espoused by more conservative Ukrainian writers and activists such as Ivan Nechui-Levytskyi or Panas Myrnyi (Panas Rudchenko).¹⁶¹ They sought instead to make it come with a Ukrainian face.¹⁶² Believing that it was the middle peasants (*serednyaky*) who had both the incentives and means to preserve traditions while seeking ways to improve productivity of their households, the statisticians bet on the rural middle class.¹⁶³ The survey’s authors actively praised the “resistant and solid elements of the village,” which had to “transform all possible external influences and develop new ways of life in continuity with the old ones.”¹⁶⁴ They also expected middle peasants to be more receptive to the *zemstvo* messages, taking the *zemstvo* agronomical advice,

¹⁵⁹ Padalka, “Chto skazalo naselenie Poltavskoi gubernii of svoem starom byte” [“What the population of Poltava gubernia said about its old way of life], 31.

¹⁶⁰ This was not characteristic of Poltava statisticians only but pertained to the *narodnik* tradition more broadly. As Tetiana Portnova stressed, the majority of intellectuals “would like it if the peasantry remained indifferent to the advantages of the city life.” Portnova, *Lyubyty i navchaty: selianstvo v uyavlennyakh ukrainskoi inteligentsii druhoi polivyny XIX stolittia* [To love and to educate: peasantry in the beliefs of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in the second half of the 19th century], 181.

¹⁶¹ In 1897, Panas Myrnyi (Rudchenko), who would soon move to Poltava to work for the Poltava provincial *zemstvo*, remarked that “the contemporary evil [post-Reform Era capitalism] is worse than the old one [serfdom].” Portnova, *Lyubyty i navchaty: selianstvo v uyavlennyakh ukrainskoi inteligentsii druhoi polivyny XIX stolittia* [To love and to educate: peasantry in the beliefs of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in the second half of the 19th century], 167–168.

¹⁶² In a certain way, this eclecticism was similar to the Ukrainian activists’ attempt to come up with the Ukrainian modernist style in architecture in the early-19th-century Poltava; several Central European nationalist movements were looking for similar solutions at the time. Anton Kotenko, “The Ukrainian Project in Search of National Space, 1861–1914,” PhD diss. (Budapest: Central European University, 2014), 258–266.

¹⁶³ The survey’s authors called “middle classes” “preservers of still surviving antique clothes.” Padalka, “Chto skazalo naselenie Poltavskoi gubernii of svoem starom byte” [“What the population of Poltava gubernia said about its old way of life], 31.

¹⁶⁴ Padalka, “Chto skazalo naselenie Poltavskoi gubernii of svoem starom byte” [“What the population of Poltava gubernia said about its old way of life], 31.

sending their children to schools for education, and cooperating with the statisticians, providing the latter with all the needed data.¹⁶⁵

All of this allows to identify the thinking of at least some Poltava statisticians as close to some sort of agrarianist ideology. Of course, in the situation of almost complete political closure before 1905 and due to the brittle compromise between *zemstvo* freedoms, radical beliefs, and central government's pressure, the statisticians carefully avoided talking about a desirable political transformation. To my knowledge, pro-republican language will resurface in their writings only in 1917, after the February Revolution. However, their thoughts about the desirable situation in the countryside can be framed as what Dietmar Müller and Angela Harre also referred to as a "development ideology."¹⁶⁶ As such, it is comparable to other similar projects elsewhere in Eastern and Central Europe.

According to Trencsényi et al., agrarianism is not as easy to "locate in the conventional political spectrum" as it deliberately occupies a position "in-between," combining the features of both the left and the right.¹⁶⁷ Some agrarianisms "underlined the preservation of the authentic folk tradition as essential component of a given country's development," which naturally went well along with the criticism of urban modernity.¹⁶⁸ However, apart from that, and unlike the more conservative traditions of agrarianism, the Poltava agrarian ideal envisaged a strong engagement with Chaianov-inspired public agronomy modernization project.¹⁶⁹ This project

¹⁶⁵ Rklitskii, *Iz proshlago i nastoiashchego chernozemnoi derevni* [From the Past and Present of the Black-Soil Countryside], 25.

¹⁶⁶ Dietmar Müller and Angela Harre, "Introduction: Agrarianism as Third Way" in *Transforming Rural Societies Agrarian Property and Agrarianism in East Central Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, eds. Dietmar Müller and Angela Harre, (StudienVerlag, 2011), 8.

¹⁶⁷ Balázs Trencsényi, Maciej Janowski, Mónika Baár, Maria Falina, and Michal Kopeček (eds.) *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe: Volume I: Negotiating Modernity in the "Long Nineteenth Century."* (Oxford University Press, 2016), 469.

¹⁶⁸ Balázs Trencsényi, Maciej Janowski, Mónika Baár, Maria Falina, and Michal Kopeček (eds.) *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe: Volume I: Negotiating Modernity in the "Long Nineteenth Century,"* 470.

¹⁶⁹ More on Chaianov's agrarian project – the theory of peasant economy – in Bruisch, Katja. "Historicizing Chaianov: Intellectual and scientific roots of the Theory of Peasant Economy," in *Transforming Rural Societies Agrarian Property and Agrarianism in East Central Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, eds. Dietmar Müller and Angela Harre (StudienVerlag, 2011), 96–113.

might have offered them the solution to the crisis of Russian populism, marked by the capitalism's advent to the village. Instead of calling for full-scale modernization and industrialization while discarding the peasantry as backward, like the Marxists did, the Poltava statisticians sought a third way between the two dominant narratives of socialism and imperial top-down capitalism and industrialization. The goal was to strike the balance and seek both preservation of traditions and moderate modernization by means of agronomy and *zemstvo* assistance. Surprisingly, the statisticians' works completely missed the discussion of rural cooperatives – a form of organization that one would expect from would-be agrarianists. This, as well as their radically negative disposition towards rich peasants, inherited from the *narodniki*, differentiated them both from the radical agrarianisms in Romania and Bulgaria, which entertained a vision of a consolidated peasant class in opposition to urban dwellers, and the more moderate Czech agrarianists.¹⁷⁰ However, the belief in a farmer as both preserving traditions and modernizing, for instance, was shared by Swedish agrarianists, too.¹⁷¹

Still, it would also be inappropriate to conflate nascent Poltava agrarianism with its Russian brethren. Inspired by the Ukrainophile tradition, Poltava statisticians sought to instrumentalize the preponderance of individual landowning in the province in order to counterpose the Ukrainian orientation on an individual farmer to Russian collectivism and “the hypnosis of the commune.”¹⁷² This prevailing of individual farming, as they claimed, was more like “in some kingdom in the German Empire than in any Great Russian province.”¹⁷³ Despite

¹⁷⁰ Angela Harre, “Between Marxism and Liberal Democracy: Romanian Agrarianism as an Economic Third Way in Societal change,” in *Societal Change and Ideological Formation among the Rural Population of the Baltic Area 1880–1939*, edited by Piotr Wawrzyniuk (Huddinge: Södertörns högskola, 2008), 63.

¹⁷¹ Fredrik Eriksson, “Modernity, Rationality and Citizenship: Swedish Agrarian Organizations as Seen Through the Lens of the Agrarian Press, circa 1880–1917,” in *Societal Change and Ideological Formation among the Rural Population of the Baltic Area 1880–1939*, edited by Piotr Wawrzyniuk (Huddinge: Södertörns högskola, 2008), 145.

¹⁷² Rklitskii, *Zemlia i zemelnyia otnosheniia v Poltavshchine* [Land and Land Relations in Poltava], 9. The sentiment is quite old and characteristic of the Ukrainian *narodnik* tradition. Rusov also complained to Kuliabko-Koretskii about the Russian press which, according to him, was “worshipping the commune.” Letter of Oleksandr Rusov to Mykola Kuliabko-Koretskyi, 26 January 1892, F. 84, Op. 1, No. 30.

¹⁷³ Rklitskii, *Iz proshlago i nastoiashchego chernozemnoi derevni* [From the Past and Present of the Black-Soil Countryside], 51.

this, their own data indicated that the land market in Poltava was never as vigorous as in, say, Württemberg.¹⁷⁴ The statisticians were also quite critical toward the Russian Socialist Revolutionary program of land redistribution and based their position on their data and expertise. The redistribution, they claimed, would just simply fail to reach its ultimate goals of providing every household with sufficient land to subsist; many efficient households were calculated to become poorer but those that would acquire land would never become well-off.¹⁷⁵ In other words, redistribution would end in a lose-lose situation.

The treading of the middle way proved useless for the Statistical Bureau in the times of the revolution after 1917. While the leftist parties eventually embraced the popular demands for land redistribution, the parties on the right consolidated the interests of the rich landowners and farmers.¹⁷⁶ In the situation of the civil war, there was no place for the middle.

*Statisticians as experts: the problem of malozemelye and resettlement*¹⁷⁷

The localization of knowledge production resulted in Bureau statisticians turning into local experts. As such, not only did they develop a particular awareness of nuance and detail of agriculture in Poltava, but also actively cooperated with local government structures in identifying and tackling what they considered most pressing economic issues. One such important issue was *malozemelye*, or land scarcity, defined as a situation in which a large

¹⁷⁴ Rklitskii, *Iz proshlago i nastoiashchego chernozemnoi derevni* [From the Past and Present of the Black-Soil Countryside], 52.

¹⁷⁵ *Doklad upravy o malozemelii Poltavskoi gubernii i ob organizatsii pereselencheskogo dela* [The Report of Uprava on the Land Hunger of the Poltava Province and on the Organization of Resettlement] (Poltava: Tipografiia I. Frishberg i S. Zorokhovich, 1906).

¹⁷⁶ Such was the conservative Ukrainian Democratic Agrarian Party (Ukrainska Demokratychno-Khliborobska Partiiia) founded in 1917 by the group around Serhii Shemet and Viacheslav Lypynskyi in Lubny, Poltava province. However, I have not encountered any indication of any direct link between the Poltava statistics project and the Ukrainian Democratic Agrarian Party, which is perhaps not as surprising given their divergence in political preferences.

¹⁷⁷ This section is partly based on the material researched for the unpublished paper for the CEU course “Soviet Empire: The View from Central Asia” (Fall 2023).

proportion of the population did not have sufficient land to ensure their subsistence. The fact that Poltava was an almost exclusively agrarian region exacerbated this situation. *Malozemelye* meant that more and more peasants did not own any land of their own and had thus to find employment either in the countryside or further away, in the Kherson or Ekaterinoslav provinces, where the industry was growing and trade abounding.¹⁷⁸ The statisticians framed wage labor as problematic and understood it as a miserable position of subjugation to another person. Ironically, the statisticians themselves were *employed* by the Bureau and did not own the means of production. They did not view migration, especially seasonal, as necessarily positive, either. As I wrote before, Rusov criticized seasonal migration to St. Petersburg for the spread of syphilis and bedbugs in the (supposedly idyllic) countryside in Central Russia. Sedentary but prosperous peasant life in the village was a preferred condition that the statisticians wanted to see in their province.

In Poltava, the problematization of *malozemelye* acquired a historical tilt. In the view of at least some Poltava statisticians, such as of Lev Padalka, Poltava was a recently colonized, i.e., settled, region, which largely remained part of the Steppe before the 17th century. The pattern of colonization, i.e., by khutors, or farmsteads, defined the prevailing landowning profile of the region which kept its huge share of individual Cossack landowners till the early 20th century. This colonization, according to the statisticians, happened as if in a Lockian utopia, wherein anyone willing could take up as much land as they could toil, leaving much more still untouched.¹⁷⁹ The problems allegedly started in the 19th century, when most of the free land was already taken – if not by the Cossacks then by the nobility, both Cossack and Russian, who were granted lands by the tsar here and there. Noble property also meant that there were serfs,

¹⁷⁸ Padalka, “Chto skazalo naselenie Poltavskoi gubernii of svoem starom byte” [“What the population of Poltava gubernia said about its old way of life], 55.

¹⁷⁹ Lev Padalka, *Proshloie Poltavskoi territorii i ieio zaselenie: issled. i materialy s kartami* [The past of the Poltava territory and its settlement] (reprinted edition from 1914) (Kharkov: SAGA, 2009), 48, 50, 53–57.

who had none or very little land of their own and, till 1861, were literally in the possession of the noble landowners. The statisticians argued that the Great Reforms, i.e., the emancipation of serfs and the opening of land market, led to the massive sales of noble lands, but those were now purchased by the already well-off Cossacks, who could invest their profits into new property. The former serfs, the research claimed, remained poor or even became poorer – the abyss between the well-off and the impoverished only kept growing.

The statisticians, not only in Poltava, but also in other provinces, strove to design policy solutions that would alleviate this growing disparity and would mitigate the sufferings of the poor. The intention was to strengthen the middle, average peasant, but the question as to the means remained open.¹⁸⁰ Serious debates about a possible redistribution of land did not launch until the opening of political opportunities after the revolution of 1917. In the meantime, Poltava statisticians entertained other ideas, and a newly created separate *zemstvo* unit, Economic Bureau, established in the mid-1890s and headed by Kuliabko-Koretskii, launched its own activities to support peasantry. To help the search for policy solutions, one of the statisticians, Lev Padalka, prepared a commissioned study of economic measures introduced by “South-Russian” *zemstvos*.¹⁸¹ One such measure was the funding and support of rural credit, enabling poorer peasants – and not only the well-off Cossacks – to buy land from the nobles who did not wish to maintain their inefficient farmsteads any longer and were selling them out.

It was also in the 1890s that the Poltava *zemstvo* and the statisticians became interested in the peasant resettlement to Central Asia and the Far East. The phenomenon as such emerged a few decades before, without any *zemstvo* interference, and was perceived by intellectuals as

¹⁸⁰ It would be interesting to see the statisticians’ attitude to Stolypin’s “wager on the middle,” because there are reasons to believe that some Ukrainophile supported it initially but did not like Stolypin for his Russification policies.

¹⁸¹ *Krattkii ocherk ekonomicheskikh meropriiatii zemstv 23 gubernii Rossii* (1865-1892) [Brief essay on the economic measures of the *zemstvos* of 23 provinces of Russia (1865-1892)] (Poltava: Tip. L. Frishberga, 1894). On Padalka’s authorship, “Foreword” and “Notes,” N. G. Kuliabko-Koretskii Collection, Page 25.

chaotic and elemental. There was a long pre-existing history of Poltava peasants settling in the territories conquered and annexed to the Russian Empire, such as in Kuban.¹⁸² The colonization of the former Wild Steppe, which was called Novorossiia, or New Russia, in the late 19th century, could be viewed as a joint settlement venture by Ukrainian and Russian peasants – a history which could be traced in detail for certain villages in the nowadays Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts. After the 1860s, with the conquest of Central Asia, and aided by the development of maritime and especially railway transportation, and the emancipation of serfs, the resettlement flows expanded and stretched across the vast spaces of the empire, to the Far East and Central Asia.¹⁸³

It was the Chernihiv *zemstvo* that, in the 1870s, first brought up an idea of instrumentalizing and correcting the ongoing resettlements from the region in order to tackle the problem of *malozemelye*.¹⁸⁴ If the poor leave the village, the notables argued, it will not, of course, increase the amount of free land, but at least it will help alleviate the already existing social tensions. As one later report put it, resettlement was initially thought of as a “valve allowing to regulate the population density.”¹⁸⁵ Understood from this perspective, the crisis of *malozemelye* can be viewed as an essentially demographic problem, defined almost in Malthusian terms. While the population was increasing, the amount of land as well as the land productivity stayed the same. Within this framework, if the population growth would not be stopped, this might result in social instability or even collapse. The concentration of people in a certain territory with the same available means of production (i.e. land) threatened to become

¹⁸² See Oleksandr Polianichev, “Rediscovering Zaporozhians: Memory, Loyalties, and Politics in Late Imperial Kuban, 1880–1914,” PhD diss. (Florence: European University Institute, 2017).

¹⁸³ Charles Steinwedel, “Resettling people, unsettling the empire: migration and the challenge of governance, 1861–1917,” in *Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History*, eds. Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Abby Schrader, Willard Sunderland (New York: Routledge, 2007), 130.

¹⁸⁴ I would like to thank Prof. Alexander Semyonov for pointing to this fact.

¹⁸⁵ Timofei Zinchenko, *Pereseleniie i zemstvo* [Resettlement and the zemstvo] (Poltava: Elektricheskaiia Tipo-Lit. I. L. Frishberga, 1912), 30.

a political problem. The ongoing outmigration appeared as a possible life preserver ring that would help stabilize the situation.

Very soon other *zemstvos*, including Poltava, began to be interested in resettlements, too. As one Poltava specialist in resettlement later claimed, the topic was discussed for the first time already in the 1880s, but it was only after the famine of the early 1890s that the local elites took the issue seriously.¹⁸⁶ *Zemstvo uprava* commissioned a comprehensive survey of the scope and conditions of the already existing peasant outmigration to Siberia. The study was “outsourced” by the Statistical Bureau to a prominent “itinerant” *zemstvo* statistician and also a former *narodnik* Dmitrii Zverev, who compiled a more than four-hundred-page report that was published in 1900. In it, Zverev optimistically argued that not only there could be ways to use outmigration as a means of regulating population density in the overcrowded counties, but also that resettlement was advantageous to both those leaving and those remaining. Zverev believed that settlers would necessarily find themselves a suitable place somewhere in Siberia and that such outmigration would not meet obstacles in the area of settlement. He also claimed that the remaining neighbors of the settlers profited from the freer land, implying that the landless and the land-scarce would thus obtain an opportunity to buy it. But Zverev’s research never indicated who exactly bought it up. More pessimistic estimates pointing to the fact that the poor in the areas of outmigration still remained poor because they simply lacked the means to buy any land would appear only later.

The suggestion to instrumentalize resettlements in order to satisfy the popular discontent with the lack of land resurfaced in Poltava after the revolution of 1905. In 1906, for an extraordinary *zemstvo* board meeting, Poltava *zemstvo uprava*, most probably the Statistical and Economic Bureaus, prepared “The Report of Uprava on the Land Hunger of the Poltava

¹⁸⁶ Zinchenko, *Pereseleniie i zemstvo* [Resettlement and the *zemstvo*], 15.

Province and on the Organization of Resettlement” (“Doklad upravy o malozemelyi Poltavskoi gubernii i ob organizatsii pereselencheskago dela”). The report radically discarded the possibility of solving the problem of *malozemelye* with land redistribution that was promoted by the parties on the left. The statisticians’ calculations proved that such a redistribution would only help swell the number of destitute households since the average land plot would be below the required levels of efficiency. Since the redistribution “would not add even a *piad*’ [Russian imperial land measure unit – D.T.] of land to the territory of the province,” it was deemed necessary to look for this *piad*’ elsewhere.¹⁸⁷ The authors of the report pleaded that the local government addresses the central government with a request for such land somewhere in Siberia, so that the landless and poor from Poltava province would resettle there in an organized way. According to the report, Poltava *zemstvo* had to demand three to four million hectares of free land in a region that had to be resemble Poltava “by its soil and climatic conditions.”¹⁸⁸

Such a plea was way too late and hence futile. Yet in 1905, an influential economist Alexander Kaufman published his study *Pereseleniia i kolonizatsiia* (“Resettlement and Colonization”), where he argued that the whole amount of arable land in the whole empire would never resolve the agrarian problem, and that the settlers from Ukraine proved particularly inefficient since they ignored the know-how of the locals and often failed to build efficient farms.¹⁸⁹ Besides, by the early 20th century, the processes of colonization in Central Asia already resulted in rising ethnic tensions – since none of the territories deemed as “free” were in fact so. Although the Poltava *zemstvo* still entertained an idea of promoting the resettlement of the

¹⁸⁷ *Doklad upravy o malozemelii Poltavskoi gubernii i ob organizatsii pereselencheskago dela* [The Report of Uprava on the Land Hunger of the Poltava Province and on the Organization of Resettlement], 6.

¹⁸⁸ *Doklad upravy o malozemelii Poltavskoi gubernii i ob organizatsii pereselencheskago dela* [The Report of Uprava on the Land Hunger of the Poltava Province and on the Organization of Resettlement], 30. This episode helps nuance the current fixation on the “decolonization” of the history of Ukraine. As some of the sources indicate, some Ukrainian national movement leaders entertained certain fantasies about Ukrainian colonies and settlements in Siberia and elsewhere. Rotmistrov, Padalka, and Rklytskyi, who were active in the Bureau at the time of the preparation of the report, were also members or adjacent to the Ukrainian movement’s branch in Poltava.

¹⁸⁹ I thank Professor Alexander Semyonov for pointing out this fact.

poor for a couple more years and even initiated, in 1907, the South-Russian Regional Zemstvo Resettlement Organization, the experts from various *zemstvos* soon came to a conclusion that outmigration was “an independent movement not much susceptible to external influence.”¹⁹⁰ As such, it could not help freeing more land within the province – the movement was not that strong to satisfy the increasing needs. Besides that, it turned out that it was the wealthier peasants who managed to successfully settle in Siberia; the poorer either did not dare or went there and returned bankrupt.¹⁹¹ After reassessing the problem, *zemstvo* decided to address it in a way that can be viewed as akin to proto-welfare state *modus operandi*. Not wishing to see the increasing numbers of destitute unsuccessful settlers returning to Poltava, *zemstvo* planned to invest now into advising peasants against resettlement by making them aware of the risks. If the peasants, knowledgeable of what awaited them, still decided to part for Siberia, the resettlement bureau would help them and accompany them in this endeavor.

While this could be a story of the gradual development of Poltava *zemstvo* into sub-imperial proto-welfare-state local government, I would argue that the statisticians’ tackling of the problem of *malozemelye* and resettlement symbolized their transformation into local technocratic experts actively working for the state structures. The statisticians’ – and former *narodniki*’s – initial embracement of an idea of resettling poorer peasants outside the province’s borders can be viewed as an early technocratic fantasy presaging later resettlement plans exercised by totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe in mid-20th century.¹⁹² While the *zemstvo* idea was significantly much more benign than later ethnic or class cleansing designs, it already indicated readiness of experts to ally with the state in “gardening” and implementing pre-planned social transformations. During its resettlement endeavor, the *zemstvo* experts

¹⁹⁰ Zinchenko, *Pereseleniie i zemstvo* [Resettlement and the zemstvo], 30.

¹⁹¹ Zinchenko, *Pereseleniie i zemstvo* [Resettlement and the zemstvo], 11.

¹⁹² But even earlier, a certain Max Weber, in his diagnosis of East Prussian agriculture, concluded that the “absenteeist” landowners residing in Berlin had to be replaced with “the development of a small independent agriculture,” with an aim of “avoiding the influx of Slavic wage earners.” Desrosières, *The Politics of Large Numbers: A History of Statistical Reasoning*, 186.

effectively “split the population into useful plants to be encouraged and tenderly propagated, and weeds – to be removed or rooted out,” or more humanely, kindly sent away.¹⁹³ Particularly so since the statisticians saw the poor (as well as the rich) somewhat ambiguous in national terms, as too susceptible to Russian imperial modernity coming from the urban center. In Foucauldian terms, this could also be seen as a manifestation of the biopower aiming to support the favorable life but “letting die,” or rather letting go, those who do not conform.¹⁹⁴

In this chapter, I read the *zemstvo* statistics in Poltava as a policy-oriented social research movement born out of *narodnik* concerns and sensitivities. Nevertheless, most *zemstvo* statisticians had to rethink their former *narodnik* visions of desirable societal transformations when “landed” in a bureaucratic position in a certain province. They could no longer rely on the peasant commune (*obshchina*) for bypassing the touch of capitalism on the way to socialism. As I have shown, there was never such hope in Poltava, for the commune was never as ubiquitous there as in the “Great Russian” provinces. Having opted for “legal populism,” i.e. pursuit of their former concerns by legal, institutional means offered by the autocracy, the *zemstvo* statisticians in Poltava developed their own answers to the problem of development – one of the fundamental debates of the turn of the century, particularly fierce in the country located in the periphery of Europe. These answers very soon acquired an additional Ukrainian dimension to them – as long as the statisticians were also part of the Ukrainian movement networks densely present in the Left-Bank Ukraine. I explicated the statisticians’ dilemmas on the case study of the crisis of *malozemelye*, or land hunger, which permeated the public debates on agriculture at the turn of the century. Navigating between various solutions discussed at the time, most importantly the policies of land redistribution (e.g. “black repartition”) and

¹⁹³ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1993), 20.

¹⁹⁴ Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76*, 240–241.

encouragement of peasant mass outmigration to Siberia and Turkestan (i.e. settler colonization), Poltava experts ended up rejecting any resolute metanarrative responses to the crisis. Theirs was essentially the project of the steady modernization of the countryside by means of constant statistical accounting and spreading of agronomic knowledge. Although the period after 1914 and even more so after 1917 remains beyond the scope of this study, the modalities of the statisticians' cohabitation with the new Bolshevik government after the consolidation of the Soviet rule pose an intriguing research question. Their readiness to embark on top-down bureaucracy-induced projects during their experience of tackling the issue of *malozemelye*, I would argue, might imply that this cohabitation was not only conflictual.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ The transition of *zemstvo* statistics from the tsarist to Soviet environment is well-covered in Martine Mespoulet's book *Statistique et Révolution en Russie. Un Compromis Impossible (1880-1930)*. The Central Statistical Committee of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic was founded on the base of the Kharkiv provincial *zemstvo*' statistical bureau, and some cadres from other *zemstvos* moved to the capital of the new republic. Poltava Statistical Bureau became part of the Central Statistical Committee's infrastructure within the Poltava province throughout the 1920s, and Hryhorii Rotmistrov remained its head until at least 1924.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis follows a cohort of Russian imperial intellectuals as they turned from *narodniki* into agricultural experts working for a provincial *zemstvo* in Poltava, now Ukraine, at the turn of the 19th century. Coming from privileged but variegated backgrounds, they all sought solutions to *the problem of development* – the challenge posed by the increasing advantage of Western Europe throughout the 19th century and Russian Empire’s endorsement of capitalism since the Reform Era. While at earlier stages, their answers were closer to the classical populism, their entry into the *zemstvo* infrastructure, implying the need to negotiate with the landed nobility in the provincial government, but also with the central government, made them digress from radical politics. This coincided with a broader shift in the movement towards “legal populism” and the paradigm of the “theory of small deeds” which envisaged cooperation with authorities while preserving the values of service to the people.

The entrance of former radicals into the empire’s state infrastructure predetermined the statisticians’ strained relationship with the central government. However, the latter could not so easily do without them. Unlike in Western Europe, where the early emancipation of serfs and urbanization ensured a considerable pool of people to be employed in government structures, the Russian Empire, with its predominantly scattered rural population, lagged far behind. The educated were few – though not happy – and all-too-often contesting centralized authoritarian control. This meant that there was persistent tension between the central government’s need for expertise and the experts’ dubious political loyalty. The governors and gendarmerie had little trust to actual or potential radicals such as Rusov or Kuliabko-Koretskii – but at times they had little choice than to approve their appointment to this or that statistical bureau. This was increasingly true as the government kept outsourcing to the *zemstvos* some of its taxing or

cadaster concerns throughout the 1890s and 1900s; after all, the state needed the *zemstvos* to complement its weak presence in the provinces.

This constellation might be eventually intrinsic to Russian imperial and maybe Soviet political culture. The intellectuals, or intelligentsia, often worked in and for the state institutions, increasing their efficiency and state's capacity, but also constituted the core of opposition to autocracy and centralization. The government treated them as potential enemies – but still relied on them. Even Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin, the author of what might be called Russia's first dystopia, was a provincial vice-governor for quite some time. The phenomenon lasted also during Soviet times, as the authorities aimed to co-opt many of the former imperial experts and scientists to serve the new regime. One could argue that Stalin's paranoid state occasionally reverted the constellation: in order to make disloyal intelligentsia work for it, the state did not simply hire but placed them in Gulag research and development institutes (*sharashka*). Eventually, not much research is needed to find out that a good portion of those who joined the opposition to the Communist Party in the late Soviet Union actually came from within the very same party.

Statistics was that something which allowed former radicals to turn into experts. Doing statistics started off as a way to learn more about the people and to prove the embedded assumptions of the *narodnik* thought about the commune and peasant economy. But even more significantly, when Rusov published something on the peasants and nobles in the Romny county now, it was not a mere bizarre ethnographer's voice among the dozens of others. Substantiated with numbers and validated by the statistical method, the experts aspired now to speak with a certain aura of objectivity: the era of positivism had set in. Put in Theodore Porter's words,

statistics offered them legitimacy since they lacked any other – only as bureaucrats *ex officio*.¹⁹⁶ One could say that this pursuit of statistical objectivity was also an attempt at depoliticization of the statisticians' politics. Few people would argue against numbers – given that there are reasons to trust those numbers, something which was not exactly there on the part of the central government (the police) and some academics. Ironically, perhaps the fiercest critics of the *zemstvo* statistics' validity were the *narodniki*'s comrades/adversaries in anti-government politics, i.e., Marxists, exactly because they did not trust the *narodniki*'s political preferences. On the part of the government, it took several decades of conservative policies to overcome its suspicion towards the statisticians – till the moment when, after the “purges” and repressions of the early 1900s and the liberalization of 1905, mostly the bureaucrats loyal to the constitutional monarchy were left in the bureaus.

The passage from the 1890s to the 1900s also marked the increasing involvement of the *zemstvo* statisticians in Poltava in something that could be called nascent provincial social policy (*Sozialpolitik*). This was characteristic of the whole Chuprov *zemstvo* project and its adaptations in specific localities – as it was inspired by the social policy as advocated by the Verein für *Socialpolitik*. From producing programmatic research in the form of household inventories and land assessments, the *zemstvo* turned to the study of pro-active economic measures of other *zemstvos* and also worked on several of their own. The Bureau's correspondents number grew, reaching almost 2,000 by 1910. The corps of the *zemstvo* hired workers roamed around the countryside, offering more and more services, ranging from agronomical assistance and insurance to aiding hesitant peasants with resettlement to Siberia. The certain awe surrounding the *zemstvo* statistics as a policy-oriented social science eventually translated into regularly conducted provincial censuses and an established, almost automated

¹⁹⁶ Theodore M. Porter, *Trust in Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 8.

system of data collection from across the province. The appeal of ethnographical work and close study of peasantry that Rusov found so appealing was becoming increasingly impossible.

Researchers have extensively commented upon the sheer scope of the literature produced by the *zemstvo* statisticians across the European part of the Russian Empire. Some have also praised it as the most exhaustive and detailed research on agriculture in Europe at the time: it is only logical that in the predominantly agrarian empire, agrarian statistics prevailed. It was perhaps also a part of the rationale: to catch up with Western Europe by producing as much statistics as possible – the strategy further pursued by the Soviet Union and, one may argue, by some post-Soviet states.

Such researchers as David Darrow and Alessandro Stanziani have produced a meticulous critique of *zemstvo* statistics. Both successfully embedded *zemstvo* statistics in the contemporary state of statistical and economic thought, political situation, the statisticians' political views; their research demonstrated how, on an empire-wide level, the statisticians' preconceptions and pre-existing beliefs were often translated into data that they produced. However, except for Martine Mespoulet's work on the statistical bureau in Saratov, the scholars of the *zemstvo* statistics largely ignored the regional variation and embeddedness of this project. The case of Poltava, with its relatively liberal *zemstvo* boards and well-developed statistical apparatus, offered a well-suited case study for exploring the intricacies of this embeddedness. A province often overlooked either by Ukrainian or Russian imperial historiography, Poltava was a vibrant provincial center with an unusual concentration of intellectuals at the turn of the 19th century. These intellectuals could self-identify as Ukrainian (Ukrainophile), Russian imperial, Jewish – all of varying political leanings. By addressing this town in my research, I sought to contribute to further decentralization of Russian imperial studies but also to a

nuancing of the pro-Ukrainophile bias of the Ukrainian historiography. But even more significantly, the goal was to contribute to the existing historiography on the *zemstvo* statistics by tracing its development in one particular context, in relation to existing social movements and particular social, cultural, and economic landscape.

I argue that the statisticians' placement in Poltava fundamentally defined the style and direction of statistics pursued by the cohort. A clearly "Ukrainian" province with a strong and relatively liberal provincial government, which any other predominantly "Ukrainian" province lacked, was open both to experimentation with research and to the Ukrainophile agenda of some statisticians. While trying to address the problem of development from a particular Poltava angle, the statisticians' cohort inclined toward a *sui generis* solution akin to Ukrainophile neo-*narodnik*, agrarianist thinking. This type of thinking made peace with the institution of the *zemstvo* and aimed to "hijack" or at least instrumentalize it to its own purposes. For instance, the *zemstvo* bureaucracy sought support of the board on the issues of primary education in Ukrainian – something that the central government openly rejected.

However, and even more importantly, the statisticians' activities were not limited by language activism only. In an almost exclusively agricultural region, the peasantry's main concerns were about land. The statisticians learned very soon that the Russian notion of *obshchina* (commune) was inapplicable to Poltava countryside and endorsed its individual landowning pattern. The acceptance of individual landowners and especially endorsement of Cossacks as farmers *par excellence* did make Poltava appear to the statisticians more like Germany, but did not solve the fundamental problem of overpopulation, which they framed as *malozemelye* (land scarcity). By the end of the 19th century, many agricultural regions of Eastern Europe experienced a demographic explosion, which, in the absence of industrialization, resulted in mass outmigration. The statisticians in the Poltava provincial *zemstvo* first sought to endorse it as a regional policy in a hope that the poor and landless would simply leave the region

for Siberia. But when it turned out that outmigration sapped Poltava of some of its affluent Cossack farmers, the statisticians changed gears to mitigate the outflow. In a typical pattern of early social policy development, the Statistical Bureau endorsed imaginaries of “gardening” the province according to its own liking: supporting the strong middle peasants who would both modernize and preserve the language and traditions while excluding the overly rich and poor. What these biopolitics did not go along well with was land redistribution. Already in the early 1900s, the statisticians, relying on their own data, concluded that land redistribution as suggested by the parties on the left would not deliver what they promised it would: the resulting households would be inefficient. But the failure to endorse neither land redistribution nor peasant resettlement meant that by 1917 the Poltava statistical bureau experts did not have any clear ready-made solution for the exacerbating problems in the village. Since they also lacked a broad pool of adherents, their agrarianist project could be easily outbid by the Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionaries who obtained an overwhelming electoral victory for the Constituent Assembly in late 1917. After the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks would solve the “gardening” equation in the countryside in a different way: the large collective farms were to be formed by the poor at the expense of the expulsion of the rich and some middle peasants. The Bolshevik state sent away those it did not kill to settle Siberia, Far East, and the North. Some statisticians remained in the Bureau, some left for other jobs, but most of those who defined the Bureau’s activities in the 1890s and 1900s never saw what the Bolshevik solution brought to their beloved middle peasants.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Primary sources

1. Unpublished sources

Institute of Manuscript of Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine

F. 84, Op. 1., No. 1—75 (Rusov Oleksandr Oleksandrovych Kuliabko-Koretskomu Mykoli Hryhorovychu. Lysty: sichen-liutyi 1889 r. – 10 lyst. 1911 r. [Oleksandr Rusov to Mykola Kuliabko-Koretskyi. Letters: January-February 1889 – 10 November 1911]).

F. 84, Op. 1., No. 76 (Kuliabko-Koretskii N. G. “Predisloviie” i “Primechaniie” k pismam A. A. Rusova [Kuliabko-Koretskii N. G. “Foreword” and “Notes” to the letters of A. A. Rusov]).

Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Kyiv (TsDIAK)

F. 266, Op. 1, No. 1 (Perepiska L. V. Padalki s Glavnym upravleniim po delam pechati o razreshenii vypisyvat galitsyiiskiiie zhurnaly... [Correspondence between L. V. Padalka and Main Directorate of the Press about the permission to receive Galician magazines...]).

F. 266, Op. 1, No. 6 (Rabota “O nachale i proiskhozhdenii kazakov” [Paper “On the origins of Cossacks”]).

F. 266, Op. 1, No. 9 (Stattia “Gromadskoie (obshchestvennoie) zemlevladieniie na Iuge Rossii” [Article “Communal land property in the South of Russia”]).

State Archive of the Poltava Oblast (DAPO)

F. 723, Op. 1, No. 3 (Perepiska statisticheskogo biuro Poltavskogo gubernskogo zemstvo so statisticheskimi biuro drugih gubernii [Correspondence between the Statistical Bureau of the Poltava provincial zemstvo and the statistical bureaus of other provinces]).

2. Published sources

Adres-kalendar i Spravochnaia knizhka Poltavskoi gubernii na 1896 god [Address-calendar and a reference book of the Poltava province for 1896], edited by D. A. Ivanenko. Poltava: Tipografiiia L. Frishberga, 1896.

Adres-kalendar i Spravochnaia knizhka Poltavskoi gubernii na 1899 god [Address-calendar and a reference book of the Poltava province for 1899], edited by D. A. Ivanenko. Poltava: Tipografiiia Gubernskogo Pravleniia, 1899.

- Bunin, Iulii. "Iz zhizni provintsii v 90-kh godakh." [From the life in the province in the 90s] *Moskva*, 2016. https://moskvam.ru/publications/publication_1495.html.
- Chykalenko, Yevhen. *Shchodennyk (1907–1917)* [Diary (1907–1917)]. Kyiv: Tempora, 2011.
- Chykalenko, Yevhen. *Spohady (1861–1907)* [Memoirs (1861–1907)]. New York: Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in the US, 1955.
- Danilov, V. M. *Pereseleniia iz Poltavskoi gubernii s 1861 goda po 1 ianvaria 1901 goda. Vypusk II-yi (1894-1901 gg.)* [Resettlement from the Poltava province from 1861 till January 1st, 1901. Issue no. 2 (1894–1901)]. Poltava: Elektrich. Tipo-Litografiia Torgov. Doma I. Frishberg i S. Zorokhovich., 1905.
- Deiateli revolutsionnogo dvizheniia v Rossii: Bio-bibliograficheskii slovar: Ot predshestvennikov dekabristov do padeniia tsarizma* [Activists of revolutionary movement in Russia: Bio-bibliographical dictionary: From predecessors of Decembrists to the fall of tsarism], *Tom 3. Vosmidesiatyie gody* [Volume 3. The Eighties], *Vypusk 1, A–B* [Issue 1, A–B], edited by M. M. Klevenskii, E. N. Kusheva, A. A. Shylov, 1. Moscow: Vsesoiuz. o-vo polit. katorzhan i ssylno-poselentsev, 1933.
- Doklad upravy o malozemelii Poltavskoi gubernii i ob organizatsii pereselencheskogo dela* [The Report of Uprava on the Land Hunger of the Poltava Province and on the Organization of Resettlement]. Poltava: Tipografiia I. Frishberg i S. Zorokhovich, 1906.
- Imshenetskii, Iakov. "Khutorianin" i ego chitateli: doklad, chitanni v godichnom zasedanii Poltavskago obsch-va s-kh 23 noiabr. 1900 g. ["Khutorianin" and its readers: a report read at the annual meeting of the Poltava Agricultural Society on 23 November 1900] Poltava, 1901.
- Ivanenko, D. A. *Zapiski i vospominaniia 1888-1908 gg. Izdanie redaktsii "Poltavskii golos."* [Notes and memoirs 1888-1908. Published by the editors of the "Poltavskii golos"]. Poltava, Otdeleniie ekekrich. tipogr. D. N. Podzemskago, 1909.
- Kaufman, Alexander. *Pereseleniie i kolonizatsiia* [Resettlement and colonization]. St. Petersburg: Tip. t-va "Obshchestvennaia polza," 1905.
- Korolenko, Vladimir. "Poltavskiiie prazdnestva" [Poltava festivities]. In *V. G. Korolenko. Sobranie sochinenii. T. 4.* [V. G. Korolenko. A collection of works. Volume 4], 368–371. Moscow: Pravda, 1953.
- Kostomarov, Nikolai. "Dve russkiiia narodnosti" [Two Russian nationalities]. *Osnova* 3, 1861, 33–80. <http://litopys.org.ua/kostomar/kos38.htm>.
- Krattkii ocherk ekonomicheskikh meropriiatii zemstv 23 gubernii Rossii (1865-1892)* [Brief essay on the economic measures of the zemstvos of 23 provinces of Russia (1865-1892)]. Poltava: Tip. L. Frishberga, 1894.
- Kuliabko-Koretskii, Nikolai. *Iz davnikh let: vospominaniia lavrista* [From the old days: memoirs of a Lavrovian]. Moscow: Izdatelstvo politkatorzhan, 1931. <https://elibr.shpl.ru/ru/nodes/21982-kulyabko-koretskiy-n-g-iz-davnih-let-vospominaniya-lavrista-m-1931>.
- Obzor selskogo khoziaistva v Poltavskoi gubernii za 1887 god po soobshcheniiam korrespondentov* [Review of agriculture in Poltava province for 1887 according to the messages of the correspondents]. Poltava: Tipo-lit. I. A. Dokhmana, 1887.

- Obzor selskogo khoziaistva v Poltavskoi gubernii za 1892 god po soobshcheniiam korrespondentov* [Review of agriculture in Poltava province for 1892 according to the messages of the correspondents]. Poltava: Tipo-lit. I. A. Dokhmana, 1893.
- Obzor selskogo khoziaistva v Poltavskoi gubernii za 1894 god po soobshcheniiam korrespondentov* [Review of agriculture in Poltava province for 1894 according to the messages of the correspondents]. Poltava: Tipo-lit. I. A. Dokhmana, 1895.
- Obzor selskogo khoziaistva v Poltavskoi gubernii za 1895 god po soobshcheniiam korrespondentov* [Review of agriculture in Poltava province for 1895 according to the messages of the correspondents]. Poltava: Tipo-lit. I. A. Dokhmana, 1896.
- Obzor selskogo khoziaistva v Poltavskoi gubernii za 1897 god po soobshcheniiam korrespondentov* [Review of agriculture in Poltava province for 1895 according to the messages of the correspondents]. Poltava: Tipo-lit. I. A. Dokhmana, 1898.
- Obzor selskogo khoziaistva v Poltavskoi gubernii za 1898 god po soobshcheniiam korrespondentov* [Review of agriculture in Poltava province for 1895 according to the messages of the correspondents]. Poltava: Tipo-lit. I. A. Dokhmana, 1900.
- Obzor selskogo khoziaistva v Poltavskoi gubernii za 1900 god po soobshcheniiam korrespondentov* [Review of agriculture in Poltava province for 1900 according to the messages of the correspondents]. Poltava: Tipo-lit. I. A. Dokhmana, 1901.
- Obzor selskogo khoziaistva v Poltavskoi gubernii za 1910 god po soobshcheniiam korrespondentov* [Review of agriculture in Poltava province for 1910 according to the messages of the correspondents]. Poltava: Tipo-lit. I. A. Dokhmana, 1911.
- Padalka, Lev. “Chto skazalo naselenie Poltavskoi gubernii of svoem starom byte” [“What the population of Poltava gubernia said about its old way of life] in *Trudy Poltavskoi Uchenoi Arkhivnoi Komissii* [The Works of the Poltava Scholarly Archival Commission]. Issue no. 2. Poltava: Elektricheskaia tipografiya G. I. Markevicha, 1905.
- Padalka, Lev. *Proshloie Poltavskoi territorii i ieio zaseleniie: issled. i materialy s kartami* [The past of the Poltava territory and its settlement] (reprinted edition from 1914). Kharkov: SAGA, 2009.
- Pavlovskii, Ivan. *Kratkii biograficheskii slovar uchënykh i pisateleii Poltavskoi gubernii s poloviny XVIII veka* [Brief biographical dictionary of scholars and writers of the Poltava province since the second half of the 18th century]. Poltava: Tipo-litografiia preemnikov Dokhmana, 1912.
- Poltavskaia gubernskaia zemskaia uprava. *Kratkii ocherk ekonomicheskikh meropriiaty zemstv 23 guberniy Rossii* [A brief sketch of the economic measures of the governments of 23 provinces of Russia]. Poltava: Tip. L. Frishberga, 1894.
- Rklitskii, Mikhail. *Iz proshlago i nastoiashchego chernozemnoi derevni* [From the Past and Present of the Black-Soil Countryside]. Poltava: Elektricheskaia tipo-litografiia I. L. Frishberga, 1914.
- Rklitskii, Mikhail. *Zemlia i zemelnyia otnosheniia v Poltavshchine* [Land and Land Relations in Poltava]. Poltava: Tip. T-va Pechatnago Dela, 1917.
- Rklytskyi, Mykhailo. “Iz spohadiv pro Pavla Hraba ta ioho dobu” [From the memories about Pavlo Hrab and his times]. In Yefremov, Serhii, Mykola Zerov, and Pavlo Fylypovych

(eds.) *Literatura. Zbirnyk pershyi* [Literature. First Collection]. Kyiv: Vseukrainska Akademiia Nauk, 1918, 196–208.

Rusov, Oleksandr. *Shchodennyky ta spohady* [Diaries and memoirs]. Chernihiv: Desna Polihraf, 2011.

Rusova, Sofiia. *Moi spomyny* [My memoirs]. In *Za sto lit: Materiyaly z hromadskoho i literaturnoho zhyttia Ukrainy XIX i pochatkiv XX stolittia. Knyha druha* [Materials from public and literature life of Ukraine of the 19th and the beginning of 20th century. Book Two], edited by Mykhailo Hrushevskyyi, 147 – 205. Derzhavne vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, 1928.

Russov, Alexander. “Oblastnoie nachalo v zemskoi statistike” [Regional principle in *zemstvo* statistics]. In *Step: Khersonskiy beletrystychny zbirnyk*, 351–391. St. Petersburg: Tipografiia V. S. Balasheva, 1886.

Shultse-Governits, Gergart. *Ocherki obshchestvennago khoziaistva i ekonomicheskoi politiki Rossii* [Essays on the social economy and on the economic policy of Russia]. St. Petersburg: Tipo-lit. A. Leiferta, 1901.

Solovei, Dmitrii. *Reshetilovskaia iarmarka 12-14 oktiabria 1923 g: statisticheskoe issledovanie* [Reshetylivka fair of 12-14 October 1923: a statistical survey]. Poltava: 1924.

Statisticheskii spravochnik po Iugu Rossii. Poltava: Elektricheskaia tipo-litografiia I. A. Dokhmana, 1910.

Tereshkevich, Nikolai. *Ocherk dvizheniia zemelnoi sobstvennosti v Poltavskoi gubernii za 8-letii 1870-1877 goda (sravnitelno s Moskovskoi guberniiei)* [Essay on the movement of land property in the Poltava province within eight years between 1870 and 1877 (in comparison to the Moscow province)]. Poltava: Tip. N. Pigurenko, 1881.

Zinchenko, T. V. *Pereseleniie i zemstvo* [Resettlement and the *zemstvo*]. Poltava: Elektricheskaia Tipo-Lit. I. L. Frishberga, 1912.

Zvieriev, Dmitrii. *Pereseleniia iz Poltavskoi gubernii s 1861 goda po 1 iulia 1900 goda. Vypusk I-yi* [Resettlement from the Poltava province from 1861 till July 1st, 1900. Issue no. 1]. Poltava: Tipo-Litografiya L. Frishberga, 1900.

II. Secondary literature

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1993.

Bourdieu, Pierre. “Intellectual Field and Creative Project,” *Social Science Information*, vol. 8 (1969): 89–119.

Bradley, Joseph. *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia: Science, Patriotism, and Civil Society*. Harvard University Press, 2009.

Brubaker, Rogers. *Ethnicity without Groups*. Harvard University Press, 2004.

- Bruisch, Katja. "Contested modernity: A. G. Doiarenko and the Trajectories of Agricultural Expertise in Late Imperial and Soviet Russia." In: *Scientists' Expertise as Performance*. Edited by Joris Vandendriessche, Evert Peeters, and Kaat Wils. Routledge, 2015, 99–114.
- Clowes, Edith W., Samuel D. Kassow, and James L. West (eds.). *Between Tsar and People: Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia*. Princeton, 1991.
- Darrow, David W. *Tsardom of Sufficiency, Empire of Norms: Statistics, Land Allotments, and Agrarian Reform in Russia, 1700–1921*. McGill-Queen's Press – MQUP, 2018.
- Desrosières, Alain. *The Politics of Large Numbers: A History of Statistical Reasoning*. Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Eyal, Gil. *The Crisis of Expertise*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019.
- Felten, Sebastian, and Christine Von Oertzen. "Bureaucracy as Knowledge." *Journal for the History of Knowledge* 1, no. 1 (2020): 8, 1–16.
- Fleck, Ludwik. *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979.
- Foucault, Michel. *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76*. New York: Picador, 2003.
- Gerasimov, Ilya. *Modernism and Public Reform in Late Imperial Russia: Rural Professionals and Self-Organization, 1905–30*. Springer, 2009.
- Gerschenkron, Alexander. *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective: A Book of Essays*. Frederick A. Praeger, 1965.
- Golostenov, M. E. "Imshenetskii, Iakov Kondratievich," In *Politicheskie deiateli Rossii 1917: Biograficheskii slovar* [Political activists of Russia 1917: biographical dictionary], edited by P. V. Volobuiev. Moscow: Nauchnoie izdatelstvo "Bolshaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia," 1993.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Translated by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence. Polity Press, 1989.
- Hacking, Ian. *The Taming of Chance*. Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Hanák, Péter. "The Anti-Capitalist Ideology of the Populists." In *Populism in Eastern Europe. Racism, Nationalism, and Society*, edited by Joseph Held. Boulder: East European Monographs, 145–161.
- Johnson, Robert E. "Liberal professionals and professional liberals: the zemstvo statisticians and their work," 341–364, in *The Zemstvo in Russia: An Experiment in Local Self-Government*. Edited by Terence Emmons and Wayne S. Vucinich. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- Judson, Pieter M. "Nationalism and Indifference." In *Habsburg Neu Denken: Vielfalt und Ambivalenz in Zentraleuropa. 30 kulturwissenschaftliche Stichworte*, edited by Johannes Feichtinger and Heidemarie Uhl. Böhlau Verlag, 2016, 148–55.

- Kappeler, Andreas. "The Ukrainians of the Russian Empire, 1860–1914," in *The Formation of National Elites: Comparative Studies on Governments and Non-Dominant Ethnic Groups in Europe, 1850-1940*, edited by A. Kappeler, F. Adanir, A. O'Day, 105–132. New York: 1992.
- Kingston-Mann, Esther. *In Search of the True West: Culture, Economics, and Problems of Russian Development*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Kingston-Mann, Esther. "Statistics, Social Science, and Social Justice: The Zemstvo Statisticians of Pre-Revolutionary Russia." In *Russian in the European Context 1789–1914: A Member of the Family*, edited by Susan P. McCaffray and Michael Melancon, 113–139. Macmillan Palgrave, 2005.
- Kohlrausch, Martin, Katrin Steffen, Stefan Wiederkehr. "Introduction," in *Expert Cultures in Central Eastern Europe: The Internationalization of Knowledge and the Transformation of Nation States since World War I*. Einzelveröffentlichungen des DHI Warschau, Volume 23, 2010, 9–30.
- Kotenko, Anton. "The Ukrainian Project in Search of National Space, 1861–1914." PhD diss. Budapest: Central European University, 2014.
- Mannheim, Karl. "The Problem of Generations." In: *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, edited by Paul Kecskemeti. Routledge & K. Paul: 1968, 276–322.
- McClellan, Steven Leon. "German Economists and the Intersection of Science and Politics: A History of the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*, 1872 – 1972." PhD diss. University of Toronto, 2022.
- Mendel, Arthur P. *Dilemmas of Progress in Tsarist Russia: Legal Marxism and Legal Populism*. Harvard University Press, 1961.
- Mespoulet, Martine. *Statistique et Révolution en Russie. Un Compromis Impossible (1880-1930)*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires De Rennes, 2001.
- Miller, Alexei. *The Ukrainian Question: The Russian Empire and Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century*. Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2003.
- Mokliak, V. O., Pustovit T. P., Suprunenko O. B. *Budynok Ukrainskoho klubu v Poltavi: pamiatka istorii doby natsionalnoho vidrozhennia ta Ukrainskoi revolutsii* [The House of the Ukrainian Club in Poltava: a monument of history of the period of national revival and Ukrainian revolution]. Poltava: TOV "ASMI," 2016.
- Müller, Dietmar, and Angela Harre (eds.). *Transforming Rural Societies Agrarian Property and Agrarianism in East Central Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. StudienVerlag, 2011.
- Pocock, J. G. A. "The concept of a language and the métier d'historien: some considerations on practice." In Anthony Pagden, ed., *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, 19–38.
- Polianichev, Oleksandr. "Rediscovering Zaporozhians: Memory, Loyalties, and Politics in Late Imperial Kuban, 1880–1914." PhD diss. Florence: European University Institute, 2017.
- Porter, Theodore M. "Revenge of the Humdrum: Bureaucracy as Profession and as a Site of Science." *Journal for the History of Knowledge* 1, no. 1 (2020): 18, 1–5.

- Porter, Theodore M. *The Rise of Statistical Thinking, 1820–1900*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986.
- Porter, Theodore M. *Trust in Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- Portnova, Tetiana. *Lyubyty i navchaty: selianstvo v uyavlennyakh ukrainskoi inteligentsii druhoi polivyny XIX stolittia* [To love and to educate: peasantry in the beliefs of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in the second half of the 19th century]. Dnipropetrovsk: Lira, 2016.
- Remy, Johannes. *Brothers or Enemies: The Ukrainian National Movement and Russia from the 1840s to the 1870s*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016.
- Rotach, P. P. “Istoriia odnoi druzhby: Epizod iz zhizni V. G. Korolenko v Poltave” [A history of one friendship: an episode from the life of V. G. Korolenko in Poltava]. In *Pobornyk pravdy. Do 155-richchia vid dnia narodzhennia V. H. Korolenka* [An advocate of truth. For the 155th anniversary of V. H. Korolenko], edited by L. V. Khliestkova, 12–23. Kharkiv, 2008.
- Scott, James C. *Seeing like the State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998.
- Sdvizhkov, Denis. “Ot obshchestva k intelligentsii: istoria poniatii kak istoria samosoznania” [From society to intelligentsia: a history of notions as history of self-awareness], in *“Poniatia o Rossii”: K istoricheskoi semantike imperskogo perioda* [Notions of Russia: To the history of historical semantics of the imperial period]. Moscow: NLO, 2012, Vol. 1, 382–427.
- Stanziani, Alessandro. “European Statistics, Russian Numbers, and Social Dynamics, 1861–1914.” *Slavic Review* 76, no. 1 (2017): 1–23.
- Steinwedel, Charles. “Resettling people, unsettling the empire: migration and the challenge of governance, 1861–1917.” In: *Peopling the Russian Periphery: Borderland Colonization in Eurasian History*, edited by Nicholas B. Breyfogle, Abby Schrader, Willard Sunderland. New York: Routledge, 2007, 128–147.
- Trencsényi, Balázs, Maciej Janowski, Mónika Baár, Maria Falina, and Michal Kopeček (eds.). *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe: Volume I: Negotiating Modernity in the “Long Nineteenth Century.”* Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Walicki, Andrzej. *The Controversy Over Capitalism: Studies in the Social Philosophy of the Russian Populists*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969.
- Wawrzzeniuk, Piotr (ed.). *Societal Change and Ideological Formation among the Rural Population of the Baltic Area 1880–1939*. Huddinge: Södertörns högskola, 2008.
- Wortman, Richard S. *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy. Volume Two, From Alexander II to the Abdication of Nicholas II*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Wortman, Richard. *The Crisis of Russian Populism*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

Yekelchuk, Serhii. *Ukrainofily: Svit ukrainskykh patriotiv druhoi polovyny XIX stolittia* [Ukrainophiles: The world of Ukrainian patriots of the second half of the 19th century]. Kyiv: K.I.S, 2010.

Zverev, V. V. “Evoliutsiia narodnichestva: ‘teoriia malykh del’” [Evolution of populism: “the theory of small deeds”]. *Otechestvennaia istoriia* 4 (1997): 86–94.