

Parrot's Projects of Rotating the Staff of Russian Universities, Sergey Uvarov's Reform and Its Short- and Long-Term Consequences

The present paper focuses on the views of Georg Friedrich Parrot in relation to the renewal of the professorial staff of the internal Russian universities, reflected in his notes 'Thoughts of universities in inner Russia' (*Mémoire sur les Universités de l'intérieur de la Russie*, 1827) and 'Note on the plan to train teachers at national Russian universities' (*Mémoire concernant le plan pour former des professeurs aux universités russes nationales*, end of 1832). Parrot's position was radical. He advised the government to prepare young scientists and teachers and replace all professors in inner Russian universities, which should have led to the establishment of a 'new spirit of teaching' and the transformation of universities into national ones. The Parrot's project was implemented only partially, but implementation of this policy led to drastic changes in the age structure of the Russian professors. All the professors and adjuncts, trained at the Professors' Institute in Dorpat and the Second Section of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery by mid-1830s represented approximately one generation. Twenty to thirty years later, by the time when this generation reached retirement, a new crisis arose. Even in the 1880s universities continued to experience the effects of the reform of the 1830s. At the same time, the practical implementation of Parrot's project led to the flourishing of inner universities in Russia in the 1840s.

A feeling of a deep crisis of universities in Russia in the mid-1830s was noted by the contemporaries and researchers (Nichpaevskiy, 2008, p. 62; Ferliudin, 1893, p. 80; Zhukovskaya, 2002, pp. 173–175). The causes of the crisis were the inflation of ruble after the Napoleonic wars; part of professors returning to Europe in the late 1810s; and a lack of young 'homegrown' professors successfully trained at the Russian universities in the first 20 years of their existence. By the 1820s the staff of most Russian universities needed rejuvenation: the professors' median age in Dorpat, Moscow and St. Petersburg universities reached about 50 years (Kostina & Koupryanov, 2017, p. 929). At the University of Dorpat the policy of rejuvenation was pursued by curator of the Dorpat educational district Karl Ch. von Lieven and Rector Gustav von Ewers in the early 1820s and it seems to have benefited the university (Leppik, 2001, p. 149–151).

However, already in 1835 the professors' median age considerably decreased, to 38 years in the Moscow University and 42 years in the Dorpat, Kazan and St. Petersburg universities (Kostina & Kouprianov, 2017, p. 929). This was due to the fact that the Minister of Education Sergey S. Uvarov (1833–1849) forced 34% of professors and assistants to retirement (Kostina, 2013; Kostina & Kouprianov, 2016).¹ The General Statute of Russian Universities (1835) significantly increased the number of professorships in these universities providing opportunities for young scientists to take positions at the department. Such rejuvenation of personnel could be welcomed as a positive measure. Indeed, the subsequent period of the 1840s became the heyday of Russian universities. One of the first historians of Russian universities Boris B. Glinskii wrote:

It can be safely asserted that the time after the introduction of the University Statute of 1835 was understood by contemporaries as “happy” for Russian universities, and the very introduction of the Statute was considered as an event leading to the flourishing of science in the universities in the 1840s, which played “a major role in the history of Russian enlightenment” through the so-called “people of the forties” (Glinskii, 1900, pp. 344–345).

However, for 20 years after that the professors' median age only increased; by the mid-1860s in inner universities it varied between 43 and 48 years. The simultaneous aging of the generation recruited in the 1830s was perceived by its contemporaries as a crisis of university, described specifically in terms of age (*Zamechaniya...*, 1862, pp. 256, 264). Apparently, throughout the 19th century, fluctuations in the median age continued to be affected by a dramatic rejuvenation of professors and assistants of the mid-1830s. Among the several factors and opinions that influenced the course of personnel reform in the universities of the Russian Empire in 1833–1837, the position and influence of the professor of Dorpat (1802–1826) and rector, St. Petersburg academician (since 1826) Georg F. Parrot are of particular interest.

On February 17, 1827 Nicholas I requested from Parrot his opinion on developing higher education in Russia; the request was passed by the president of the Academy of Sciences Uvarov (Mardarev, 1895, p. 207). In response, Parrot presented a proposal titled ‘Thoughts of universities in inner Russia’ (*Mémoire*

¹ The policy of rejuvenating professors' corporation was already worked out under the Minister of Education Lieven (1828–1833).

sur les Universités de l'intérieur de la Russie)². The note (now in the Russian State Historical Archives) was written and signed by Parrot in French. It can be divided into two parts: a rather lengthy rhetorical preamble, followed by an elaborated plan with practical recommendations. The last one was translated by the minor officials of the Ministry of Public Education to be incorporated into the relevant ministry decree, which was later published in the 'Postanovleniia po Ministerstvu narodnogo prosveshcheniia' (*Po delu o prigotovlenii Professorov*, col. 96-100). Historians sometimes refer to it, but the contents of the preamble, which was never translated, are only retold in the dissertation of Villu Tamul (1988, p. 43). The cause for the ministry officials to omit the preamble was probably its rhetoric, because Russian universities in the note are called "simulacra of universities", "which are much more the tombstones of the people's education than its sources (foyers)" (RGIA, 1827–1832, p. 2).

The main thesis of Parrot's note is presenting the universities in inner Russia as unsuccessful in becoming 'national' universities. However important this nationalistic attitude is for Parrot's rhetoric, it is more intriguing to see how it affected the very matter of the proposed universities' management. Parrot insisted on completely substituting all the professors of inner Russia with new ones, believing that it was necessary to change "the spirit of teaching". In practice, he provisioned the implementation of the project as follows: 156 graduates would be selected from the best students, trained for three years in Dorpat, and then abroad, after which they would return and occupy all the departments in the inner universities of Russia. According to the Parrot's project, "The current universities will last only seven years, after that their professors will be dismissed with honour [...] In each university, one old professor who is well acquainted with the course of affairs will be kept, so that in the first two years he will perform the post of rector" (RGIA, 1827–1832, p. 2v).

Parrot's project was discussed by the Committee for the Organization of Academic Institutions on September 3, 1827. It is known that the views of the committee members differed, but what is important to us, none of those who criticized the project pointed out its possible long-term negative consequences. Mikhail M. Speransky was the only one who mentioned the age composition of professorial corporations in the following remark: "It is obvious that it's impossible to fully replace experienced scientists with young inexperienced

² The inner universities were those in Kazan, Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kharkiv. The students and part of the professors in them were Russian-speaking, unlike the universities in Vilna, Dorpat and Helsingfors.

professors” (RGIA, 1827–1832, p. 12). On the contrary, Heinrich F. von Storch even supported Parrot in the idea of the simultaneous total rotation of the staff:

At once and with a single device he is seeking to achieve the goal which hitherto the Pedagogical Institute and the universities were assigned to follow gradually and for many years. This circumstance first settled in me some prejudice against the project of Mr. Parrot, but having examined it with attention, and embracing all the parts of it, I have become convinced that the execution of this project is not only possible, but even becomes most convenient by the decision of admitting it simultaneously, not gradually” (RGIA, 1827–1832, pp. 16–16v).

Adam J. R. von Krusenstern was only worried (and Storch supported him) that there are not enough good students for this mission, which later proved to be true (RGIA, 1827–1832, p. 37).

As we know, the discussion ended with a decision to open the Professors’ Institute in Dorpat. The training involved two groups of students, enrolled in 1828 and 1832, and a group of lawyers in the Second Section of His Imperial Majesty’s Own Chancellery, supervised by Speransky. Although formally the age was not a requirement for selecting students, all the graduates belonged to approximately one generation, described in the ministry’s documents as “young people”. The age of candidates in only two cases was indicated in the examination list, provided by the Academy of Sciences (Ivan Shihovskii, 27 and Feodosii Kondakov, 30). The oldest of the students, Kondakov, was not accepted. The median age of the students for the Professorial Institute in both courses (1828 and 1832) at admission was 21 years (with extreme values from 19 to 28 years; and the average age of 22.3). In 1832, students only from 20 to 24 years of age were admitted. The students who were to study law under Speransky’s supervision were even younger. They entered with the median/average age of 22 years. The ministry later mentioned that even after returning from Berlin and occupying the departments they remained “young scholars” (SPb II RAN, 1828–1835, p. 138v).

Parrot was not satisfied with the partial implementation of his project. At the end of 1832 he offered a new project to Nicholas I called ‘Note on the plan to train teachers at national Russian universities’ (*Mémoire concernant le plan pour former des professeurs aux universités russes nationales*). Its text in French on 2.5 pages (also held in the Russian State Historical Archives) is not signed, but

written, undoubtedly, in Parrot's hand and thus can be attributed to him. The practical part of this note repeated the project of 1827. In Parrot's mind, the crucial point of the plan was "to create the new spirit, the harmony between the professors, the unity in education and attendance, the love of science among the students, to elevate the status of the universities, to get trust from the nation" (RGIA, 1827–1832, p. 102). Following these goals, it was not that important to substitute the present professors with Dorpat's graduates *per se*. The only possible device was the simultaneous rotation of the staff. With that reason in mind, Parrot was very skeptical of the first graduates of the Professors' Institute in Dorpat, who at that time joined the posts of acting professors. Parrot writes in his note: "So few of them were prepared there that they will but form a proportion to the old ones, which is $1:5^{2/3}$, so they will eventually impregnate with the old spirit to live in idleness" (RGIA, 1827–1832, p. 102). Parrot again insisted on the complete replacement of the staff, offering to train 90 professors at once, and he was even ready to downgrade enrollment standards to increase the number of the Professor's Institute trainees. He indicates that they should be primarily teachers, not outstanding personalities and scientists, directly regarding research as an optional aspect of a professor's practice. The idea to change the spirit of teaching by a full-scale replacement of professors prevailed in his projects over the desire to elevate universities in an academically sense.

Thus, from the notes of Parrot, it can be seen that his position about the rotation of the staff of professors in the inner universities in Russia was consistently sharp. There is a question whether (or not) he influenced or was influenced by Lieven and Uvarov, who also pursued a policy of significantly rotating the professors first in Dorpat (in the early 1820s) and later in the whole body of Russian universities (since 1828). But it is certain that Parrot's project contributed to the emergence of the Professors' Institute in Dorpat and thus corresponded to the views of the chief officers in the Ministry of Public Education; by the late 1820s radical rotation of their staff became more or less the mainstream policy in managing Russian universities (Kostina, 2012).

Even if indirectly and only partially implemented, Parrot's project had consequences in the age composition of the professorial corporations. The core of trainees for teaching positions consisted of people who had a small gap in their dates of birth. They were recruited to serve at the same time, they took a sound part of the professorial positions in Russian universities, and their entry into service significantly affected the age structure of professorial corporations.

Such a radical rejuvenation of the staff, combined with the high-level training of the new professors, certainly contributed to the flourishing of the universities. However, 20 to 30 and even 50 years later, this policy continued to influence the age structure of Russian professors and contribute to personnel crises in universities. Even a partially conducted mass replacement of professors largely weakened the corporate devices of the gradual staff rotation. It is obvious that the complete replacement of the staff, for which Parrot was advocating, would have most likely completely deprived it of the possibility to normally reproduce itself.

At the same time we can say with confidence that the renovation of faculty staff, made in the 1830s, led to significant improvements in the atmosphere of teaching and learning in Russian universities. Russia received national universities where the professors could lay foundation to serious academic schools.

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