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“We are at one with our tsar who serves the Fatherland as we do”

**The Civic Identity of Russifying Officials in the Empire’s
Northwestern Region after 1863***

The theoretical point most recently made by a number of historians, that a self-identity of Russifying officials in the Romanov Empire’s borderlands was affected by their own Russificatory policies and measures¹ finds solid support in studies of the so-called “Western provinces” (*Zapadnye gubernii*) during and in the aftermath of the 1863-64 (January) Polish uprising. My focus in this paper is on the Northwestern region (*Severo-Zapadnyi krai*), which consisted in 1863-69 of six provinces – Vil’na (Vilnius), Kovno (Kaunas), Grodno, Minsk, Mogilev, Vitebsk – and was administered by the Vil’na Governor General. This is the present-day territory of Belarus and Lithuania.

During the 1860s and later, the Northwestern region was area of the most intense Polish-Russian rivalry, the most bitter clash of “Russianness” and “Polishness” projects (in the Southwestern Region—the Right-Bank Ukraine—the Polish presence was less visible, the contention not being so dramatic, and in the Polish Kingdom, the imperial government never pursued a goal of total ethnocultural de-Polonization). Contention with the “Polish element” (a prevalent term of the time) was by no means confined to the military struggles, repressions and persecutions of those whom the government considered irreconcilable rebels or incorrigible separatists. Such struggle also implied a good deal of sophisticated cultural and semiotic legitimization of imperial power, resourceful myth-making and representational strategies,

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innovative social policies, and manipulations of the ethnic and religious identities and sentiments of diverse groups of population.² At the same time, the Russification campaigns on the Western periphery can be analyzed in the perspective of 19th century development of Russian national consciousness and the debates about the nature, criteria, and limits of “Russianness.” This approach is particularly prompted by a nascent interpretation of the Great Reforms under Alexander II not only as a series of liberally-oriented social and institutional transformations, but also as a deliberate, European-fashioned nation-building project interwoven with nationalistic ways of thinking and the rise of ethnophobias.³

The heroes of this paper are the officials of higher (up to Governors General) and middle ranks who were closely engaged in such spheres of bureaucratic activities as the introduction of the network of Russian-language popular schools (instead of private Polish-language schools supported by Polish *szlachta*), the enforcement of the ban on the Polish language in administrative and educational institutions, the reglamentation of the Catholic church’s status and rituals as well as Catholic clergy’s functions, the contrivance of mass conversions from Catholicism to Orthodoxy, and, to a lesser degree (due to a selection of primary sources), the implementation of the peasant reform, favorable to the peasantry in this region as compared with central Russia. Placing these officials in the context of the Great Reform era’s civic thinking and developments is not meant to claim that some of them were prominent theoreticians of citizenship or proponents of a sublime ideal of civic society. Nor did they go so far in their fight against the Polish *szlachta* as to abandon the estate (*soslovie*)-based vision of the peasantry. Rather, the paper is about civic aspects of their self-legitimization. The Polish uprising, with its claims to the territories from the Neman to the Dnepr and the Dvina, was actually a formidable

Center in Moscow. I thank Sophie Solovyova, Paul Werth, and Richard Wortman for helping me with the translation of the quotations.

challenge both to the empire and Russian nationalism. The task of confronting such “encroachments” was viewed by officials in terms of historic mission, a vocation not to be missed in any case. Dramatization of political goals in so highly contested an area made the traditional patterns of the officialdom’s dynastic loyalty insufficient. The language of bureaucratic subservience pathetically failed to capture and convey emotional reactions provoked by the Polish-Russian clash.

Russifiers of the 1860s certainly were not first in the Russian history to try to reconcile a dream of being independent actors in politics, investing initiative, self-confidence, and dignity in their office, with duty to the autocrat and monarchy. A similar quest had been undertaken by groups of wealthy and educated aristocrats or ambitious and smart generals under Alexander I, young officials of the Ministry of Justice committed to the legal expertise and reform-minded bureaucrats of the Ministries of the Interior and State Domains in the 1840s and 1850s.⁴ Unlike them, the officials who in 1863-64 received appointments to high positions in the western provinces had not earlier constituted a close circle of participants in common efforts. Their *esprit de corps* emerged simultaneously with their Russificatory efforts, precisely by imagining themselves as a part of a far larger body. It was for the first time that attempts at combining civic identity and dynastic loyalty ran parallel to the rise of modern nationalistic sentiment and notions of supra-estate (*nadsoslovnyi*) national unity. In the first section of the paper, I analyze major components of the officials’ civic self-portrayal as connected with their thinking about means and agencies of national consolidation. The second and third sections deal with interdependence between their civic identity and the directions of the administration’s confessional policies that have not received much attention from historians.

1. “We are not hirelings, but citizens...”

Russian officials who had come to Vil’na from Great Russia (Velikorossia) were bound to become the prisoners of the primordialist discourse about the Western region as a “Russian land from the times immemorial” (*iskonno russkii krai*), a “purely Russian land.” There was a gap between this canonical view and their own frustrating experience gotten from the contacts with different groups of the local population. Ethnic and religious heterogeneity, a lack of modern linguistic uniformity even among the East Slavic rural population (Belarusians really spoke many dialects), a blurred confessional border between Catholic and Orthodox commoners undermined the official claims and baffled the bureaucrats who were obliged to keep up—and believe in—appearances of Russianness.⁵

What made them feel most uncomfortable in their day-to-day life and routine pursuits was perhaps the isolation from the local high society that was predominantly Polish. Since early 1860s, the usual forms of the nobility’s social contacts – balls, banquets, music parties and other entertainments – were missing in Vil’na. Polish magnates stubbornly stood aside from Russian officials (e.g. theater performances were attended only by Russians), and the dictatorial powers of Governors General were insufficient to order, say, Polish noblewomen to smile, chat and dance with Russian officials. Admittedly, up to 1868 no Governor General or governor sought to resume such contacts. Whether voluntary or forced, this unsociability lent many of the Vil’na officials’ self-representation a characteristic air of resentment and gloominess. To give an example: In 1868, the newly appointed Vil’na Governor General Alexander Potapov organized an open-air ball to ease tensions between the local Polish beau monde and leading figures in Russian administration. Aware of this plan, one of the hard-liners wrote in a private letter to another: “Even from a distance, it seems, a magnificent illumination of a garden would remind

me of the Polish arson [here we deal with a wide-spread belief that Poles were responsible for a number of devastating fires in Russia, especially in 1862. – *M.D.*]. And is it possible that the Polish ladies would so easily forget [Russian] gallows? Well, they did dance under Alexander I and then, right after, with Napoleon I. I would like to know how many of the newly arrived Russians will be made a laughing-stock of each Polish lady!”⁶

So, proponents of the “Russian cause” could not avoid thinking of themselves as a minority in a culturally alien milieu. Paradoxically, Vil’na was for them both the motherland and *chuzhbina*, a foreign country. This oxymoronic discrepancy helped flesh out romantic aspects of their civic self-images. Being a minority surrounded by explicitly or latently inimical forces became an attribute of Russifying bureaucracy, a sign of their noble mission. An overemphasis on their “loneliness” as a social element and an institutional group among the local population ran through both their official and private writings. The logic of this dramatization can be seen from the following quotation from a private letter of the ex-curator of the Vil’na School District Ivan Kornilov sent in April 1868 to a district official, Nikolai Novikov: “In the Western region, our small, but tightly-knit, circle encounters three native communities: Polish-Latin [i.e. Polish-Catholic. – *M.D.*], Jewish, and German. These communities are not simply associations that can be separated, broken up into parties, but are close unions, unified by faith, tradition and nationality. We are the only ones who do not constitute a community in the Western region; we are artificially assembled by the administrative authority in order to serve it as long as will be required and then leave and go back home.”⁷ Kornilov did not distinguish between the existing and anticipated threats (though “German threat” to the Russian Empire as a whole was already being discussed then, Baltic Germans constituted not an independent “close union” placed at the heart of the Lithuanian-Belarusian land, but a loyal minority residing at a single margin of the

Northwestern region—several uyezds of Kovno province adjacent to Kurland). In his eyes, Poles, Jews, and Germans were concertedly plotting against the “Russian cause.”

A dream of acting as citizens was a part of this xenophobic worldview. The state officials wished to substitute for a Russian educated society still to emerge on this periphery. Being a minority entitled them to a great variety of commitments. Such endeavor affected not only their mindset, but also their temperaments, emotional reactions, manners of public behavior. Rhetoric of citizenship easily entered the vocabulary of Russifying bureaucracy. The self-definition “citizens,” *grazhdane*, seems to have been the favorite. It implied aversion to the strictly formal, emotionally neutral, *kazennyi*, performance of service duties and even a hint of criticism of earlier ways of empire-building under Nicholas I: “To fight for one’s native land, Polotsk and Minsk, is not the same as to battle in Hungary, not the same as to hold on to the Baltic region (*Ostzeiskii krai*), Mitava, Helsingfors. It is quite obvious that the Russian officials who, for the lack of Russian social forces, direct the whole endeavor, cannot treat it indifferently, in a formal way, cannot simply be the executors of the orders of their immediate superiors. ... We are not hirelings, but citizens, sincere and solid people, who serve not a person, but idea.”⁸

Russifiers were pleased to draw parallels between themselves and foreign models of civic dignity, the American Civil War being one of the points of reference. In November 1863, Vladimir Levshin, the Governor-General’s assistant supervising the implementation of the peasant reform, wrote to his friend and junior colleague in Minsk province, Constantine Bozhovskii, about a newly appointed peace mediator (*mirovoi posrednik*) named Razderishin: “A fine man! He fought -sabre in hand --as a volunteer on behalf of the oppressed Negroes in America; for his own people [i.e., peasants to be emancipated from Polish *pany*. – *M.D.*] he won’t spare his life.”⁹

Another flattering self-appellation was *deiatel'*, a man of action, as opposed to *ispolnitel'*, a clerk, functionary; presumably, it was put into circulation by Governor General Mikhail Murav'ev himself.¹⁰ The *deiatel'* was expected to have developed a set of recognizable qualities among which enterprise and skepticism toward rank and estate (*soslovie*) hierarchies were most prominent. Presumably, they could be distinguished at first glance by their appearance. Here is an excerpt from the informal recommendation for a young nobleman, eager to take part in Russificatory efforts, that was designed to be eventually looked through by Murav'ev (who in his previous offices strictly observed conventionalities of bureaucratic discipline and subordination, but now was likely to encourage officials' activities beyond the letter of service regulation¹¹): "A reasonable gentleman, one of the first ones to quit the ways of nobility (*barstvo*), put on a sheepskin coat (*dublionka*), grow a beard, and take up heavy work. This young man signed up for a merchant guild, passionately went into industry and commerce and ... greatly increased his fortune. His decision to serve in this region can be explained only by his noble intent to serve the Russian cause with all his youthful energy."¹² Not surprisingly, opponents (both Polish and Russian) of the Vil'na nationally inclined bureaucrats derisively used the word *deiateli* to denote administrative arbitrariness, careerism under the guise of zeal, destructive and incompetent enthusiasm, and even socialist aspirations (and officials' beards were assigned a quite different meaning in this context).¹³

Did the civic rhetoric mean a serious change of officials' attitudes to the emperor and his autocratic prerogatives? Researching their private papers, including most confidential correspondences, I have not run across instances of open and unequivocal expression of their dissatisfaction with Alexander II personally.¹⁴ They wanted to believe that, carrying out de-Polonization measures, they were enforcing the emperor's will. Kornilov succeeded in

conveying what was in the air very concisely, nearly in the aphoristic form: “We are at one with our tsar, who serves the Fatherland as we do (*My zaodno s Gosudarem, kotoryi tak zhe, kak i my, sluzhit Otechestvu*).”¹⁵ Indicatively, dynastic loyalty, *vernopoddannichestvo* was expressed by means of such a formula that as if placed the Emperor and his officials on an equal plane, as fellow members of a civic union.

However, no doubt that Russifiers were frustrated to see Alexander II’s distrust of the overt Polonophobia and reluctance to declare himself a Russian nationalist. Here one can cite their endless lamentations about the treacherous and ubiquitous “Polish intrigue” that was rumored to have a strong impact on all important governmental decisions. Talking about the “Polish intrigue” dealt with the Russifiers’ civic self-image, too. They strove to portray themselves not so much as humble and defenceless as staying remote from corrupted court circles and despised aristocracy. This meaningfully underscored their remoteness from the Emperor as well.

An indirect way of distancing themselves from the central government and even the Emperor was to indulge in what Henryk G__bocki refers to as an “almost religious cult” of Mikhail Murav’ev, the charismatic Vil’na Governor General (1863-65).¹⁶ For a range of Russian nationally inclined people, first and foremost his subordinates, Murav’ev, despite (or perhaps by virtue of) his odious reputation as a brutal administrator, came to embody a potential national leader. Not accidentally, Alexander Herzen, in anger at the Russian educated society’s nationalist evolution, sardonically suggested that Murav’ev would replace Alexander II on the Romanov throne. The Murav’evian cult gave rise to forms of spontaneous manifestation of public opinion that were not familiar yet in Russia. One of them was the 1863 campaign of congratulations and greetings by telegraph on his nameday, November 8. Statesmen, church figures, journalists,

merchants and others sent him expressions of their gratitude for promoting the “Russian cause” in the struggle with so insidious an enemy backed by European haters of Russia. Using the telegraph for the first time to stir public opinion was a fascinating experience for those who actively participated in the campaign.¹⁷ Murav’ev was keenly aware of the role the nationalist segments of Russian society envisaged for him. Remaining a cautious bureaucrat quite loyal to the Emperor, he tried to play on the public delight about his “heroic deeds.” In his memoirs written in 1865 and early 1866, i.e., very shortly after his retirement, and circulating in many copies among the members of imperial elite, he emphasized (by means of semantic structuring of the text) that he appreciated the beautiful icon of St. Michael, “gift and blessing from Russian people” (*dar i blagoslovenie russkikh liudei*) more than the St. Andrei order with which the Emperor honored him a bit earlier. He appealed fairly boldly to a modern autobiographical notion, “my political life.” His self-confident assertion that “my political life, in terms of introducing the Russian principles in the Western region, even during my absence from this region, did not end,” symbolically denied his removal from Vil’na in April 1865 by imperial decree.¹⁸

One more example, particular, yet illuminating, of civic repercussions of the Murav’evian myth is the toast a group of Murav’ev’s former subordinates proposed for his wife, Pelageia Vasil’evna, at a dinner in his estate Syrets in 1865. Pelageia Murav’eva never sought to play a role of the wife–comrade-in-arms of the statesman, but the rhetoric of citizenship helped construct a different image. Her arrival in Vil’na and staying together with the husband in the perfectly guarded palace of Governors General were exalted as a sublime exploit: “When Russia’s soul shuddered momentarily for her great interests in the Northwestern region, when Count Mikhail Nikolaevich was appointed by his majesty into the milieu of unbridled sedition (v

sredu raznuzdannoi kramoly), you also made a sacrifice to Russia... by arriving in the Northwestern region to comfort your precious spouse, who is also no less dear for Russia. This is self-sacrifice of a woman citizen, this is a respectful quality of a national, Russian, orthodox woman! We are grateful to you for your husband and for yourself.”¹⁹ In this self-sacrificial guise, Murav’ev’s wife invokes memories of the famous Decembrists’ wives who made their civic choice and voluntarily followed their husbands into the Siberian exile. This mythologizing toast directly related to the logic of nationalism. The glory of Murav’ev in Vil’na was seen as a glory of the nation in microcosm; the completeness of this triumph implied a contribution made to it by the female part of the nation as well.

The isolation the bureaucratic Russifiers complained of was not solely an “invented” aspect of their self-image. Trying to approach the local peasants a great majority of whom were officially declared to be Russian, they often experienced a deep disappointment preconditioned in part by the limited “nationalizing” potential of the imperial state. To illustrate this point, I will briefly turn to the project of a magazine for the people (“*narodnyi zhurnal*”) that was under consideration by the Vil’na authorities in 1862-1864. A series of proposals and counterproposals in the context of imperial ethno-linguistical policies has been recently discussed by Darius Stali_nas²⁰; I treat the subject from the perspective of the bureaucrats’ hope for civic and national mobilization.

In 1862, a half a year prior to the Polish uprising, the idea of a magazine for the people (secular and entertaining, rather than religious and didactic) was enthusiastically promoted by Petr Shchebal’skii, an official of the Ministry of Education, expert on Poland and the western provinces, and journalist. His memorandums on this issue offered what can be called an optimistic version of nation-building project. Not masses of peasantry, but people of educated

society were to become primary beneficiaries of the decision to launch such a magazine. That is, not readership, but contributors. Shchebal'skii key point was that the magazine should be a private enterprise run, e.g., by a committee for popular literacy, whereas the Vil'na administrators, including Governor General Vladimir Nazimov, insisted on having a state-supported, (semi-)official magazine.

Shchebal'skii argued that the task of publishing a magazine for newly emancipated peasants would be a strong impetus to the disjointed "Russian" elements scattered among the predominantly Polish educated society in Vil'na, Minsk, Grodno and so on. In his vision, this would be the best utilization of their Polonophobic sentiments. Shchebal'skii's argumentation elucidates the reasons why Russifiers may have considered (not consistently, however) being in the minority an advantage for educated Russians in the western provinces: "It is necessary to call on all available social forces. All the other means have been tested: firmness and leniency; the systematic suppression of the Polish nationality in that region as well as granting it certain rights.... They did not trust the government's humanity, while its strict measures did not weaken the opposition: so, let *the nation itself* fight for itself, for its most vital interests. It will not be accused of acting like a party: in the present case, it cannot act in any other way, other than with fervor, quick temper, unbridled passion (*s uvlecheniem, s zapal'chivostiiu, s neodolimoiu siloiu strasti*), the qualities which the government cannot and should not have."²¹ The distinction between the "government" and the "nation" is telling. Shchebal'skii put forth a militant and non-statist image of the nation-"party." Activities of this "party" were described precisely in civic terms, as transcending the borders between "dialects" (of the Russian language) and estates: "[This society will become] a new bond between the Belarusian, the Great Russian, and the Little Russian, between the peasant and the nobleman, between the clergy and the laity..."²²

Due to the 1863 uprising, the debates stalled for a while. The administration in Vil'na got back to the project only in spring 1864. As is clear from a report of the above-quoted Ivan Kornilov, the curator of the Vil'na School district (and a presumed crusader for the officials' civic consciousness), to the Minister of Education, the uprising made the borderland officials suspicious about any plans to involve local peasants in common, all-estate civic actions. Rather, the current priority was to insulate the peasantry, this invaluable and (in the fringes of the Russian national territory) vulnerable foundation of the Russian nation, minimizing external influences not subject to the government's control. In Kornilov's opinion, no magazine was needed for the peasants who simply were not able to consume printed information.²³ Unlike his predecessors, he did not combine the magazine project with, but opposed it to the spread of popular schools.²⁴ What was at stake was the question about who and what means would influence the peasantry. The head of the School district wanted to cut off diverse elements of the educated society from access to the common people; and he definitely placed emphasis on a religious character of education. (Generally, subsequent policy fit in this scheme.) Here is a sample of his judgment: "[The people] need sacred books, the writings of the church fathers, teachings and didactic discussions.... It is necessary to select and flood the people with hundreds of thousand of them. *The Selected Words* [Izbrannye slova] of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk are really better than modern compositions where in a funny story it is proven that drunkenness is a vice."²⁵

Kornilov's way of reasoning reveals a vicious circle of aspirations and misgivings of the Russifying officials when thinking of themselves as "citizens". For instance, he criticized the magazine project on grounds that its dissemination would entail establishing as soon as possible a dense postal communication network all across the six provinces, which was not an easy task

(“*ustanovit' narochno dlia zhurnala pochtovuiu postoiannuiu gon'bu mezhdue seleniiami*”). The objection is curious. A lack of what is now known to have been one of the mightiest ‘nation-builder’, railroad network, was cited as a reason to put off using another effective tool of nation-building, mass press. Moreover, the Vil’na Russifiers might have found railroad construction to be in contradiction to their goals. Indeed, railroads would facilitate communication not only with Petersburg, but also Warsaw. It was reported from time to time that, thanks to the newly constructed railroad Vil’na – Warsaw, the already deeply “Polonized” peasants in the border uyezds of Grodno province held secret contacts with the “agents of the Polish *sprawa*” (Polish cause) in Krakow and Warsaw. One of them was reported to have sent a complaint about Russificatory policies of Alexander II to Napoleon III himself.²⁶ So, at least in several territories, railroad construction threatened to turn the assimilation processes in the opposite direction, the former Polish “core-area” being an alternative center of gravitation for the population with no clear etho-cultural identities.

The collision between two priorities—inculcating in peasants civic-mindedness and protecting them from stirring (not necessarily Polish) influences—reflected an ambiguity of the civic self-perceptions of the bureaucratic Russifiers. In their minds, modern notions of civic activism amalgamated with the romantic image of rediscoverers and custodians of a once-lost branch of the “Russian people.”²⁷ Apart from other spheres, this dual role manifested itself in complexities of the policies toward the Catholic church.

2. Civic Sentiments of Russifiers and the Catholic Church

In this section, I will be discussing a sense of citizenship or perhaps just a civic sentiment of Russifying officials as stirred by the struggle against the Catholic church on the western periphery.

It is well-known in historiography that the 19th century Russian bureaucrats' enmity and even hatred against Catholicism had a strong national character.²⁸ Catholic clerics were viewed as leaders of the Polish national movement; the equation of Catholicism with "Polonism" became by the mid-1860s quite a common place or even incantation in official documents, periodicals, private correspondence. Here is a typical quotation from a report of the Vil'na Governor General Mikhail Murav'ev, notorious for his Polonophobia and persecution, submitted to Alexander II in April 1865: "The Catholic faith of this region is not a faith, but a political heresy; Roman Catholic bishops, priests and monks constitute not a clergy, but political emissaries, preaching hostility toward the Russian government and toward everything that bears the designation Russian and Orthodox."²⁹

The point I will be developing below is that the anti-Catholic motivations of imperial bureaucrats were more complex than such clichés implied. This is not merely to say that Russian enmity toward Catholicism can be contextualized by historians in different ways, focusing, for instance, on the issues of relations of Petersburg with the Holy See and patterns of loyalty of Catholics to their church authorities. Russian-Polish rivalry is certainly a salient context for analyzing relationship between the Imperial state and the Catholic church. However, one should not forget that these relations in the 1860s were affected not only by the 1863 uprising, but also preoccupations and anxieties of the government and imperial elite originating with the Great Reform project. I argue that, for bureaucrats in the Western borderland, talking about Catholicism might have been a catalyst for developing—sometimes contrary to their intentions—notions of collective civic efforts and mobilization of the common people not necessarily and not directly related to the Catholic church's *Polishness*.

The 1861 peasant emancipation and the Great Reforms as a whole heightened an ambiguity of the official perception of Catholicism in Russia. Here a comparison with the case of Prussia and the German Empire could be of some help. German state policies toward Catholic church were often cited as exemplary by the 19th century Russian nationalists (though with disbelief in the possibility of having them consistently emulated). As David Blackbourn has shown, as late as 1870s the Enlightenment legacy was still quite apparent in the German government's and liberals' perception of Catholicism. Echoing Voltaire, they squeamishly referred to Catholic clergy (Polish as well as German) as an embodiment of medieval "darkness," condemned the church for obscurantism and keeping ignorant people under the yoke of "superstitions," scoffed at manifestations of Catholic piety, and revolted at reports of (faked, they believed) apparitions. But this Voltairean stream of criticism and sarcasm was only supplementary to a newer, informed by *Kulturkampf* values, portrayal of Catholic church—the opposite of material and moral progress and positivist science. In this logic, nascent popular forms of Catholic religiosity, pilgrimages and apparitions, associated with a social "infectious disease," meant a dramatic failure of Catholic commoners en masse to meet the standards required of a good citizen, educated, sober-minded and responsive to a wiser liberal counsel.³⁰

In many respects, Russifying bureaucrats of the Romanov Empire shared this type of discourse and perhaps borrowed from the German liberals' and Protestant officials' devastating rhetoric about Catholic "backwardness" and ultramontanism. For example, in an 1867 memorandum on the education in Catholic seminaries, the members of the so-called Inspection Commission on Affairs of the Roman Catholic Clergy in Vil'na (*Revizionnaia komissia po delam rimsko-katolicheskogo dukhovenstva*) spoke in characteristically scathing language: "Catholic clerics are required [by the higher church authorities. – *M.D.*] to reject the secular

spirit--that is, the logic and learning that is accepted by all people, and to follow only their Ultramontane logic and teaching, which finds its expression in the following propositions, among others: the Ptolemeic system is true, that of Copernicus is false; that witches exist (*ved'my sushchestvuiut*), and that one can ascribe one's soul to Satan."³¹ The Catholic clergy versus "all people"!

However, in Russia Catholic "backwardness" and "benightedness" did not appear as indisputable as they seemed to German liberals. Regardless of the Russians'—more or less latent at the time-- "inferiority complex" about Poles as a "more European" people, bureaucrats knew very well that East Slavic (officially classified as Russian) population of Catholic faith had a larger proportion of literate persons than the Orthodox peasantry, a fact of great importance after 1861. The discourse of "Catholic ignorance" was doomed to stumble at this point. In this perspective, the crucial difference between the German and Russian cases lies in that the German anti-Catholic rhetoric could often have been couched in elitist terms, thus justifying an alienation of propertied literati from masses of lower-class victims of "fanaticism," which clearly showed "the limits of liberal sympathy for the lower classes."³² In Russia, on the contrary, the struggle with what was perceived as "overpresence" of Catholicism in public sphere, as a rule, implied a shift to populist attitudes and affirmative action policies aimed to protect lower-class population from economic exploitation and moral humiliation. As put by Kimitaka Matsuzato, the Russificatory policies in the Western region had a "democratizing effect."³³ My argument in this paper is that for Russifiers in the Romanov Empire's western provinces (unlike Protestant representatives of state in the German Empire), confronting and persecuting Catholic activities meant to experience, at least intermittently, a sense of being challenged by modernity, rather than the "medieval past."³⁴

Even those bureaucrats who tended to label Catholicism as the “Polish faith” first and foremost were aware of a strong appeal that a “non-Polish” Catholicism might have had in the eyes of Russians within the Empire, not only in the Western provinces, but also in the capitals. Alexander Rachinskii, an official of the Vil’na School District, a fierce Polonophobe and fervent Orthodox believer, angrily wrote in a private letter in 1866: “We know how Orthodox ladies, scholarly ladies, perhaps even with princely surnames, caused the walls of Petersburg and Moscow Catholic churches to burst upon the appearance of a skillful Latin [Roman Catholic] preacher: after all, was it the Polish dialect that captivated them there?” This alarmist tone reverberated in a memorandum of 1866 by Ivan Eremich, the assistant of the editor of *Vestnik Zapadnoi Rossii*, a propagandist Polonophobic journal. According to Eremich, it was not only noble Orthodox ladies of Petersburg who rushed to the Catholic church there to listen to the sermons delivered by a visiting French priest: “When Solière delivered sermons in Petersburg thousands of Russian came to hear him, including crowds of unskilled laborers (*chernorabochie*) who of course did not understand French.”³⁵ The “mobs of *chernorabochii*” attracted by French-language church services indeed challenged the pre-reform official stereotype of the “Russian Catholic” as an eccentric and degenerate aristocrat-cosmopolitan.³⁶

So, Catholic ritual practices was viewed by officials as a powerful mobilizing force in itself. They saw in Catholicism, with its “theatricality” and, as Eremich put it, message to the “outer self” (*vneshnemu cheloveku*), a potential beneficiary of the new liberal climate of the Great Reforms, of the new opportunities for public action, discussion and dissemination of ideas. Responding to Mikhail Katkov’s idea of introducing the Russian language into Catholic services, Ivan Kornilov contended that Catholic prayer books in Russian had been “very skillfully composed” and was fearful of their dissemination among the people.³⁷

This was not simply a fear of Catholic proselytism (quite familiar to the imperial elite already under Nicholas I who precisely for this reason, in late 1840s, issued the ban on Russian-language sermons by non-Orthodox priests), but an anticipation of a more sophisticated, modern propaganda affecting masses of people and operating through such channels as, e.g., popular literacy. What “discoveries” about Catholicism proved to be most unpleasant to Russifiers in the mid-1860s?

Of special interest for our subject is the Russifying bureaucrats’ view of brotherhoods at local Catholic churches. The existence of the brotherhoods came to the surface in 1865 and caused serious troubles for Vil’na authorities in 1866-67. Then Russifiers faced a wave of the stubborn resistance from those newly converted to Orthodoxy in the Belorussian provinces: former Catholics, peasants, as well as petty *szlachta*, claimed themselves to have been forced to convert. They refused to take Orthodox Communion and have children baptized by Orthodox priests. They petitioned for their return to Catholic faith. Quite in accordance with the traditional governmental “conspirology,” officials sought to blame such backlash on a certain group of instigators, *podstrekateli*. Catholic brotherhoods were found to have been the main culprit.

As was the case with other parts of contemporaneous Catholic Europe, many brotherhoods in the Empire’s Northwestern region were dedicated to the Virgin Mary. They held the name of *szkaplerzy* (the Polish word, meaning a piece of fabric with the name of the Virgin Mary embroidered on it). The issue of their origin and evolution requires further research, but it may be assumed that the rise of brotherhoods’ visibility in the 1860s related not only to the 1863 uprising proper, but also to the “Catholic revival” throughout nineteenth-century Europe and the emergence of forms of folk, and particularly female, religiosity approved of by the church.³⁸

The official versions of what brotherhoods were like came to be remarkably contradictory. One of the approaches was to treat them as a lifeless, “medieval” relic of once-influential Catholic orders. This view was actually reinforced by Catholic bishops who were interested in avoiding accusations of supporting the “societies” that had not been sanctioned by, and even known to, the government. They tried to portray brotherhoods as innocent gatherings devoid of any initiative and prestige. For example, the Mogilev Archbishop referred to the brotherhoods as “an demoralized and decaying institution that has deviated from its [original] purpose.” In his words (readily and often cited by bureaucrats), they “are merely decomposing on the [very] foundations on which they were originally introduced.”³⁹ This was the reason on which Russifiers based their proposal to abolish the institution of Catholic brotherhood immediately—look, even the local Catholic hierarchy did not defend them!

But the metaphors of decay and de_omposition were barely compatible with the supposed role of brotherhoods as inspirers of resistance to the spread of Orthodoxy. To explain this role both state and church (Orthodox) officials had to consider brotherhoods from the perspective of horizontal social ties. The way that bureaucratic investigators depicted them reveals a keen attention to the implications that the idea of citizenship and civic activism might have had in brotherhoods’ undertakings.

Let us analyze the reports on this issue submitted by Orthodox priests to the local civil authorities (this was only one of a number of cases where the Orthodox church served as an expert on affairs of other faiths). Beyond an understandable ecclesiastical enmity, the reports raised a number of secular concerns and preoccupations. Most important, members of Catholic brotherhoods threatened to shake the traditional distribution of functions between the estates (*sosloviia*) and even blur the very border between them. The social profile of brotherhoods was

noticeably plebeian: “Nobody from among the greatest landowners and lords enters the brotherhoods; instead it includes people from the lower estate (*iz nizshego sosloviia*) who assemble in this corporation: people from the lesser nobility (*melkoi shliakhty*), single homesteaders, craftsmen of primarily peasant origins, [and] those [seeking to] dignify themselves as meshchane.” They ventured to take on the clergy’s prerogatives and attributes, beginning with clerical garb: “Members of the brotherhoods are provided with special attire, something akin to white surplice. They don this attire during the liturgy and during processions. Several dozen fraters, dressed in white attire and walking in two rows during cross processions, produce a quite powerful impression on the people in favor of 'Latinism'.”⁴⁰

Still worse, brotherhoods provided effective forms of a more active, than in Orthodox churches, participation of laymen in church services, even in chanting liturgy. “Serving as a kind of commentary on the foreign, Latin liturgy, the brotherhoods in a most successful manner render it comprehensible by means of the Polish language, which has been raised to the status of a liturgical language and in which those called to the brotherhood conduct the better half of services in churches.” Thus, brethren and sisters helped the clergy convey the spiritual message to other parishioners. With great anxiety, the authors of the reports cited the instances of direct performance by brotherhoods’ members of the clergy’s sacral duties: “They have sometimes had the extreme audacity to appropriate for themselves the rights of ecclesiastical figures--to baptize children and to perform the burial services for the deceased.” In a tone of deep revulsion, the reports underlined that sacraments could have been administered in the absence of a Catholic priest or any cleric whatsoever. Civil officials who received these reports for consideration (the Inspection Commission on the Affairs of Roman Catholic Clergy in Vil’na) went further over this point, stating that brotherhoods, “despite their [formal] subordination to parish priests

(*ksendzy*), maintain those priests in a certain state of dependence with respect to themselves and impress them by their very fanaticism (*samym swoim fanatizmom imponiruiut poslednikh*).” In one of the reports, brotherhoods were characteristically referred to as “parish committees” (*prikhodskie komitety*).⁴¹

This narrative derided and condemned Catholic brotherhoods, but at the same time—and, to be sure, implicitly—added legitimacy to the notion of civic community, with firm horizontal ties bonding and keeping together people of different social standings, both clergy and laity, committed to the common spiritual values and capable of self-mobilization. In a sense, hateful brotherhoods gave an example to be emulated. Some important features in their depictions by officials were “reversed” projections of the Orthodox church’s weaknesses. We should bear in mind that imperial officials who were demonstratively disgusted at Catholic “fanatics”, allegedly intimidating priests and co-parishioners, in their private or confidential writings lamented about degradation and isolation of Orthodox clergy and looked around for models for its reorganization. Shortly after his retirement, Ivan Kornilov, a fervent ethnonationalist, compared the Orthodox clergy with the priesthood of other faiths of the Empire in the following, fairly sceptical, way: “Among Jews the clergy is made up of the entire people; that is the entire male sex is the clergy. Every Jew may be a rabbi, every Jew may perform marriages, in Synagogue every Jew wears special vestments and participates directly in all portions of the service. Among Muslims, and likewise among Lutherans, there is not a clerical caste; the clerical vocation is selected by inclination. Among Catholics and Lamaists the clergy constitutes an organized and apparently distinct corporation, but since their clergy is celibate its personnel is constantly being replenished from among the people and consequently has family ties with them. And therefore in

all of the named churches there is not the kind of separation and estrangement between people and clergy that exists in our [Orthodox] church organization.”⁴²

A very difficult task for officials who, like Kornilov, were aware of advantages of Catholicism in spiritually uniting parishioners and proselytizing was to present themselves as bearers of a sober sense of citizenship confronting those who maliciously distorted the idea of citizenship (out of religious fanaticism or political disloyalty) and exploited popular sentiments and aspirations. However, often the competition with Catholicism in this sphere was hindered by the very conservative character of Orthodox service and ritual practices. A particular, yet telling example is the issue of religious choral singing. Catholic choral (meaning all parishioners attending the service) singing was nearly an obsession for many Russifiers in the Western region. It was considered to be one of the key sources of vitality of Catholic faith and its appeal to believers. A member of Vil’na Inspection Commission on Catholic Clergy Vladimir Samarin, a younger brother of the famous Slavophile Iurii Samarin, argued in 1866 that common people had a strong affection for Catholicism due to “the possibility for one to be the most energetic participant in that singing, with the sound of the organ and during the procession.” “This is a great temptation (*eto bol’shoi soblazn!*)”, Samarin concluded. “Engaged in *by everyone* in churches, singing binds Roman Catholics (*rimliane*) to Papism terribly and draws many simple Orthodox folk astray into the Roman confession. This singing, [even] more so than organs, draws simple folk into the Catholic churches,” an Orthodox priest, one of the “experts” on Catholic brotherhoods, observed.⁴³

As is clear from these quotations, officials understood very well a broader social significance of laity’s participation in service singing. What is strongly felt in their accounts is misgivings that this custom would allow every humble parishioner to elevate himself or herself

as a contributor to the collective “production” of sublime emotions. The fear of emotions transcending borders between the estates (*sosloviia*) most of all affected officials’ attitude toward the so-called 40-hour church service (to be administered on the eve of the greatest holidays). As was put in a report by the Inspection Commission, “The concentration in one place of an enormous number of people--priests, lords, and peasants--for an extended period of time, as they arouse one another by speeches, sermons, religious solemnity and feasting, renders such gatherings more dangerous than all others and most convenient for exciting the people and for any sort of political propaganda and agitation among them.”⁴⁴

Practical outcomes of this polemical attack were not impressive. Officials tried to prove that participation of laity in sacral singing was not in accordance with the Catholic canon law, but did not succeed.⁴⁵ Then a series of awkward restrictive measures followed—e.g., a ban was imposed on processions outside of church buildings.⁴⁶ There were no attempts to assimilate some of the Catholic ritual practices of “emotional mobilization” into Orthodox liturgy. Officials virtually ignored one of the important implications of the choral singing issue closely related to the question of education of common people. To promote the laity’s participation in services meant promoting popular literacy, namely publication of prayer books in great numbers. Prayer books and collections had a far narrower circulation among Orthodox peasants than Catholic ones (who used primarily Polish books). Saying prayers in church with a prayer book in the hand, following not only the priest’s speech, but also printed or written text, was a practice foreign to Orthodox church in Russia. And proposals to innovate were very likely to encounter a harsh criticism. In 1867, Petr Kozlovskii, a former Catholic priest converted to Orthodoxy, serving as an expert at the Inspection Commission, suggested that Orthodox prayer books be sold in many copies at every church and village school in the Northwestern region. He assured the

Commission that “the people here are accustomed to praying both at home and in church using prayer book and that habit is very strong and does not violate Orthodoxy.” Kozlovskii was rebuked by Nikolai Derevitskii, an influential member of the Commission and advisor of Governor General Count Baranov. He rejected the idea of introducing prayer books in church service, since, in his words, “the distraction of reading [during services] is prohibited by our church (*nasheiu Tserkov’iu zapreshcheno razvlekat’sia chteniem*).”⁴⁷ Derevitskii as well as many other officials in Vil’na were preoccupied with an ambiguous religious identity of local Orthodox peasants who preserved memories of Uniate (Greek Catholic) church abolished in 1839. In their logic, banning prayer books, be they in Polish or Russian, from the church was a kind of exorcism of these memories, and no matter that, as a result, the church service would lose much of its spiritual message.

Beyond the ritual practices and rules of Orthodox church, officials felt freer to challenge a civic—in their opinion, “fanaticizing”—appeal of Catholicism.

3. “*Orthodox atheism*” versus *Catholicism*

A fairly militant version of the official's civic self-image as opposed to Catholic “fanaticism” is to be found in the above-mentioned 1865-67 campaign of mass conversion of peasant and petty *szlachta* to Orthodoxy, especially in Belarusian-populated Minsk province.⁴⁸ In the entire Northwestern region this campaign affected about 70000 people (about 35000 of them in Minsk province), an extremely great number of converts for the mid-19th century. In the official jargon converts, in a usual primordialist manner of Russifying bureaucracy, were called “*prisoedinennye*”, “joined with”, since their previous confession of Catholicism was thought to have been a regrettable, but (in the case of common people, not *szlachta*) pardonable deviation

from the “native” faith. Their conversion to Orthodoxy became a result of elaborate social engineering undertaken not so much by Orthodox clergy and missionaries as enthusiastic bureaucrats and military officials.

The leading figure of the campaign was sixty-year-old (in 1865) Aleksei Storozhenko, the chair of the Inspection Commission and the official for special affairs (*chinovnik po osobym porucheniiam*) under three Governors General successively – M. Murav’ev, K. von Kaufman, and Count Baranov. Storozhenko was a Little Russian (*maloross*) by origin and sympathized with Ukrainophilism in the sense of cultural distinctiveness within the single, tripartite Russian nation. He loved to identify himself with his Cossack ancestors who had valiantly fought against Polish Catholics in the 17th century. In early 1860s he contributed Ukrainian-language prose and verse to the well-known journal *Osnova*. Mikhail Katkov’s diatribe against Ukrainophiles in *Moskovskie vedomosti*, accusing *Osnova* of separatism, bitterly disappointed and even frightened Storozhenko, and since 1863 he never composed in Ukrainian, though forced silence made him suffer. Shortly appointed to serve in Vil’na, he found new opportunities for projecting his nationalistic self.⁴⁹

Storozhenko and his assistants in the conversion campaign turned out to be a mirror image of Catholic brotherhoods' members as depicted by them in memoranda of the Inspection Commission. There was a similar fusion of lay and clerical spheres, laymen (namely officials) without qualms performing the clergy’s functions. In early 1865, Storozhenko complained in his report to Murav’ev that the matter of conversion in Minsk province was “in the most pitiful condition. [Orthodox] priests act zealously, but not consistently, while the administration does not take any part [in that affair].”⁵⁰

What followed this inspection was a nominally religious movement the mostly secular character of which was not denied even by Governors General when reporting to the Emperor. Count Baranov wrote in 1867, “If it is impossible to assert that the movement to Orthodoxy is always based on deeply felt conviction about the superiority of one confession over another, there is no doubt, that this movement currently derives from a feeling of unlimited gratitude toward the Monarch-Liberator.”⁵¹ Vil’na officials did not expect an immediate religious rebirth of the peasant population from the conversion, but thought that it might strengthen potentially more important secular means of assimilation, most of all, an agrarian reform favorable to the peasants.⁵²

In order to persuade peasants to accept conversion, the engineers of this campaign appealed to their expectations of material benefits of emancipation and additional land allotment, promised payments in cash or wood, or simply presented the whole parish with a *fait accompli*, having turned the local Catholic *ko_ció_* into an Orthodox church at a request solicited from only a lesser part of parishioners. Contrivance, pressure, and chicanery were not at all means to be avoided in this campaign. Particularly dubious was the plan to recruit Catholic priests to the cadres of Orthodox clergy. The Catholic priest converting to Orthodoxy without losing his clerical office was supposed to be followed by many of his parishioners. In Storozhenko’s eyes, internal religious conviction of such Catholic priests were of little significance; their role would be that of passive tools. As if animating his own description of Catholic brotherhoods, those “parish committees,” he did not hesitate to intimidate and blackmail priests, e.g., threatening them with prosecution or exile for “harmful influence” on a neighboring Orthodox settlement. He reported in mid-1867 about a priest in Grodno province: “Priest [*ksendz*] Lipka has been placed in such a position that he is surrounded, and there is nothing left for him to do but either

to join Orthodoxy or flee the area.”⁵³ To avoid being charged with Catholic proselytism, *kSENDZY* would have to become proselytizers of Orthodoxy. Others were promised a good salary and rewards. Thus, by promoting Catholic candidates for Orthodox priesthood, a not so prominent member of civil bureaucracy encroached on the clerical domain and shared prerogatives with the higher church authorities.

Storozhenko and his collaborators strove to portray themselves as noble warriors, proponents of the “holy cause”.⁵⁴ As is clear from their correspondence, both official and private, their vision of what was going on was almost that of military fight. The phraseology of their reports and letters is remarkably belligerent. Storozhenko declared that their aim was to “exhaust Latinism to the greatest possible extent.” One of his most triumphant reports of 1867 submitted to Governor General Baranov reads as follows: “Orthodoxy in Minsk province is marching forward in crescendo. Priest [kSENDZ] Koshko with his parish is reuniting with Orthodoxy, priest Onoshko is offering his services in Kopyla. So is priest Petrovskii, in Stvolovichi of Borshov uezd. Other Catholics are surrendering as well. Latinism is apparently disintegrating and clambering from all sides towards Orthodoxy (*vidimo razlagaetsia i lezet so vsekh storon v pravoslavie*).”⁵⁵ The metaphor of “surrender” or “fall” (*padenie*) was applied not only to Catholic priests, but to villages or even parishes as a whole, underscoring large numbers of people being affected by the action: “The parish of Novaia Mysh’ will have fallen by spring...”, “The parish of Medveditsa will lower the flag...”. The most energetic of the former Catholic priests-“proselytizers”, Antonii Girdvoin, was reported to “be reuniting parishioners with Orthodoxy mercilessly (*besposhchadno*)”. Amusingly, sometimes this rhetoric seems to have anticipated, albeit vaguely, the language of Soviet socialist emulation, e.g., of collectivization: “It was supposed that the parish of Gai in Borisov district would be the first to join [Orthodoxy],

but it turned out that [the parish] of Omnishev superceded it. The reason for this is the intrigues of the Orthodox priest, who is trying to ensure that that the converting Catholics will join his parish, instead of going to [Catholic] priest (*kseudz*) Petrovskii, who intends to accept Orthodoxy and be a priest in that same parish. [Characteristically, the Catholic priest converting to Orthodoxy was preferred to his Orthodox counterpart, the latter being referred to with dislike.-*M.D.*] Now it is the turn of the parish Darevo where it has already begun.” One of Storozhenko’s enthusiastic assistants in Novogrudok uezd, peace mediator (*mirovoi posrednik*)⁵⁶ Mikhail Almazov was no less “eloquent”: “Our Orthodoxy is now going forward in such a manner that if we can just turn one good screw a little bit more the machine will go forward with enormous speed (*esli nemnogo eshche podvintit’ gde-libo khoroshen’kii vint, tak mashina dvinetsia vpered s ogromnoiu siloiu*).”⁵⁷

The most interesting thing about Storozhenko’s self-representation is that he did not conceal he was considering the campaign from a literary perspective as well. For him, the mass conversions he sought to contrive were a fascinating and artistically crafted extension to the epic narrative about the Russian-Polish rivalry in the region. He tried to impress his superiors as a public man whose patriotic zeal and literary talent entitled him not only to transgress of requirements of rank and trivial regulations, but also to use the eccentric improvisations of a man of letters. In his description, the project of mobilizing Catholic priests to spread Orthodoxy looked like a missing, but anticipated chain in the gripping plot, a kind of witty inversion: “Reading the history of the tortures and oppression suffered by the Orthodox people, all Russian and Orthodox people are seized by such indignation, that if the return of those who have been Catholicized were accompanied by drastic measures, even these would not disturb the conscience of most moderate people. At the present time the government has adopted a most

irreproachable system for the spread of Orthodoxy: Catholic priests introduced Latinism into the Western region and now, in accordance with the saying 'like cures like' (*klin klinom vyshibaiut*), those same priests are converting Catholics to Orthodoxy. Better propagandists would be hard to find, [since] *kSENDZY* are great masters when it comes to proselytism.”⁵⁸

The failure of the conversion campaign was not unexpected. In 1868, the newly appointed Vil’na Governor General, Alexander Potapov, responding to the highest governmental circles’ anxiety about uncontrolled activities of the local officials in the Northwestern region, abruptly terminated conversions and dismissed Storozhenko. Potapov represented those higher bureaucrats under Alexander II who stayed committed to the non-nationalist, dynastic pattern of empire-building and looked askance at the emergence of nationally inclined cadres of officials in the borderlands, particularly on the Western periphery. In their vision, the sweeping conversion campaign constituted a menace to the imperial order so highly dependent on subjects’ belonging to a certain confession (Orthodoxy or others) recognized by the state. Actually, beyond the optimistic and jubilant reports about thousands and thousands of converts (one of Storozhenko’s telegrams is even reminiscent of the Acts of the Apostles 2:41⁵⁹), there were such concomitants of the campaign as a wave of complaints from the “reunited” about administrative coercion⁶⁰ and an increase of the number of those remaining in Catholicism who, due to the closure of parish church or removal of the priest, increasingly had to cease receiving sacraments and attending services. Unbaptized babies, unwedded couples and burials without a priest haunted many minds in the imperial administration.

To be sure, the emergence of this frightening troubles was not intended by the engineers of conversion campaign. However, they were by no means afraid of making use of a lack of discrimination between confessions, typical, as was believed, of the local peasantry. Inducing the

peasant masses to adopt Orthodoxy seemed to them relatively easy given the absence of a clear confessional identity among nominally Catholic peasants. According to a member of the Inspection Commission, “The people are prepared to return and go over to the womb of the Orthodox church and only await kindly directives from influential Russians in the area... Many times, I have heard Roman Catholic peasants say, ‘Soon everyone will be Russian,’ that is Orthodox. In the eyes of the local people, conversion from Latinism to Orthodoxy and Orthodoxy to Latinism occurred so often that the new religious movement surprises them not at all.”⁶¹ Not accidentally, the conversion efforts came to blur even the distinction between Catholic and Orthodox clergies as proselytizers of Orthodoxy.

A secularistic bias of the Storozhenko projects can be illustrated very well by a somewhat paradoxical statement attributed in 1867 by an inspector from the Ministry of Interior to another ardent Russifier in Vil’na administration, General A.D. Stolypin: “Orthodox atheism is more of use to the Western provinces than Catholicism.”⁶² “*Orthodox atheism*” might have sounded too strong, but the phrase revealed an idea essentially foreign to empire-minded bureaucrats of the time of Nicholas I—religious indifference or nonchalance of common people may be of help to resourceful administrators seeking to shape new identities of the population. One may assume that this “protoatheistic” attitude was prompted by a latent conviction of bureaucrats that the Catholic presence (embodied not only in legal Catholic believers, but also in the tenacious affection of a far larger amount of nominally Orthodox, former Uniates, for Catholic church) could not be eliminated with a religious and church-related weapon. Indeed, priests, former *kSENDZY*, caught “in between Catholicism and Orthodoxy” and calling on laymen to change their ascriptive confessional status, were viewed as mainly secular agents of administration whose task was to bring masses of people into the focus of assimilationist state influence.

Storozhenko as well as his collaborators were far from the high standards of civic dignity. Yet, he tried to offer a new model of borderland official, with a far more individualized approach to complex problems of imperial rule on periphery. Even his careerism and cynicism bore a seal of modern epoch. To a degree, his dubious experiments reflected a major difficulty of secularizing the spheres of borderland policy too closely tied to religious identities of population, which was the tendency of the time.

In the aftermath of the 1863 Polish uprising, the Russifying officials were pleased to imagine themselves as both loyal subjects of the emperor and energetic representatives of a Russian national community. In spite of brave rhetoric of activism and endeavor, their sense of citizenship did not prove to be well-developed and persistent. Civic aspects of their self-images were more of operationalizing a certain type of discourse, rather than a product of genuine civic conviction. After Alexander II's turn to less harsh depolonization policies in the Western borderlands (about early 1868) and, as a result, general loss of certainty about the government's enmity toward the Polish nobility as a whole estate, the local administrators who had earlier promoted the ideal of independent activities for the "Russian cause," were strikingly quick to mute their nationalistic tone and get back to typical patterns of bureaucratic servilism. One of the staunchly Polonophobe officials lamented in 1868 that Russians in Vil'na failed to assert themselves and were bound to play "roles" subject to unexpected change, and he had a point.⁶³

However, the civic self-portrait the Russifiers sought to project did not remain within a field of their bureaucratic games. As I have tried to show, it was a driving force behind a number of measures toward the Catholic church, helping reconceptualize rivalry with Catholicism as a phenomenon of the new, reformist epoch, a conflict over means of mobilizing people.

The question of further elaboration of the officials' self-image in memoirs (the above-mentioned Murav'ev's *Zapiski* pioneered the narrative and was followed by many others, up to early 20th century) deserves a separate discussion. Given the lasting interest of Russian public in the Polish uprising, Russifiers' efforts can be seen as a contribution to a broader Russian thinking about citizenship. And here evidence of their commitment to the image of threatened and embattled minority seems to have been of much significance. The words "handful" (*gorst' russkikh liudei*), "minority", "a little circle" (*kruzhok*) and so on were very frequent to accompany outbursts of civic sentiments. So, in this case the latter implied and even entailed xenophobia, exclusion, and alienation.

Russifiers' notion of civic community was not inclusive with respect to the "Russian" peasantry as well. As was put in 1863 by L. Spichakov, one of the proponents of all-estate Russian zemstvo in the western provinces, "a handful of the local Russian nobility, clergy and merchants, united with the peasantry summoned to a new life" were to form local self-government.⁶⁴ In contradiction to the very idea of national unity, there was a characteristic distinction between a "handful" of members of higher estates and peasants. But it was not so much as the obsolete estate paradigm as the specter of ubiquitous "Polonism" that shaped this sectarian vision of a "handful" entitled to represent the masses of fellow citizens.

¹ See, e.g.: Aleksei Miller, "Rusifikatsii: klassifitsirovat' i poniat'," *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2002), 133-48.

² For general discussions of the subject, see: Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia. Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996); Witold Rodkiewicz, *Russian Nationality Policy in the Western Provinces of the Empire (1863-1905)* (Lublin: Scientific Society of Lublin, 1998); Leonid Efremovich Gorizontov, *Paradoksy imperskoi politiki: Poliaki v Rossii i russkie v Pol'she (XIX – nachalo XX v.)* (Moscow: Indrik, 1999); Henryk G__bocki, *Fatalna sprawa. Kwestia polska w rosyjskiej my_li politycznej (1856-1866)* (Kraków: ARCANA, 2000).

³ Andreas Renner, *Russischer Nationalismus und Öffentlichkeit im Zarenreich 1855-1875* (Köln, Weimar, Wien, 2000).

Kingdom with the western provinces of the Empire. As regards the intensity of nationalist feeling, the son excelled the father.

¹⁵ RO RNB, f. 377, d. 374, l. 8.

¹⁶ G__bocki, *Fatalna sprawa*, 276.

¹⁷ A.N. Mosolov, "Vilenskie ocherki," *Russkaia starina* no. 11 (1883), 405.

¹⁸ M.N. Murav'ev, "Zapiski ob upravlenii Severo-Zapadnym kraem i usmirenii v nem miatezha," *Russkaia starina* no. 12 (1882), 640; no. 1 (1883), 164.

¹⁹ RO RNB, f. 523, d. 550, l. 3. Interestingly, the word *grazhdanka* is not present in the earlier (declined) versions of the toast. In the diary kept in Vil'na, one of Murav'ev's subordinates, Alexander Mosolov noted disapprovingly that Pelageia Vasil'evna covertly interfered in the recruitment of officials. See: OR RGB, f. 514, k. 1, d. 1, ll. 20, 35. In the memoirs written a couple of years later Mosolov did not mar a profoundly masculine image of Murav'ev (and his team as a whole) by referring to his wife's influence.

²⁰ Darius Stali_nas, "Granitsy v pogranich'e: Belorusy i etnolingvisticheskaia politika Rossiiskoi imperii na Zapadnykh okrainakh v period Velikikh reform," *Ab Imperio* no. 1 (2003), 282-85.

²¹ LVIA, f. 567, ap. 4, b. 915, l. 16-16v. Emphasis added to the quotation.

²² *Ibid.*, l. 19.

²³ Kornilov not only exaggerated the degree of illiteracy of the Belarusian peasantry, but also showed a lack of interest in mobilizing younger generations of the peasantry, the hope of leaders of many national movements: "_____

_____, _____, _____ 8 13-_____.
 _____." (LVIA, f. 567, ap. 4, b. 915, l. 97-97v). Eight- and thirteen-year-old ones, yes. But why not for those a bit older?

²⁴ LVIA, f. 567, ap. 4, b. 915, l. 54-55.

²⁵ OR RGB, f. 231/II, k. 16, d. 57, ll. 1-1 ob. (Kornilov to the historian Mikhail Pogodin, March 1864).

²⁶ LVIA, f. 378, BS, 1866, b. 1152, ll. 86-86v.

²⁷ For the bureaucratic self-image of rediscoverers of the people as related to the 1861 peasant emancipation, see: M. Dolbilov, "The Emancipation Reform of 1861 in Russia and the Nationalism of Imperial Bureaucracy," in: Hayashi T., ed. *Construction and Deconstruction of National Histories in Slavic Eurasia* (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2003), 205-35.

²⁸ As Leonid Gorizontov argues, Nicholas I took into account spiritual and dogmatic affinities between Catholicism and Orthodoxy and cherished the dream of a loyal and reliable Roman Catholic church in the Empire. However, this tendency, already weak, was irreversibly killed by the Polish uprising of 1863. See: Gorizontov, *Paradoksy*, 81-82.

²⁹ *Russkaia starina* no. 6 (1902), 503.

³⁰ David Blackbourn, *Marpingen. Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 250-67.

³¹ LVIA, f. 378, BS, 1867, b. 2526, l. 50-50v.

³² Blackbourn, *Marpingen*, 260. On the conservative, anticonstitutionalist and colonialist implications of anti-Catholic and anti-Polish policies in the German Empire, see: Philipp Ther, “Imperial instead of National History: Positioning Modern German History on the Map of European Empires”. Paper presented at the conference “History of Empires: Comparative Approaches to Research and Teaching” held in Moscow in June 2003. Cf.: William W. Hagen, *Germans, Poles and Jews. The Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772-1914* (Chicago 1980).

³³ Kimitaka Matsuzato, “General-gubernatorstva v Rossiiskoi imperii: Ot etnicheskogo k prostranstvennomu podkhodu,” in: Alexander Semyonov, ed. *Novaia imperskaia istoriia* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2004; forthcoming).

³⁴ The following discussion concentrates on the Vil’na administration’s policy toward the Catholic church as pursued primarily in the Belorussian territory (the Vil’na and Minsk Catholic dioceses). Being interested first and foremost in the Russifiers’ thinking, I exclude the Tel’shev (Tel_iai) diocese (it covered Kovno and Kurland provinces) on grounds that they considered the “Lithuanian” Catholicism a specific case in which national and religious “fanaticisms” were inextricably interwoven. For this paper, of more interest are the cases wherein Catholic influence was *thought* (by officials) to be exerted with no strong support in national aspirations and sympathies of the mass of population. For a recent analysis of the role of Catholic clergy in the Lithuanian nation-building, see: Vytautas Merkys, “Bishop Motiejus Valan_ius, Catholic Universalism and Nationalism,” *Lithuanian Historical Studies* vol. 6 (2001), 69-88.

³⁵ RO RNB, f. 523, d. 823, l. 2; Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (RGIA – Russian State Historical Archive), f. 821, op. 150, d. 584, l. 136-136 ob.

³⁶ On conversions to Catholicism among the 19th century Russian nobility, see: Ekaterina Nikolaevna Tsimbaeva, *Russkii katolitsizm: Zabytoe proshloe rossiiskogo liberalizma* (Moscow: Editorial URSS, 1999); E.E. Dmitrieva, “Obrashchenie v katolichestvo v Rossii v XIX v. (istoriko-kul’turnyi kontekst),” *Arbor mundi/Mirovoe drevo* [Moscow] issue 4 (1996), 84-110.

³⁷ OR RGB, f. 120, k. 21, d. 1, l. 150 ob.-151, 152.

³⁸ Blackbourn, *Marpingen*, 361 and passim.

³⁹ LVIA, f. 378, BS, 1866, b. 2516, l. 22-24v; b. 1340, l. 80-81v.

⁴⁰ LVIA, f. 378, BS, 1866, b. 2516, l. 156 v., 159.

⁴¹ LVIA, f. 378, BS, 1866, b. 2516, l. 159v-160, 156v-157, 160v; b. 1340, l. 81-81v; see also: *Ibid.*, b. 1152, l. 84-86.

⁴² RGIA, f. 970, op. 1, d. 99, l. 4 (Kornilov’s notes on a memorandum by the Curator of Kazan School District, P.D. Shestakov, 1869).

⁴³ RGIA, f. 821, op. 150, d. 584, l. 20; LVIA, f. 378, BS, 1866, b. 2516, l. 160.

⁴⁴ LVIA, f. 378, BS, 1866, b. 1340, l. 84.

⁴⁵ LVIA, f. 378, BS, 1866, b. 2267.

⁴⁶ About the post-1863 official restrictions on the Catholic church and the clergy's resistance in the Northwestern provinces, see: P. Kubicki, *Bojownicy kapłani za sprawę Kościoła i Ojczyzny w latach 1861-1915*: Tom 1, cz. 2: *Dawna Litwa i Białołęka* (Sandomierz, 1936).

⁴⁷ LVIA, f. 378, BS, 1867, b. 1426, l. 5v, 7-8.

⁴⁸ Another major measure towards the Catholic church that could be treated in terms of officials' civic sentiments was the campaign for introducing the Russian language in supplementary Catholic services. For its analysis from the perspective of diverging (ethno-linguistical and religious) criteria of national identity, see: Weeks, "Religion and Russification: Russian Language in the Catholic Churches of the 'Northwest Provinces' after 1863," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 2:1 (Winter 2001). For my view of the campaign as affected by a contradiction between different bureaucratic priorities of the Great Reform era, see: Dolbilov, "Russification and the Bureaucratic Mind in the Russian Empire's Northwestern Region in the 1860s," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 5:2 (forthcoming).

⁴⁹ *Storozhenki. Famil'nyi arkhiv*, vol. 1 (Kiev, 1902), 458, 470-71. About the government's effort to use Ukrainophiles against the Polish movement, see: A. Miller, "Ukrainskii vopros" v politike vlastei i russkom obshchestvennom mnenii (vtoraia polovina XIX veka) (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2000), 131-33.

⁵⁰ LVIA, f. 378, BS, 1865, b. 1354, l. 25.

⁵¹ LVIA, f. 378, ap. 216, b. 308, l. 62-62v.

⁵² Supposedly, it was the officials' clear perception of the movement as predominantly secular that allowed the local authorities to widely use material incentives, against a pronounced tendency in the legislation and administrative provisions of the time, leading to the termination of "aspiritual means of promoting conversion." See: Paul Werth, "Changing Conceptions of Difference, Assimilation, and Faith in the Volga-Kama Region, 1740-1870" (manuscript).

⁵³ LVIA, f. 378, BS, 1866, b. 1152, l. 89-90; BS, 1864, b. 1331a, l. 60-63.

⁵⁴ In many respects, Storozhenko's activities foreshadowed the techniques that the Siedlce governor Stepan Gromeka used in 1874-75 to contrive the so-called "reunion" of Uniates in the Polish Kingdom with the Orthodox church. See: Weeks, "The 'End' of the Uniate Church in Russia: The *Vossoedinenie* of 1875," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 44:1 (1996), 28-40.

⁵⁵ LVIA, f. 378, BS, 1867, b. 1157, l. 57; b. 1380, l. 14v.

⁵⁶ On the prominent role of peace mediators in the de-Polonization policies in the Western region, see: K. Matsuzato, "Iz komissarov antipolonizma v prosvetitelei derevni: mirovye posredniki na Pravoberezhnoi Ukraine, 1861-1917." Paper presented at the conference "History of Empires: Comparative Approaches to Research and Teaching" held in Moscow in June 2003.

⁵⁷ LVIA, f. 378, BS, 1864, b. 1331a, l. 71v, 57, 58, 58-58v.; 1867, b. 1380, l. 16.

⁵⁸ LVIA, f. 378, BS, 1864, b. 1331a, l. 64-64v. The very manner in which Storozhenko's reports to Governor General Baranov were composed is noticeable. Here and there, he digressed from the subject and, in a tone of friendly conversation, presented Baranov with quite informally written considerations and notes. One of such fragments, preceded by the point about the necessity of material incentives for Catholic priests converting to Orthodoxy, was obviously

designed to invoke the satirical accounts by N.V. Gogol' (Storozhenko met him in their youth and was proud of this acquaintance): “ _____, _____

_____!
 _____,
 _____,
 _____,
 _____;
 _____!”

(Ibid., 1867, b. 1380, l. 15.)

⁵⁹ LVIA, f. 378, BS, 1867, b. 1157, l. 34.

⁶⁰ LVIA, f. 378, ap. 216, b. 310a, l. 7v-8 (Potapov's report to Alexander II, September 1868).

⁶¹ RGIA, f. 821, op. 150, d. 584, ll. 48-48 ob.

⁶² RGIA, f. 908, op. 1, d. 279, l. 484. Another example of this discourse is a fragment from a 1866 memorandum by Ksenofont Govorskii, editor of the propagandist semi-official journal, *Vestnik Zapadnoi Rossii*. Govorskii advocated mass conversions with participation of former *ksemdzy* (and certainly Storozhenko found strong support in his memo): “All priests are nihilists, and they are fanatics of Catholicism only for material goals and ambition, they can be easily led to convert with their entire parishes if only given the prospect of bettering their well-being.” (RGIA, f. 821, op. 125, d. 294, l. 7). The view of priests of a non-Orthodox faith as greedy fanatics was quite trivial, but the very word “*nihilist*” had far-reaching connotations in the mid-1860s. Predictably, Govorskii expressed no concern about what kind of Orthodox priests those *nigilisty* would develop into. One more member of the Inspection Commission, General Vasilii Ratch, suggested that teaching peasants the Catholic catechism in any language be prohibited forever. (Ibid., op. 150, d. 584, l. 77-77 ob.) The possibility of their having to convert eventually to Orthodoxy hardly outweighed a risk of dissolution of the people's religiosity in the generations to come.

⁶³ RO RNB, f. 377, d. 948, l. 16 (Nikolai Novikov to I.P. Kornilov, April 1868).

⁶⁴ LVIA, f. 378, BS, 1861, b. 339, l. 398v. It was Spichakov who “put on a *dublionka*, gr[ew] a beard, and t[ook] up heavy work” (see p. 6 of the paper).