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Editorial



Issue 59 is dedicated to a major anniversary in Russian history: the bicentenary of the establishment of the Third Section of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery, the central organ of the Empire's regular political police. The Third Section became the forerunner of the Russian security services in the broadest sense of the term. The contributions collected in this issue, however, extend far beyond the commemorative date of 3 July 1826, covering the history of Russia's various political policing institutions during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including the Corps of Gendarmes, the Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the security sections (*Okhrana*), and the provincial gendarme administrations. Several articles also examine the most challenging target of the tsarist political police – revolutionary terrorism. The volume brings together not only representatives of the Moscow scholarship on the history of political policing but also leading historians from regional academic centers, including Vladivostok, Voronezh, St Petersburg, and Tomsk.

The issue is divided into four thematic sections. The first, *General Aspects of Political Investigation*, explores the activities of the imperial security apparatus on a country-wide scale. It opens with Marina V. Sidorova's article, *On the Officials of the Third Section*, which examines the formation of personnel policy and the characteristics of the staff of the nascent political police. Drawing on extensive archival material, the author analyses the social and financial circumstances of Third Section officials, the factors influencing their career advancement or dismissal, and the internal conflicts that arose within the institution.

Yekaterina I. Shcherbakova's article forms a conceptual bridge between the gendarmerie of Nicholas I and the Police Department of Alexander II's reign. Working with information and analytical reports preserved in the State Archive of the Russian Federation, the author investigates one of the principal channels of information in an age of widespread illiteracy – rumours – and their influence on the political climate of the Empire. Alexander V. Peregudov's article places the reforms of the political police undertaken under Count



P.A. Shuvalov in the 1870s within the broader context of Alexander II's Great Reforms. Historians have generally overlooked the aspect of the Emperor's program related to the strengthening of internal security alongside the implementation of liberal reforms. The article vividly demonstrates Shuvalov's personal role in reinforcing the gendarmerie component within the dual structure of the political police. Thematically related is Alexey A. Rubtsov's study, which, on the basis of archival and legislative sources, analyses the impact of the Judicial Reform of 1864 on the conduct of preliminary investigations into state crimes. The author demonstrates how officers of the Corps of Gendarmes – previously functioning largely as an executive body subordinate to the Third Section rather than as an independent investigative institution – came to occupy a central position in this process. Artur V. Ataev's contribution adopts a historical and political science-related perspective, examining the formation of the social foundations and distinctive ethical principles of terrorism in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russia. The phenomenon is analyzed both through the motivations and actions of individual terrorists and from a broader theoretical perspective. The section concludes with Yevgenia V. Oksenyuk's study, which considers whether the political police adequately understood the organizational development of the Socialist Revolutionary Party during the First Russian Revolution.

The second section, entitled *The Regional Aspect*, focuses on the operation of the political police in four strategically important regions of the Russian Empire – Siberia, the Far East, Right-Bank Ukraine, and Crimea – each possessing its own distinctive political and administrative characteristics. The opening article by Lyubov V. Ulyanova is a highly engaging study of the role played by both regional and central political police institutions in the removal from office of the Mayor of Sevastopol, A.A. Maksimov, who was accused of political unreliability. Behind the political intrigue lay the far more prosaic issue of corruption connected with the contract for the construction of the city's tramway system. The affair reached the highest levels of the

Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the author exposes the regrettably common practice of political defamation and the use of the political police to advance private commercial interests.

Working within the framework of the 1830s, Pyotr P. Rumyantsev presents, with a commentary, a memorandum by the Chief of the Siberian Gendarme District advocating the establishment of an institution of higher education in the region. The document reveals gendarme officers not merely as investigators but also as officials concerned with the long-term development and prosperity of Siberia.

Grigory N. Bibikov's article uncovers a unique historical source: the memoirs of Lieutenant Colonel F.I. Bek concerning the administration in Volhynia Governorate. This text is valuable not only for the richness of their factual content but also for the unusually analytical approach adopted by a gendarme officer in an official report. The publication is significant not merely because it introduces a previously unknown historical source into scholarly circulation, but also because of Bibikov's extensive introduction and commentary, which together are as valuable than the source document itself.

The concluding article, by Vasily K. Azarevich, examines the largely unexplored history of the political police in the Russian Far East. Drawing upon the records of the Vladivostok Security Section, the author reconstructs the establishment of a regional political police institution virtually from scratch and demonstrates how the personal qualities of its chiefs and officers shaped the effectiveness of the organization as a whole. In this respect, the article complements Marina V. Sidorova's work, which opens the current issue and reveals how a staff numbering only several dozen officials succeeded in monitoring political opinion across an immense territory and even within Russian settlements in China.

The third section, *Biographical Studies*, is more concise than the preceding two and focuses on two notable figures associated with the political policing system. Anna M. Lavryonova's article contributes to the already extensive historiography of the Myasoedov espionage affair by turning to its origins: the development of the antagonism between the gendarme officer S.N. Myasoedov and the future Director of the Police Department, M.I. Trusevich, arising from procedural irregularities committed by the lieutenant colonel during the

investigation of the terrorist A.D. Pokotilov. The article by Vladimir V. Hutarev-Garnishevsky, under whose general editorship this issue was prepared, is devoted to the biography of A.I. Guytov, a little-known yet highly remarkable secret agent who worked for several security sections and the Kronstadt Gendarme Administration. Guytov remains the only reliably documented police informant who, after the February Revolution, succeeded in securing the release of his former handlers from arrest and who, during the Civil War, joined the Volunteer Army and headed an independent intelligence station of the Armed Forces of South Russia.

The issue concludes with a **Reviews** section, featuring Sergey V. Medvedev's assessment of Anna M. Lavryonova's widely discussed monograph *The Thin Blue Line: Gendarmes and Society at the Twilight of the Empire*. Written by a historian specializing in the political police and the history of Zubatovism, the review considers Lavryonova's attempt to examine the personnel of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes through the lens of their everyday lives and contemporary public opinion. The Editorial Board notes that the opinions expressed in the review are solely those of its author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial board.

Alexey E. Titkov
Editor-in-Chief of The Historical Reporter



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Original paper



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On the Officials of the Third Section

Abstract

This article examines the formation of the personnel of the Third Section of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery, one of the principal state security institutions of the Russian Empire. Drawing on an extensive body of documentary evidence, the study analyzes changes in the agency's staffing establishment, the characteristics of its recruitment practices, and the system governing the promotion of officials. The methodological foundation of the research is based on archival service records, personal correspondence, and official documents of the agency's employees. Analysis of these sources makes it possible to examine in detail the social composition of the personnel, their social origin, religious affiliation, and ethnicity. Particular attention is devoted to the mechanisms used in selecting candidates and the conditions of service within the institution. The study demonstrates that throughout its existence, the Third Section maintained a relatively small staff, with increases in personnel occurring primarily from the body of the Chancellery employees and copyists. It also establishes that the majority of officials came from noble families, although representatives of other social estates also served in the



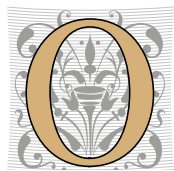
institution. The practical significance of the study lies in its contribution to the understanding of the imperial civil service in the first half of the nineteenth century. The findings provide new insights into the functioning of the political police and the personnel policies of the autocratic state. The materials presented here will be of interest to historians, scholars of public administration, and specialists in the history of law enforcement institutions. The conclusions also open new avenues for research into the biographies of individual officials of the Third Section and their role in implementing the policies of the Russian Empire. Of particular value are the findings concerning the system of promotion and the criteria used in selecting candidates for service within the institution.

Keywords:

The Third Section of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery; Officials; Personnel; Service records; Staffing establishments; Chancellery employees

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On 3 July 1826, an imperial decree was issued establishing the Third Section of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery. Conceived as the sovereign's right hand and “all-seeing eye”, the new institution was endowed not only with extensive powers but also with responsibility for addressing major tasks connected with the reorganization of the entire machinery of government. Nicholas I was particularly concerned with corruption and official misconduct (*likhoimstvo*) at every level of

administration – in government service, within various departments, during elections to the nobility's corporate offices, military conscription campaigns, and similar matters. Monitoring such abuses became one of the principal responsibilities assigned to the Third Section. The institution was also entrusted with a number of other important functions, including safeguarding the political security of the state through a broad range of protective measures; implementing all decrees and regulations concerning state criminals; collecting information on counterfeiters and the manufacture of forged banknotes, official seals, and documents; monitoring the number and activities of various religious sects and schismatic groups; supervising foreigners; and exercising censorship over theatrical works. The first Head of the Third Section and Chief of Gendarmes, Count Alexander Kh. Benckendorff recalled in his memoirs: "The Emperor sought by every possible means to eradicate those abuses that had penetrated the machinery of government and had become evident following the discovery of the conspiracy that stained with blood his accession to the throne. Convinced of the need to establish an effective system of surveillance, converging from every corner of his vast empire upon a single authority, he turned to me with the task of creating a supreme police force for the protection of the oppressed and the surveillance of conspiracies and ill-wishers"¹.

Initially, the work of the Third Section was divided among four Expeditions (offices), each responsible for a distinct sphere of activity. The First Expedition supervised "public opinion and the national spirit", monitored persons under police surveillance, and observed the conduct of government officials of various ranks. The Second Expedition exercised oversight over religious sects and places of confinement for state criminals, supervised various societies and inventions, examined petitions and complaints, investigated cases involving counterfeit banknotes and forged documents, and was also responsible for personnel administration within the Third Section itself. The Third Expedition performed counter-intelligence functions and oversaw all regulations and directives concerning foreigners. The Fourth Expedition collected

¹ Бенкендорф А.Х. Воспоминания. 1802–1837 / Публ. М.В. Сидоровой, А.А. Литвина; пер. с фр. О.В. Маринина. М.: Российский фонд культуры, 2012. С. 342.



View of the Third Section building from the Chain Bridge.

Artist: V.S. Sadovnikov. 1853.

From open sources

and systematized information on incidents throughout the Empire, including fires, epidemics, robberies, murders, and other extraordinary events.

The Expeditions were headed by *expeditors* (heads of Expeditions), who received annual salaries of 2,000 rubles. Their senior and junior assistants received annual salaries of 1,500 and 1,000 rubles, respectively. The staff also included a censor of theatrical works and an executor, each with an annual salary of 2,000 rubles, and a journalist, who received 1,500 rubles per year. Their assistants were paid according to the salary scales established for senior and junior assistants. Some officials also received additional allowances and were provided with government-owned apartments². In 1826, the total staff numbered sixteen officials, all of whom had previously served in the abolished Special Chancellery of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In his report to the Emperor, Count Benckendorff wrote: “The transfer of the papers accumulated in the Ministry of Internal Affairs over the course of fifteen years, together with the initial organization of this department, will for some time require particularly intensive work. Thereafter, when all matters have been placed on a regular and orderly footing, it will be our duty

² ГА РФ. Ф. 109. 2 экспедиция. 1826 г. Д. 1. Ч. 1. Л. 30, 44.



A.Kh. Benckendorff. Artist: V.I. Hau. 1841.

From open sources

to reduce the number of officials and thereby increase their salaries”³. In fact, the number of officials was not reduced. On the contrary, in 1828 it increased by two with the addition of the censor and his assistant, after the censorship of dramatic works was transferred from the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Third Section. Salaries, however, were not increased until 1835, when senior officials were granted an additional allowance of 1,000 rubles. Initially, officials of the Third Section received lower salaries than those employed in the other departments of His Imperial Majesty’s Own Chancellery, and there was also a discrepancy between their official positions and civil service ranks. It was only in 1839, when an imperial order directed that the staffing tables of all departments of the Chancellery be reviewed “for the purpose of bringing the remuneration of all officials into uniform salary grades”, that the officials of the Third Section were assigned the appropriate ranks and positions and their salaries were brought into line with those of officials in the other departments. At the same time, four non-staff officials for special assignments were incorporated into the permanent staff. Including the administrator, the total number of officials in 1839 reached twenty-seven⁴. Their annual salaries ranged

³ Ibid. Л. 14 об.

⁴ ГА РФ. Ф. 109. 2 экспедиция. 1826 г. Д. 1. Ч. 1. Л. Л. 68.

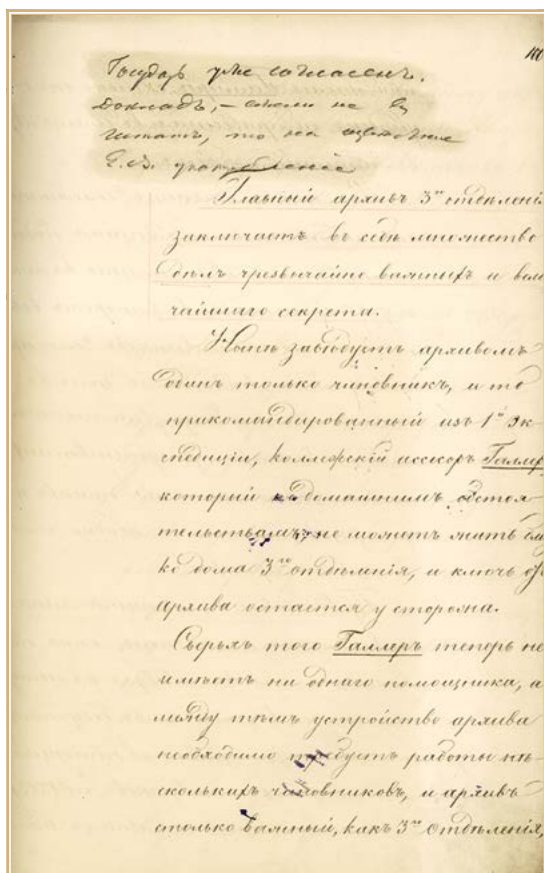
from 2,000 rubles for a senior official (5th class) to 515 rubles for the assistant journalist (10th class). In 1839, the senior leadership of the political police also underwent a degree of reorganization: the office of Administrator of the Third Section was merged with that of Chief of Staff of the Corps of Gendarmes. The combined office was assigned to Leonty Vasilyevich Dubelt. However, upon appointing him Administrator of the Third Section, the authorities somehow neglected to assign him the salary attached to that office. This prompted the officials of the Third Section to submit a memorandum to Benckendorff requesting that Dubelt be granted the appropriate remuneration. Benckendorff intended to prepare a report to the Emperor on the basis of this petition, but Dubelt refused to support it, adding to the memorandum the following resolution: “...I cannot agree to their request, both because, being comfortably provided for thanks to my good wife, it is a pleasure for me to serve the Sovereign without burdening the Treasury, and because, when I assumed the administration of the Third Section, His Majesty did not see fit to assign me a salary for this office – and the will of our Tsar has always been, and will always remain, sacred to me!”⁵ As Chief of Staff of the Corps of Gendarmes, Dubelt received an annual salary of 3,900 rubles.

In October 1842, the Fifth (Censorship) Expedition of the Third Section was added. Accordingly, the censor of dramatic works was redesignated as a senior official and was assigned a second assistant.

A further change to the establishment occurred in 1849 with the creation of supernumerary positions for the head of the archive (Chief Archivist) and his two assistants⁶. Remarkably, for more than twenty years the institution responsible for the Empire’s principal political secrets had possessed no archive of its own. The immediate impetus for establishing one was an incident in 1846. That year Emperor Nicholas I of Russia decided to inspect the archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Accompanied by the Chief of the Third Section, Alexei Fyodorovich Orlov, he expressed great satisfaction with its organization and, on the return journey, asked the Chief of Gendarmes about the archive

⁵ ГА РФ. Ф. 109. 2 экспедиция. 1826 г. Д. 1. Ч. 1. Л. 85–85 об.

⁶ They were incorporated as permanent positions into the staffing schedule and budget of the Third Section in 1862.

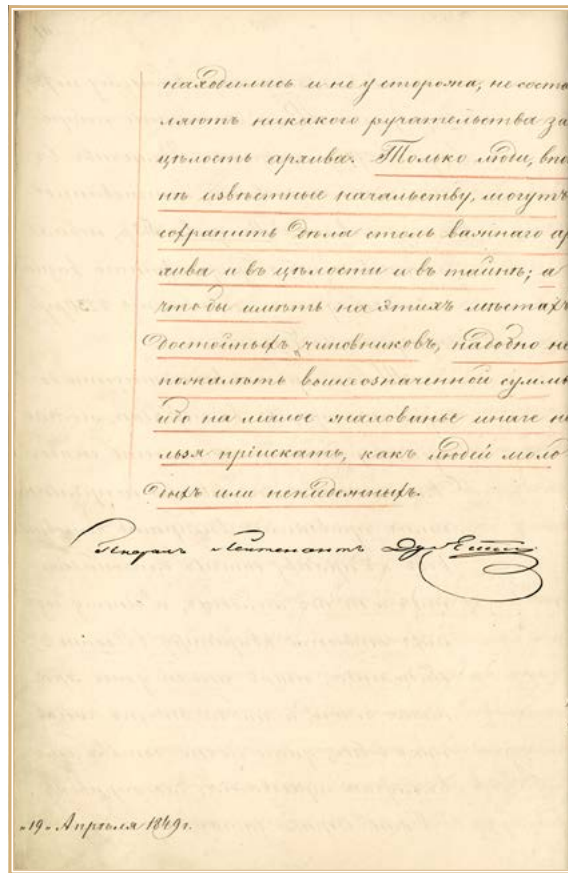


Autograph of L.V. Dubelt on a memorandum concerning the establishment of the archive of the Third Section. 1849.

From open sources

of his own department. Orlov summoned Dubelt, the Administrator of the Third Section, and instructed him to investigate. Accompanied by one of the department's officials, Dubelt descended into the basement, where he discovered heaps of unsorted, dirty, and water-damaged files. As recalled by Third Section official Alexander Mikhailovich Petrov⁷, "Dubelt was horrified. A report was immediately prepared, a vast hall was allocated for the archive, and within some four months it had been furnished with magnificent mahogany cabinets, a thousand plaques bearing gilded coats of arms and inscriptions... In short, within half

⁷ Петров А.М. Из далекого прошлого: Воспоминания о Кирилло-Мефодиевском обществе // Звенья. Сб. материалов и документов по истории литературы, искусства и общественной мысли XIX века / Под ред. В.Д. Бонч-Бруевича. Кн. 5. М.; Л.: Academia, 1935. С. 331.



Autograph of L.V. Dubelt on a memorandum concerning the establishment of the archive of the Third Section. 1849.

From open sources

a year the archive of the Third Section had surpassed that of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in outward appearance”. Officials appointed as Chief Archivists generally possessed either higher or secondary education and extensive clerical experience. It was intended that the archive should be staffed by “the most reliable officials, and not by young men”⁸.

Owing to the steadily increasing volume of documentation handled by the department, in June 1850 Orlov submitted to the Emperor a proposal for a confidential addition to the staffing establishment. Nicholas I authorized the recruitment of several officials, preferably “young men of uncorrupted morals”⁹. The candidates whom Orlov considered

⁸ ГА РФ. Ф. 109. 2 экспедиция. 1826 г. Д. 1. Ч. 1. Л. 100.

⁹ Ibid. Л. 114 об.



L.V. Dubelt. Unknown artist. 1830s.
From open sources

suitable, however, were recent university graduates and therefore lacked the three years of civil service required for appointment to the Third Section. Orlov explained to the Emperor: “I shall more readily find officials among young men who have not previously served in other departments, who have not become acquainted with the abuses of office found there, and who have thus preserved the purity of their morals”¹⁰. The Emperor granted the requested exemption, and six additional young officials were appointed to the Third Section as supernumeraries, enjoying full service rights and receiving salaries equal to those of regular junior officials.

In August 1862, a new staffing establishment for the Third Section was approved. It incorporated into the permanent establishment all of the supernumerary additions introduced in 1849 and 1850. Under the new staffing schedule, the total number of officials in the Third Section reached thirty-six.

In 1865, responsibility for theatrical censorship was removed from the Third Section, and all related records were transferred to the Main Administration for Press Affairs. Nevertheless, the positions of the senior official and his assistant (formerly attached to the Fifth Expedition) were retained.

¹⁰ Ibid. A. 112–113.

In March 1871, the additional post of Deputy Chief of the Third Section was established. At the same time, the previously combined offices of Administrator of the Third Section and Chief of Staff of the Corps of Gendarmes were separated into two distinct positions. The office of Administrator was incorporated into the department's official establishment, classified in the 4th class, with an annual salary of 7,000 rubles. In 1873, a new staffing schedule was approved. Under it, the number of officials increased to fifty-eight, owing to an expansion in the number of junior officials (whose total rose to twelve) and the introduction, for the first time, of twenty copyists into the permanent establishment. This staffing structure remained unchanged until the abolition of the Third Section in 1880.

*Changes in the Staffing Establishment
of the Third Section, 1826–1880*

Year	Number of Established-Post Officials	Number of Non-Established-Post Officials	Total Number of Officials	Notes
1826	15	1 Director 4 Officials for Special Assignments	20	
1828	17	1 Director 4 Officials for Special Assignments	22	New staff positions: Censor of Dramatic Works and Assistant Censor of Dramatic Works
1829	19	1 Director 4 Officials for Special Assignments	24	2 new staff positions: junior clerks
1839	23	1 Director 3 junior clerks (copyists)	27	Officials for Special Assignments, who had previously served as supernumeraries, were incorporated into the staff establishment.
1841	26	1 Director	27	Three junior clerks previously serving as supernumeraries, were incorporated into the staff establishment

Year	Number of Established-Post Officials	Number of Non-Established-Post Officials	Total Number of Officials	Notes
1842	27	1 Director	28	The Fifth (Censorship) Expedition was established. The Censor of Dramatic Works was assigned an additional Assistant Censor of Dramatic Works.
1843	27	1 Director 1 Chief Archivist 2 Assistant Chief Archivists	31	With the establishment of the Archive, non-staff positions of Chief Archivist and Assistant Chief Archivists were created.
1850	27	1 Director 3 archivists 6 junior clerks	37	Under the proposed confidential supplement to the staff establishment of the Third Section, submitted by A. F. Orlov, six junior clerks were added.
1862	36	1 Director	37	All non-staff additions made in 1849 and 1850 were incorporated into the regular staff establishment.
1871	37		37	A Director was added to the staff establishment of the Third Section.
1873	58		58	Twenty new junior clerks and the position of Secretary to the Director were added. The staff establishment was reorganized, and several positions were renamed.

No special requirements existed for appointment to the Third Section. Nevertheless, applicants were expected to have at least three years of prior service and experience in other government offices. Preference was given to candidates with a higher education and knowledge of foreign languages. Impeccable references attesting to the applicant’s political reliability were also essential. Priority was accorded to individuals who had previously served in the Corps of Gendarmes, the chancelleries of military governors, or the leading ministries. Marriages between relatives of fellow officials were encouraged, as was the

employment within the department of members of the same families. Officials of the Third Section were predominantly of noble origin, although sons of junior commissioned officers and enlisted soldiers were also represented. During the reign of Nicholas I, little attention was paid to applicants' religion or nationality. The department employed Orthodox Christians and Lutherans, Russians, Poles, Greeks, and, of course, Germans. From the mid-1870s onward, however, Lutherans were admitted only with great reluctance, while Poles and Jews were prohibited from entering police service. Newly appointed officials were required to complete a probationary period of two to three months, during which their diligence, abilities, and clerical skills were assessed.

The principal source for studying the personnel of the Third Section is the collection of service records (*formulyarnye spiski*) preserved in Collection No. 109 of the State Archive of the Russian Federation. These records survive for approximately 85 percent of those who served in the department between 1826 and 1880, since officials who transferred to other government institutions normally took their service records with them. Only the records of those who retired from service or died while still in office remained permanently in the archive. One mandatory entry in each service record specified the official's religious affiliation. Although there was no separate entry for nationality, this information can often be inferred from the section entitled "estate or social origin", which frequently reflected not only social status but also ethnic background. An analysis of the surviving service records indicates that between 1826 and 1856 approximately half of the department's officials bore German surnames. During the reign of Alexander II of Russia, this proportion declined by roughly one-third, to about 35 percent of the total staff. A similar pattern can be observed among the department's senior leadership. During both the initial and final stages of the Third Section's existence, it was headed by Russian Germans, whereas in the 1850s and 1860s these positions were occupied by members of Russia's leading noble families¹¹.

¹¹ A.Kh. Benckendorff (Chief of the Third Section and Chief of Gendarmes, 1826–1844); M.Ya. Fock (Administrator of the Third Section, 1826–1831); L.V. Dubelt (Administrator of the Third Section, 1839–1856); A.F. Schults (Administrator of the Third Section, 1871–1878); A.R. Drenteln (Chief of the Third Section and Chief of Gendarmes, 1878–1880); N.K. Schmidt (Administrator of the Third Section, 1878–1880). Chiefs of the Third Section:

The original staff of the Third Section consisted of officials transferred from the Special Chancellery of the Ministry of Internal Affairs under the leadership of Maxim Yakovlevich Fock, who was appointed Administrator of the new institution. Under the staffing schedule, he received an annual salary of 6,000 rubles together with a table allowance of 3,000 rubles¹². In his new position, Fock drew extensively upon his previous experience in police service. As one contemporary observed, he “was the soul, the principal actor, and the chief driving force of the entire complex police apparatus, concentrating in his experienced hands all the threads of gendarme investigations and the secret agency”¹³. Fock was the first to prepare moral and political surveys for the Emperor, presenting a comprehensive picture of the “state of public opinion” among different social groups, the alignment of social and political forces, and public reactions to government policies¹⁴. In his first report he wrote: “Public opinion is the same for the authorities as a topographic map is for the commander of an army during a war. Yet to compile an accurate survey of public opinion is as difficult as to produce a precise topographical map. In order to ascertain the views of the majority in every class of society... the organs of supreme supervision employed every means at their disposal, together with the assistance of persons worthy of trust and respect. All information was verified several times so that the opinion of a single party would not be mistaken for the opinion of an entire class”¹⁵. Despite his prominence, relatively little biographical information about Fock has survived. His service record shows that he began his career in 1793 in the Life Guards Cavalry Regiment. In 1794 he served as a volunteer with the corps of Generals Osip Andreevich Ig-elström and Ivan Yevstafyevich von Fersen, took part in the Battle of Maciejowice, participated in the storming of Praga, and was awarded

A.F. Orlov (1844–1856); V.A. Dolgorukov (1856–1866); P.A. Shuvalov (1866–1874); A.L. Potapov (1874–1876); N.V. Mezentsov (1876–1878).

¹² ГА РФ. Ф. 109. 2 экспедиция. 1826 г. Д. 1. Ч. 1. Л. 19.

¹³ *Модзалевский Б.А.* Пушкин под тайным надзором. 3-е изд. Л.: Атеней, 1925. С. 42.

¹⁴ The moral-political surveys of the Third Section have been published in full in: *Россия под надзором. Отчеты III отделения, 1827–1869* / Сост. М.В. Сидорова, Е.И. Щербакова. М.: Российский фонд культуры, 2019.

¹⁵ *Россия под надзором.* С. 17.

a Gold Cross for his service. Retired because of illness in 1799, he soon entered the Ministry of Commerce and, from 1804 onward, served as an inspector in Moscow on the Minister's instructions. Between 1806 and 1808 he served on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief of the Moscow Militia, where he managed all clerical affairs, and subsequently served in the militia of Moscow Governorate¹⁶. Despite his long career in the police, according to Filipp Filippovich Vigel, Fock "was a German dreamer who regarded liberal-mindedness as something natural and legitimate and was more inclined to oppose its enemies... He wished that what he considered enlightened ways of thinking would not entirely perish in Russia and intended to protect those who held such views from persecution"¹⁷. Although Fock's agents kept the exiled Alexander Pushkin under surveillance, the poet himself regarded Fock as an intelligent and cultivated man and described his death in 1831 as "a public calamity"¹⁸.

For many years, the Third Section's "foreign agency" was headed by Adam Alexandrovich Sagtynsky. By birth he was a member of the Polish nobility and remained a Roman Catholic throughout his life. Sagtynsky entered government service in 1810 as senior translator in the administration of the Principality of Wallachia. In 1816 he was appointed to the Military Chancellery of Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovich of Russia and subsequently served in the Heir Apparent's (Tsesarevich's) General Staff. In 1834 he entered the Third Section as an official for special assignments, specializing primarily in political surveillance abroad. His responsibilities included supervising domestic intelligence operations and directing the Third Section's foreign intelligence network. Sagtynsky maintained constant contact with the

¹⁶ ГА РФ. Ф. 109. 2 экспедиция. 1827 г. Д. 19; on М.Я. Fock, see also: *Рейтблат А.И. Записки Ф.В. Булгарина в III отделение // Новое литературное обозрение*. 1993. № 2. С. 129–146; *idem*. Ф.В. Булгарин или М.Я. Фок? (К вопросу о сотрудничестве Булгарина с III отделением) // Тыняновский сборник: Пятые Тыняновские чтения. Рига: Зинатне; М.: Импринт, 1994. С. 250–274; *он же*. Видок Фиглярин: Письма и агентурные записки Ф.В. Булгарина в III отделение. М.: Новое литературное обозрение, 1998.

¹⁷ *Вигель Ф.Ф. Записки / Ред. и вступ. ст. С.Я. Штрайха. Т. 2. М.: Круг, 1928. С. 258, 277.*

¹⁸ *Пушкин А.С. Полное собрание сочинений. 4-е изд. В 10 т. Т. 8: Автобиографическая и историческая проза. История Пушкина. Записки Моро де Бразе. Л.: Наука, 1978. С. 22.*

twenty years. He began his career in 1819 “as a foreign national” in the post office at Mitau. His career subsequently took him to the Caucasus, where by 1835 he was serving as an official for special assignments in the Treasury Expedition of the Supreme Georgian Government. His successful execution of highly confidential assignments, some of them of an intelligence-gathering nature, attracted the attention of Emperor Nicholas I and Count Benckendorff. In 1839 Taube was appointed to the Third Section. Although he regularly received marks of imperial favour in the form of valuable gifts and monetary rewards, he could neither be promoted in rank nor decorated with an order because he remained a foreign subject. This obstacle was removed in 1843 when, following his marriage to Therese von Maydell, a native of Estland, he swore allegiance to the Russian Empire. During his twenty years in Benckendorff’s department, Taube’s principal duty was to remain at the port of Kronstadt and supervise foreigners entering Russia. He “employed every means to achieve the principal objective of this measure – to prevent persons deemed harmful and dangerous to our Government on account of various political designs from arriving in St Petersburg”²⁰.

From 1827 onward, Osip Vasilyevich Koberwein served under Benckendorff “on confidential assignments”, having previously performed similar duties for Field Marshal Fabian Wilhelm von Osten-Sacken, Commander-in-Chief of the First Army. In 1832, when Benckendorff recommended his confidential agent for promotion, the Emperor declined to approve it because no official service record or supporting documentation for Koberwein had been submitted. An inquiry by the Third Section established that “until 1809 he served in the Austrian National Guard of Lemberg. After Napoleon occupied Vienna and Saxon troops entered Galicia, when Polish regiments began to be formed, Koberwein enlisted in them, together with other natives of Galicia, and was commissioned as a lieutenant. When there was talk of being sent on campaign to Spain, he travelled to Russia, but on the road near Tarnopol he lost all his papers and possessions and was therefore unable to produce any documents concerning his previous service”²¹. Accordingly, in 1832 Koberwein received only a diamond ring, while the rank due to him was

²⁰ ГА РФ. Ф. 109. 2 экспедиция. 1857 г. Д. 188. Л. 4.

²¹ Ibid. 1832 г. Д. 804. Л. 2.

granted only in 1847. After Benckendorff's death, Koberwein found himself without a formal position. He was formally employed neither by the Third Section nor the Corps of Gendarmes, undertaking only occasional assignments for the new Chief of Gendarmes, Alexei Fyodorovich Orlov. In 1847 Koberwein accepted Russian citizenship and requested that Orlov petition the Emperor to grant him the appropriate rank and appoint him to the permanent staff of the Third Section. On Orlov's report, Nicholas I wrote the following resolution: "Approved. Promote him from the rank of Austrian lieutenant to the corresponding Russian rank"²².

Personal patronage and recommendations from influential figures, friends, and acquaintances played a significant role in appointments to the Third Section. In some cases, appointments were made "by supreme command". Thus, in 1838 Alexander Alexandrovich Galler was transferred from the Chapter of Orders to Benckendorff's department "for a noble deed". Galler had "revealed the criminal intentions of the former teacher Alexandrov, who had attempted to murder the retired staff captain Yakovlev and extort one million rubles from his father, and had refused the 10,000 rubles offered to him by the latter in gratitude"²³. A graduate of the Faculty of Philology at St Petersburg University who knew several foreign languages, Galler was initially assigned to the archive of the Third Section to sort and organize accumulated documents and soon became head of the archive with the rank of senior official.

A very different outcome accompanied the appointment "by supreme command" of Alexei Mikhailovich Petrov, a student of the St Vladimir University. Petrov was appointed to the staff of the Third Section in 1849 with the rights of a junior official²⁴ as a reward for informing on the Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood. Unwilling to employ an informer in the department, Dubelt proposed rewarding Petrov with money instead, but Orlov observed that the Emperor himself had ordered Petrov's appointment. Shortly thereafter an embarrassing incident occurred. Postal employees discovered an envelope addressed to the Emperor in one of the letterboxes on Nevsky Prospekt. When it was delivered to the Third Section, it was found to contain excerpts from

²² Ibid. A. 14.

²³ Ibid. 1837 г. А. 634. А. 45 об.

²⁴ Ibid. 1847 г. А. 236. А. 1, 6.

Orlov's reports to the Emperor bearing Nicholas I's handwritten resolutions. An anonymous note enclosed with them alleged that, for money, one could obtain even the Tsar's autograph through the Third Section. An investigation was immediately launched. A special commission chaired by Alexander Fyodorovich Golitsyn established that Petrov had been responsible. "While on evening duty, he had entered the First Expedition, removed confidential documents, and even detached papers from archival files for transmission to private individuals"²⁵. Petrov was arrested, spent more than eighteen months in the Alekseevsky Ravelin of the Peter and Paul Fortress, and was subsequently exiled to Olonets Governorate, where he served as a court secretary. After secret police surveillance over him was lifted in 1856, he settled in Starodub. On several occasions he appealed to the Third Section for assistance and received financial aid from his former department²⁶.

Through the recommendation of family friends, Pavel Ivanovich Miller, a graduate of the sixth year of the Tsarskoye Selo Lyceum, was appointed Benckendorff's personal secretary in 1833. Miller's mother, Praskovya Alexandrovna, was the sister of Alexander Alexandrovich Volkov, Benckendorff's close friend and Head of the Moscow Gendarme District, and it was she who secured her son's appointment to police service. Miller remained with Benckendorff until the latter's death in 1844. His duties included preparing documents for official reports, compiling background memoranda, organizing the papers on the Chief of Gendarmes' desk, and filing completed documents in the archive. Benckendorff's absent-mindedness and poor memory were well known, and Miller took advantage of this weakness by quietly removing some of Alexander Pushkin's letters from his superior's papers²⁷. His predecessor, Andrei Andreevich Ivanovsky, had behaved in much the same way. Ivanovsky was appointed Benckendorff's secretary after the dissolution of the Investigative Commission on the Decembrist affair, where he had served as secretary. His collection contained not only Pushkin's

²⁵ Ibid. Оп. 223. Д. 14. Л. 54–55.

²⁶ See: Сидорова М.В. Дело чиновника А.М. Петрова // Сидорова М.В. О жандармах, императорах и изобразительном искусстве. Архивные заметки. СПб.: Алетейя, 2023. С. 99–106.

²⁷ See: Эйдельман Н.Я. Десять автографов из архива П.И. Миллера // Записки отдела рукописей. Вып. 33. М.: Книга, 1972. С. 280–320.

letters²⁸ but also letters addressed to the Decembrists Alexander Bestuzhev, Kondraty Ryleyev, and Alexander Kornilovich²⁹. Ivanovsky also published the literary almanac *Album of the Northern Muses*, in which Pushkin's poem *The Talisman* first appeared in print, and maintained close friendships with many leading literary figures of his day.

It should also be noted that a considerable number of officials of the Third Section supplemented their income through literary work³⁰. Among the members of the Department's original staff, Evstafy Ivanovich Oldekop deserves particular mention. A graduate of the Faculty of Philology of Moscow University, he began his career in Arkhangelsk, where he taught at a Lutheran school. After moving to St Petersburg, he opened a private educational institution and, in 1820, entered the Chancellery of the Minister of Police. There he worked in the censorship service, while also actively translating Russian authors – from Alexander Pushkin to Faddei Bulgarin – into German and publishing them as separate volumes. He also compiled and published a number of French–Russian–German phrasebooks, textbooks, and linguistic manuals and served as publisher of the newspaper *St.-Petersburgische Zeitschrift*³¹. Beginning in 1828, Oldekop served in the Third Section as censor of dramatic works, a position he held until 1840. Another official well known in literary circles was Nikolai Andreevich Kashintsov. He began his civil service in the Vladimir Provincial Administration and, in 1815, entered the Governing Senate with the rank of provincial secretary. In 1819 he joined the Kremlin Buildings Expedition, where he served until 1827. He subsequently entered the Moscow Guardianship Committee of the Imperial Philanthropic Society and became Director of the Dorogomilovo Almshouse. In 1829 the nobility of Klin

²⁸ Модзалевский Л.Б. Рукописи А.С. Пушкина, хранящиеся в Пушкинском Доме. Научное описание / Сост. Л.Б. Модзалевский, Б.В. Томашевский. М.; Л.: Изд-во АН СССР, 1937. № 41, 50, 56.

²⁹ The first description of the A.A. Ivanovsky's collection was undertaken by V.E. Yakushkin. See: Из литературной и общественной истории 1820–1830 // Русская старина. 1888. № 10. С. 149–157; № 11. С. 311–332; № 12. С. 583–600; Эдельман О.В. Следствие по делу декабристов. М.: Модест Колеров, 2010. С. 71–72; 247–249.

³⁰ See: Рейтблат А.И. Русские писатели и III отделение (1826–1855) // Новое литературное обозрение. 1999. № 6 (40). С. 158–186.

³¹ ГА РФ. Ф. 109. 2 экспедиция. 1839 г. Д. 224.

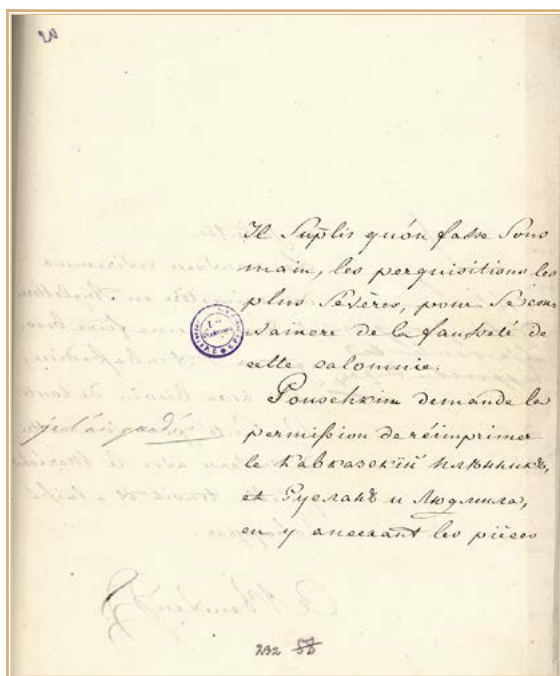
elected him as a deputy responsible for compiling genealogical registers. Kashintsov moved in Moscow's literary circles and became particularly famous for his romance *Farewell to the Nightingale*. He also published his own poetry in separate pamphlets. In 1832 he was attached to the Third Section by imperial command to supervise all periodical publications issued in Moscow, and at the same time was granted the court rank of *Kammerjunker* (Gentleman of the Bedchamber)³². The archives of the Third Section preserve several remarkable essays by Kashintsov reflecting on the purposes of the political police and the methods employed by its agents. He wrote: "Contrary to what many people say, honourable surveillance can never descend to espionage: the former brings everything into the light, whereas the latter dwells in the darkness of suspicion, prejudice, and vice. Surveillance is necessary, but espionage is an unquestionable evil: it rests upon bribery and therefore corrupts morals, undermines principles, and weakens a sense of duty"³³.

It is hardly surprising that officials serving as censors of dramatic works or as translators also engaged in literary pursuits, since their official duties required them to translate articles from foreign newspapers and journals. Thus, in a memorandum addressed to the Chief of the Third Section, Pyotr Andreevich Shuvalov, in 1867, official Karl Ivanovich Bernard wrote: "Besides my ordinary duties in the Third Section connected with dramatic censorship, I translated and excerpted articles from various publications, compiled catalogues, and arranged the foreign editions held in the archive. In 1863, immediately upon receiving the first reports of the Polish Uprising, after submitting to Adjutant General Prince Dolgorukov and Potapov an article on the subject, which they approved, I published a series of articles in *Golos* concerning the Polish question. At the invitation of Count M.N. Muravyov, I travelled to Vilna, where I gave the local official newspaper, *Vilensky Vestnik*, a more distinctly Russian orientation. I wrote editorials, shorter articles, and essays, and prepared two historical studies that received Count Muravyov's full approval. Some of these articles were subsequently reprinted in the metropolitan newspapers, including *Russky Invalid*"³⁴.

³² Ibid. 1832 г. Д. 7.

³³ Ibid. Ч. 2. Л. 89.

³⁴ Ibid. 1862 г. Д. 30. Л. 37–38.



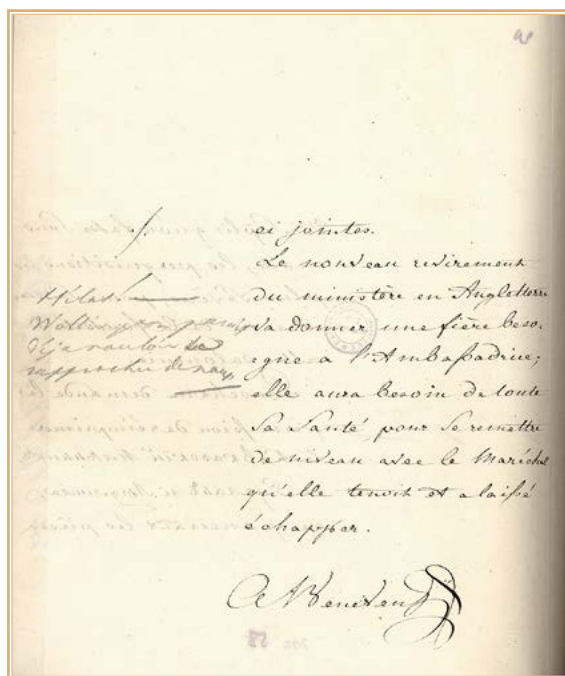
Report by A.Kh. Benckendorff to Emperor Nicholas I
concerning A.S. Pushkin. 1837.

From open sources

Not all officials, however, were able to publish their literary works during their lifetimes. An article by Mikhail Maksimovich Popov, who headed the First Expedition – the most secret division of the Third Section – appeared in print only several years after his death. It provided a detailed account of the materials relating to Pushkin preserved in the archive of the Third Section³⁵. Although the article had been written in 1856, it could not be published because the documents on which it was based remained subject to official secrecy³⁶. Popov was acquainted with many literary figures. After graduating from Kazan University, he taught literature at the Penza Gymnasium, where Vissarion Belinsky was among his pupils. He was also a close friend of the novelist Ivan Ivanovich Lazhechnikov, who left the following assessment of him: “M.M. Popov was a real treasure for the gymnasium. His love of scholarship, especially literature, his brilliant mind, and his solid education were combined

³⁵ [Попов М.М.] Александр Сергеевич Пушкин // Русская старина. 1874. Т. 10. С. 683–714.

³⁶ See: Березкина С.В. Статья чиновника III отделения М.М. Попова «Александр Сергеевич Пушкин» // Русская литература. 2013. Вып. 1. С. 105–110.



Report by A.Kh. Benckendorff to Emperor Nicholas I
 concerning A.S. Pushkin. 1837.

From open sources

with a warm heart and a poetic soul. His pupils loved him, and no one listened to any other teacher with such pleasure or profit. Belinsky was fortunate to have come under his instruction; beneath his kindly wing he developed his love of literature and of all that is beautiful”³⁷. After leaving Penza, Popov moved to St Petersburg and entered the Department of Foreign Trade. In 1835, he was transferred to the Staff of the Corps of Gendarmes, and in 1839, by imperial command, was appointed a senior official in the Third Section. He was later promoted to the position of official for special assignments and on several occasions acted as administrator during the absence of the Department’s Head from St Petersburg. In recognition of “his long, consistently diligent service and the conscientious execution of matters requiring exceptional secrecy”³⁸, he was granted a twelve-year monetary annuity of 2,000 rubles per year. Popov retired because of ill health in 1865 and died several years later. His papers, now

³⁷ Лажечников И.И. Заметки для биографии В.Г. Белинского. М.: Директ-Медиа, 2014. С. 10.

³⁸ ГА РФ. Ф. 109. 2 экспедиция. 1828. Д. 179. Л. 126–130; 2 экспедиция. 1865. Д. 76. Л. 8–21.

preserved at the Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkin House), contain not only autograph manuscripts of his published works but also numerous unpublished articles dealing with both literary subjects and the confidential assignments he carried out while serving in the Third Section³⁹.

In most cases, officials of the Third Section retired from service on pension or died while still in office. Transfers to other government departments were relatively uncommon, and dismissals without petition were rarer still. However, the case of A.M. Petrov, mentioned above, who was arrested in 1849 for stealing documents from the Third Section, although exceptional, was not unique. Another incident occurred in 1869, when Nikolai Karlovich Halsleben was dismissed for abusing his official position for personal gain: in exchange for payment, he assisted petitioners in obtaining confidential information about the progress of various cases. After struggling for three years to support himself by giving private lessons, Halsleben wrote to the Chief of the Gendarmes, P.A. Shuvalov, in 1872. In his letter, he expressed deep remorse for his actions, described the hardships he had endured – “having sold my last bed and being left with nothing but a frock coat and an overcoat, I moved to Moscow with my wife and children to live with my elderly mother” – and asked that the words “dismissed from service” be removed from his certificate of service. In his report to the Emperor, Shuvalov described all the “grave consequences” that the dismissal had entailed for Halsleben, whereupon the Tsar ordered: “Enter in the certificate: ‘dismissed for domestic reasons’”⁴⁰. One may hope that the unfortunate official’s subsequent career proved more successful.

The career of Nikolai Fyodorovich Miller is equally noteworthy. A graduate of St Petersburg University, he initially served as an actuary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and later as an official for special assignments under the Military Governor of Arkhangelsk. In 1846, Miller entered the Third Section, soon converted to Orthodoxy, and joined a group of pilgrims travelling to the Konevets Monastery on Lake Ladoga. There, as contemporaries put it, “his imagination seized him”: he resolved to remain at the monastery as a novice and eventually withdraw to the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra. Miller sent a letter to the Third Section requesting his

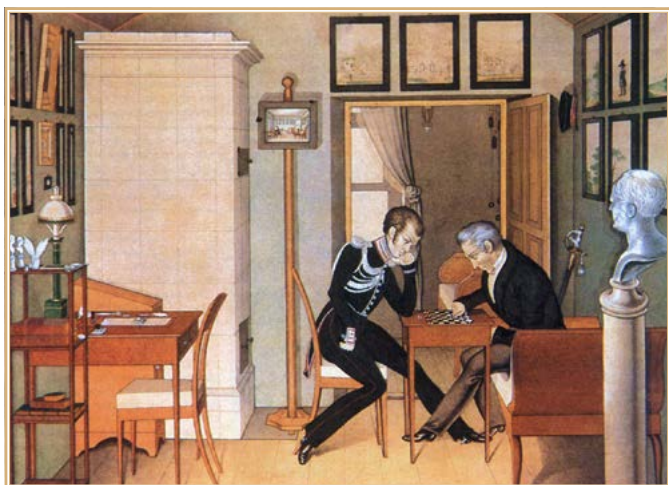
³⁹ Березкина С.В. *Op. cit.* С. 109–110.

⁴⁰ ГА РФ. Ф. 109. 2 экспедиция. 1862 г. Д. 333.

resignation and a small allowance for travel to Kyiv, while tactfully hinting that the authorities might also petition on his behalf for admission, at government expense, to a theological academy “to attend a course in theology so that in time I might become a useful member of the clergy”. The letter could not but astonish the leadership of the Third Section, which immediately requested an explanation from the St Petersburg diocesan authorities as to what had happened to their police official. The reply from the Abbot of Konevets Monastery, however, revealed even stranger circumstances. Miller had indeed stayed at the monastery for some time with the other pilgrims, attended services and excursions, and departed with the same pilgrimage group. At no point had he even hinted to anyone that he wished to become a novice. It is unknown where the would-be monk wandered during the next two years, but in 1848 the Third Section received an inquiry from Archimandrite Andronik, Abbot of the Trinity Lavra of St Sergius, asking whether the Department had any objections to Miller’s admission as a novice. The Third Section replied that Miller had always served diligently and well, though it tactfully omitted any mention of his mysterious disappearance from Konevets Monastery.

The next communication from Miller arrived less than a year later. Sending a letter addressed to L.V. Dubelt together with an icon of St Leontius (Dubelt’s patron saint), Miller asked the all-powerful gendarme general to secure his reinstatement in government service. Dubelt advised him instead to appeal to the ecclesiastical authorities and sent the unfortunate would-be monk ten rubles in payment for the icon⁴¹. Unfortunately, Miller’s subsequent fate is unknown. In 1874, Konstantin Fyodorovich Philippeus, Head of the Secret Expedition of the Third Section, was hastily dismissed “at his own request on grounds of ill health”. Having joined the department in 1869 at the invitation of P.A. Shuvalov, he had, for five years, exercised control not only over the entire network of secret agents but also over all the confidential funds allocated for intelligence operations. It was eventually discovered that Philippeus had spent the greater part of these funds on an extravagant social life and on women. Unwilling to expose the scandal publicly, the authorities quietly retired him with the pension to which he was entitled. However, since Philippeus maintained “extensive acquaintance

⁴¹ Ibid. 1846 r. Д. 169.



In the office of A.Kh. Benckendorff.
From open sources

with persons of questionable character and, by virtue of his former service, knew many details concerning important affairs of state and political significance”, he was placed under covert surveillance⁴².

Although such instances of official misconduct did occur, they were exceedingly rare. The overwhelming majority of officials carried out their duties honestly and conscientiously, striving to earn promotion to the next rank or to receive official distinctions. The principal forms of reward included the conferral of orders and medals, grants of land leases, lump-sum allowances, valuable gifts, promotion in rank, and imperial acts of favour, such as the admission of an official's children to educational institutions at government expense. Thus, in 1831, in recognition of Alexander Isaevich Lefebre's long and “zealous” service, his son, who ardently wished to become a naval officer, was admitted to the Naval Cadet Corps at the request of A.Kh. Benckendorff. On Benckendorff's report to the Emperor, Nicholas I wrote: “Admit him. Inform Prince Menshikov, although according to the regulations no children except those of naval personnel are admitted to this corps”⁴³.

The number of officials who transferred from the Third Section to other government departments remained small. Many spent their

⁴² For details on the fate of K.F. Filipeus, see: *Сидорова М.В., Лурье Ф.М. Взлеты и падения сыщика Филиппеуса // Сидорова М.В. О жандармах... С. 107–139.*

⁴³ ГА РФ. Ф.109. 2 экспедиция. 1826 г. Д. 72. Л. 15.

entire careers within the department. As K.F. Philippeus observed, “...the personnel of the Department developed in a distinctive manner; its members acquired their own particular outlook and traditions. The Department became something akin to a monastery, and upon entering it one had to renounce the outside world”⁴⁴.

Following the abolition of the Third Section in 1880, its officials were pensioned according to their years of service. Those who had served for twenty-five years or more received a pension equal to their full salary; those with twenty to twenty-five years of service received two-thirds of their salary; and those who had served between fifteen and twenty years received one-half⁴⁵. Many former officials petitioned for appointment to the Police Department. Twenty-one such petitions were approved⁴⁶. Preference in appointments to the new department was given to officials for special assignments, archivists, and clerical personnel.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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“A Little Bird Told Me”

Abstract

One of the principal tasks of political police of the Russian Empire was to collect information on the attitudes and sentiments of different social groups. Researchers now have access to an extensive body of documents preserved in the collections of the Third Section and the Police Department of the State Archive of the Russian Federation, in which rumors constitute one of the most important sources of information. In nineteenth-century official documents, the term *publika* (“the public”) most closely corresponds to the modern concept of “society”, and its views are reflected in numerous reports of the political police, primarily concerning urban life, especially in the capital. However, the overwhelming majority of the country’s population consisted of *narod* (“the people”), namely the peasantry. By carefully recording rumors circulating among peasants and attempting to identify the sources of those considered dangerous, political police officials frequently attributed unsettling popular gossip to the propaganda or agitation of malicious actors, although such an interpretation was by no means always justified. The rumors that spread among

the peasantry can be reduced to several fundamental issues of rural life, chiefly those connected with land, its scarcity, and the enduring hope for a “general redistribution of land” (*chernyi peredel*). Virtually all developments in the country’s domestic and foreign policy were interpreted by peasants through the prism of their expectation of the sovereign’s “grace regarding land”. The analytical and informational materials of the political police that recorded popular rumors constitute an invaluable historical source, one that “opens a window for the historian onto the collective mentality of society”. At the same time, interpreting these materials when they concern the peasantry posed considerable challenges both for the political police analysts who compiled them and for modern historians.

Keywords:

Rumors; Gossip; Peasants; Political police; Intelligence and analytical activities; Public opinion; Third Section; Police Department

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It is well known that the functions of the Third Section of His Imperial Majesty’s Chancellery were extremely diverse. The “Eye of the Sovereign” monitored the work of the bureaucratic apparatus, anti-government activity, and the mood of various segments of the population.

This agency was initially assigned the role of “central headquarters for monitoring general opinion and the spirit of the people”¹, because,

¹ ГА РФ. Ф. 109. Оп. 3. Д. 510. Л. 9.



Maxim Yakovlevich von Fock. Lithograph after the original by I.P. Fridrits.
From open sources

as the first Chief of the Third Section, Maxim Yakovlevich von Fock, wrote, public opinion “is the same for the authorities as a topographic map is for the commander of an army during a war”². Nicholas I always strove to be informed about the needs and aspirations of his subjects, and a key part of the annual reports of the Third Section were the “moral and political reviews”, which recorded not so much specific facts as the “general state of the collective mind”. Today, such a document would be called an analytical review. What sources did the information and analytical activities of the political police rely on?

The Third Section received information from secret agents and voluntary informants, excerpts from the intercepted correspondence, reports, and dispatches of gendarme staff officers in the governorates; all of it was the primary source of information for the political police leadership. In 1827, gendarmerie districts were organized into sections headed by staff officers, each covering one to three governorates. By the early 1830s, this structure was reorganized to provide greater coverage of the country’s gendarmerie oversight; instead of sections, directorates were set up in all governorates within the Corps’ districts (the latter,

² Гр. А.Х. Бенкендорф о России в 1827–1830 гг. (Ежегодные отчеты III отделения и Корпуса жандармов) // Красный архив. 1929. Т. 6 (37). С. 141.

with the exception of Warsaw, Siberia, and Caucasus, persisted until the establishment of provincial gendarmerie directorates in 1867).

Gendarme staff officers in the governorates were ordered to “see everything, know everything, and not interfere in anything”³, as was formulated by the Chief of the Department, Commander-in-Chief of the 3rd Section and Chief of the Corps of Gendarmes, A.Kh. Benckendorff. Reports from staff officers, which were to be compiled every six months, were attached to reports and sent directly to the capital, to the Chief of Gendarmes, bypassing the chief of the gendarmerie district; so that “the chief of the Moscow district could familiarize himself with the papers first”⁴. In St. Petersburg, the reports were studied by the head of the Third Section, whose position since 1839 had been combined with that of Chief of Staff of the Corps of Gendarmes. The most informative reports from the field ended up on the desk of the Chief of Gendarmes, who could communicate them to the Emperor⁵; in addition, they formed the basis of the annual reports of the Third Section. The frequency and form of reporting changed, but their role was retained even when the functions of political oversight were transferred from the Third Section, abolished in 1881, to the Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

How could gendarme officers judge the mood and public opinion in their respective governorates? Their primary source of information was their own observations, and each drew their own conclusions from these observations. “Without paid agents, the gendarmes privately collected news and rumors”⁶, writes G.N. Bibikov. “...I delve into the manifestation of rumors with particular care...”⁷ said A.A. Myshetsky, a gendarme staff officer in Olonetsk Governorate. His superior, Head of the First District of the Corps of Gendarmes, insisted on the constant need to collect “detailed information about circulating rumors; about

³ Quoted in: *Бибиков Г.Н. Жандармский надзор в системе государственного управления Российской империи (1826–1856 гг.).* М.: Квадрига, 2023. С. 94.

⁴ Ibid. С. 149.

⁵ Ibid. С. 160.

⁶ Ibid. С. 312.

⁷ *Белюсов К.Ф. Олонецкие люди оружия: из истории губернского жандармского управления.* Петрозаводск: Острова, 2021. С. 57.



Leonty Vasilyevich Dubelt. Artist: P.F. Sokolov.
From open sources

ongoing gossip and discussions on matters deserving the government's attention; about the state of minds both in the upper classes and among the common people..."⁸

In addition to the reports of gendarme staff officers, rumors, as an indicator of public sentiment, were recorded in a number of documents that were deposited in the funds of the Third Section in a set of materials for the years 1857–1869, entitled *Summaries of Intelligence Reports on Rumors Regarding Various Events in the Political, Economic, and Social Life of Russia, International Events and Incidents*⁹. They primarily concern capital-related events, as do the summaries of the most significant information communicated by L.V. Dubelt, Head of the Third Section, to A.F. Orlov, head of the political police from 1844 to 1856, during his absence from St. Petersburg. The "information notes" delivered to the Chief of Gendarmes by courier on a nearly daily basis have been preserved in the State Archives of the Russian Federation for the years 1845–1846 and 1849–1855. Furthermore, the archival materials also include individual files from the Third Section, often grouped by topic, reflecting public opinion on various socially significant issues and based primarily on rumors and hearsay.

⁸ Ibid. C. 130.

⁹ ГА РФ. Ф. 109. Оп. 3а. Д. 3213–3245.

Thus, the researcher has at his disposal a vast collection of review and analytical documents from the political police of the Russian Empire, in which rumors serve as one of the most important sources of information. Related to these are such tasks of the political police as identifying the source and preventing the "spread of disturbing rumors", which is quite logical, since monitoring untrustworthy thoughts is inseparable from preventing the relevant actions. However, when working with this data, it's important to remember that, in addition to recording rumors, the documents often reflect their interpretation. In the first case, a gendarme officer or official from the Third Section is reproducing public opinion; in the second, they're expressing their own, and separating the two can be difficult. Despite their zeal for professionalism and a desire for objectivity, political police analysts may also have their own perspective, which influences the information they present.

Anyway, rumors act as the main indicator of the sentiments of the population; the population, however, was far from homogeneous. If we reduce all its diversity to the well-known triad of "state power – society – people", the differences are quite obvious. For purposes of political control, the position of elite representatives is undoubtedly important. In 19th-century documents, the term "public" best corresponds to the modern concept of "society". It is precisely their views and sentiments that are reflected in numerous political police reports concerning urban, primarily capital, life. The "public" is distinguished from the "people", above all, by its level of education, its connection to European civilization, and, of course, its material wealth. According to S.F. Blumenau, a scholar of the French Revolution, the public is "a minority possessing 'property and culture'", as opposed to the people "with their fickle moods and mentality imbued with prejudice"¹⁰.

Public sentiment and behavior, as well as the rumors circulating within this milieu, are the focus of a number of studies, such as O.Yu. Abakumova's *The Third Section Guarding Morality and Decency. Gendarmes in the Fight Against Bribery and Vice. 1826–1866* or E.V. Balushkina's *Rumors and Gossip: Spring 1857 in St. Petersburg through the Eyes of the*

¹⁰ Blumenau С.Ф. Просвещение и проблемы истоков Французской революции: современное видение // Вопросы истории. 2003. № 9. С. 155.



Alexei Fyodorovich Orlov. Artist: F. Krüger.
From open sources

Third Section. The same cannot be said for studies of the “mindset” of the common people based on political police records.

For Russia, “the people” meant, first and foremost, the peasants. They constituted the overwhelming majority of the country’s population, and the political police paid them due attention. Carefully recording rumors circulating among the people and attempting to identify the sources of those deemed dangerous, “political detectives”, writes L. Ulyanova, “in most cases attributed the emergence of rumors to the targeted activities of various groups in society that, in one way or another, demonstrated their political beliefs”¹¹, i.e., they tried to connect the rumors that were stirring up the people with the propaganda or agitation of some malicious individuals, although such an approach was not always correct.

There are a number of issues so deeply rooted in the common man’s consciousness that they can be called fundamental. Rumors on these topics don’t require any outside intervention to form and spread; they are present in the public consciousness for generations. D.I. Uspensky,

¹¹ Ульянова Л.В. Слухи в инструментарии политической полиции. 1880–1905 гг. // Слухи в России XIX–XX веков. Неофициальная коммуникация и «крутые повороты» российской истории. Сборник статей. Челябинск: Каменный пояс, 2011. С. 293.

who surveyed peasants in Chernsky Uyezd of Tula Governorate in 1891–1892 and published his findings in the journal *Ethnographic Review*, identifies the most pressing topics of popular rumor in the title of his article, *Rumors of the People (Crop Failure — Cholera — War)*. The chosen moment for the survey was particularly poignant — the time of the catastrophic famine in the Black Earth and Volga governorates, which struck the region following a severe drought amid the poor harvests of 1889 and 1890, triggering the spread of epidemics and claiming numerous lives. The author offers very specific explanations for these disasters: in the popular imagination, they are associated with the evil will of a witch who sends drought, the actions of doctors who deliberately starve the people, or the sins of the Orthodox people in general. The stories recorded by the ethnographer also contain speculation about when the plague would end, as communicated to the peasants by apparitions of the Virgin Mary, saints, and seers who foretold the future. Uspensky does not make sweeping generalizations: "People's rumors are like a sea wave", he writes. "There is no consistency in popular belief"¹². But even if this is true, the themes these rumors evoke have remained unchanged for centuries and are linked to the living conditions of peasants in the "zone of risky agriculture". Generally, the rumors circulating among the people convey either fears or hopes.

Studying the behavior of Russian peasants during the First World War, O.S. Porshneva notes: "Despite the peasants' well-known economic and social rationalism and pragmatism, their perception of events (the causes of which remained beyond their mental horizon) was determined for centuries by the action of traditional mental attitudes"¹³. The most important of these mental attitudes is connected with the idea that the land should belong to those who cultivate it.

Rumors about land and freedom — occasionally dying down, but never ceasing — were one of the main concerns of the political police. "With every new reign, with every important event at court or in state affairs, since ancient times, news of an impending change in internal

¹² Успенский Д.И. Толки народа (Неурожай — Холера — Война) // Этнографическое обозрение. 1893. № 2. С. 184.

¹³ Поршнева О.С. Российский крестьянин в Первой мировой войне (1914 — февраль 1917) // Человек и война. Война как явление культуры / Под ред. И.В. Нарского, О.Ю. Никоновой. М.: АИРО-XX, 2001. С. 192.

governance has spread among the people, and thoughts of peasant freedom have been aroused”¹⁴, analysts from the Third Section note.

In K.V. Chistov’s fascinating study of the peculiarities of popular consciousness, *Russian Folk Social-Utopian Legends*, a rumor is cited that after the death of Alexander I, for reasons unknown to the people, it was not Konstantin Pavlovich, but Nicholas, who took the throne. “It is remarkable that both of these facts were interpreted by the popular consciousness as a consequence of the fact that both Alexander and Constantine wanted to liberate the peasants”¹⁵. There was also a rumor that “Alexander gave freedom before his death, and Nicholas hid it”¹⁶.

A Brief Review of Public Opinion in 1827 contains information that “several prophecies and predictions are circulating among the peasants: they await their liberator, like the Jews their Messiah, and have given him the name Metelkin. They say among themselves: ‘Pugachev frightened the lords, but Metelkin will sweep them away’”¹⁷. Moreover, the author of the review calls for paying special attention to peasant rumors, “since we recruit our soldiers from this class”¹⁸.

In the mid-1850s, information about preparations for a peasant reform could not help but leak out into the public. A very curious conversation was recorded in the report of the Third Section from early May 1857: “The other day, a cab driver asked his passenger: ‘What’s the news, sir? Will the Empress soon give birth?’ They say that if God gives the Tsar a son, he will certainly want to give us freedom, because this son will be the Tsar’s son and more important than all his other children. — The Tsar would have done something for us long ago, but he can’t — the landowners are begging him (not to), and if he has a son now, then from this day forward, they say, all our children born from now on will be free, and for us ourselves a fee will be set to buy ourselves out to freedom, not like now — pay whatever the master wants

¹⁴ Россия под надзором: отчеты III отделения, 1827–1869 / Сост. М.В. Сидорова, Е.И. Щербакова. М.: Российский фонд культуры, 2006. С. 201.

¹⁵ Чистов К.В. Русские народные социально-утопические легенды XVII–XIX вв. М.: Наука, 1967. С. 200.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Россия под надзором. С. 24.

¹⁸ Ibid.

and some want us to pay an exorbitant price, that's why we can't buy ourselves out, but if it happens as the Tsar wants, then soon we will all be free. – Let God grant the Tsar a son – we are waiting and waiting!”¹⁹ This likely refers to Sergei Alexandrovich, who was born on April 29/ May 11, 1857. But the peculiarity of this rumor isn't that popular wisdom associates the emancipation of the serfs with a significant event in the royal family, nor is it that, in the common people's view, the Tsar has long been ready to help the peasants, but the landowners are hindering him. It's surprising that the reference is to a feasible ransom. Peasants typically viewed personal emancipation and land grants as a “royal grace” – free of charge, of course. Perhaps the point is that this conversation is being conducted by a capital coachman, somewhat immersed in the life of the educated public, among whom the terms of the peasant reform were being hotly debated.

Volumes have been written about the peasants' dissatisfaction with these conditions, and I won't dwell on them. I'll simply note that in the *Moral and Political Review* (1861), the Third Section included a part *On Peasant Affairs*, which stated: “The majority of peasants hoped to receive complete exemption from mandatory landowner-imposed duties and a free allotment of land”²⁰. Self-proclaimed “royal envoys” immediately appeared in various governorates to explain the supreme will, among them envoys from Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich, Grand Duke Konstantin Pavlovich (who died in 1831), and even from the Emperor himself (it was Private Vasily Khrabrov²¹, on indefinite leave from the Oryol Infantry Regiment of General-Field Marshal of the Prince of Warsaw). K.V. Chistov asserts that “the legend of Constantine the ‘Deliverer’ was the final stage in the 250-year history of Russian legends about saviors. After the 1860s, such legends are unknown to us”²². However, this is not entirely true. Several decades later, Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovich would act as the “deliverer” and protector of peasant interests, as we will see below.

¹⁹ Балушкина Е.В. Слухи и толки: весна 1857 года в Санкт-Петербурге глазами Третьего отделения // Ежегодник Государственного архива РФ: публикации, исследования, рецензии / Гл. ред. С.В. Мироненко. М., 2023. С. 58.

²⁰ Россия под надзором. С. 551.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Чистов К.В. Опр. cit. С. 219.

The political police found no evidence of outside influence in all these instances of post-reform unrest. Even the peasants, disconcerted by the impostors, everywhere demonstrated unwavering faith in the tsar's goodwill, but on the other hand, they "were distrustful of the landowners and officials", who were accused of concealing the "true Manifesto"²³. The tragic events in the village of Bezdna in the Kazan Governorate were also connected to the peasants' demand for true freedom. The leader of the uprising, Anton Petrov, convinced his fellow villagers that "the Tsar has declared complete freedom, all land will henceforth belong to the peasants, and power will belong only to the Tsar. Anyone who speaks of a different freedom has been bought by the landowners"²⁴.

In addition, the Third Section reported that rumors had spread widely that in two years, "a new, complete will would be declared, granting land, and that those who agreed to the conditions now proposed by the landowners would be deprived of this right. Therefore, the introduction of statutory charters met with stubborn resistance everywhere..."²⁵ This is likely due to the fact that the first two years after the reform were intended to draft these very charters, which specified the sizes of peasant allotments and obligations. It was assumed that, starting in 1863, a mass transition of peasants to land redemption would begin. Incidentally, we will encounter similar sabotage of land management innovations during the Stolypin agrarian reform, which will be discussed below.

Chronologically, the next surge in expectations of the royal "grace" and the spread of corresponding rumors occurred in the late 1870s. On the one hand, this was the time of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, and on the other, the *Going to the People* movement and the subsequent wave of revolutionary terrorism.

AN. Engelhardt, the author of the celebrated *Letters from the Village*, who organized a model farm on his estate in Smolensk Governorate, lived side by side with the peasants for many years, and knew the post-reform villages well, wrote that the peasants "are awaiting royal grace regarding the land. ... There are no doubts, everyone is convinced, everyone believes. It's entirely amazing how people hear and see exactly

²³ Россия под надзором. С. 552.

²⁴ Quoted in: Чистов К.В. Опр. cit. С. 214.

²⁵ Россия под надзором. С. 552–553.

what they want to see and hear"²⁶. The talk about land allocation "never ceases, but dies down until the first incident, until the first event out of the ordinary"²⁷. The latest Russo-Turkish War proved such an event; rumors of a new "decree" grew sharply, their escalation depending on news of the military's progress. For example, after the victory at Plevna, people said, "The war will end, there will be a census, and they will distribute the land"²⁸. Note, not to take away and give to the poor, but to "equally distribute" – everyone will receive as much as they can cultivate. Moreover, it is the rebellious lords who are preventing the Tsar-father from showing "mercy regarding the land"!

These rumors intensified in 1879, likely after the assassination attempt on Emperor by Alexander Solovyov, so the peasants' perception of the revolutionaries' activities was quite peculiar. Even after the first assassination attempt on Alexander II, carried out on April 4, 1866, by Dmitry Karakozov, rumors spread that the shooter was a landowner seeking revenge on the Tsar for the emancipation of the peasants. However, on the other hand, the popular reinterpretation of the word "nihilist" is curious and revealing. The following conversation was recorded among onlookers present at Karakozov's execution: "There is, my brother <...> such a sect, and it's called the Nadelists, which means it wants to allocate (*nadelit*) land to everyone"²⁹.

Malicious people were said to be trying to destroy the sovereign out of revenge for the peasants' freedom; "the landowners may try to hide the *Manifesto on Land*, which will certainly be given soon"³⁰. In the spring of 1881, likely in connection with the accession of a new emperor, this confidence was further strengthened. A.N. Engelhardt's information confirms the findings of O.P. Semenova-Tyan-Shanskaya, who conducted surveys of the population of villages in the Ryazan Governorate³¹. Introduced several months after the death of the Tsar-Liberator *Regulations on*

²⁶ Энгельгардт А.Н. Из деревни. 12 писем (1872–1887). М.: Сельхозгиз, 1956. С. 407.

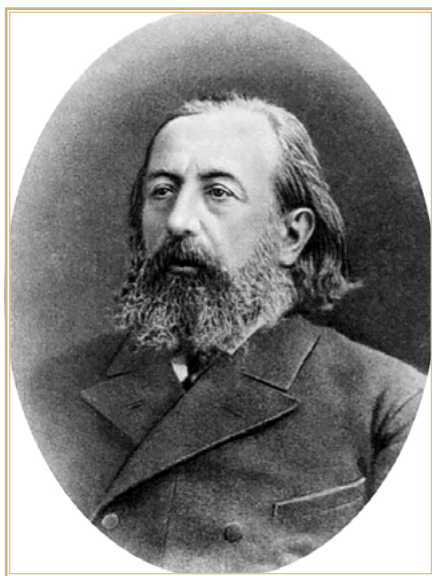
²⁷ Ibid. С. 409.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Вормс Н.А. Белый террор // Колокол. 1 января, 1 февраля, 1 марта 1867.

³⁰ Энгельгардт А.Н. Опр. cit. С. 408.

³¹ Семенова-Тян-Шанская О.П. Жизнь «Ивана». Очерки из быта крестьян одной из черноземных губерний. М.: Ломоносовъ, 2010. С. 145–146, 157.



Alexander Nikolaevich Engelhardt.
From open sources

Measures to Maintain State Order and Public Peace, when, as Engelhardt writes, “severity was introduced and orders were given to inspect everyone’s passports, stop travelers, etc.”, which gave rise to talk among the peasants that they would receive the long-awaited “grace” precisely when “the authorities caught the landowners who were rebelling”³².

The figure of the Tsar, no matter which one, is the foundation of the people’s aspirations. “According to the peasant’s concepts, ...only the Tsar thinks about everyone... The Tsar wants everyone to be equal, because he loves everyone equally, he feels equally sorry for everyone. The Tsar’s function is to make everyone equal”³³. The idea of an autocrat who stands above all and reconciles the interests of his subjects fits perfectly with a communal worldview based on ideas of equality and justice.

Before turning again to the materials of the political police, let us summarize in the words of A.N. Engelhardt: “The general conclusion that can be drawn from all these rumors and gossip is that the peasant is not satisfied with the land he has been given, that he needs more land”³⁴.

³² *Энгельгардт* А.Н. *Op. cit.* C. 411.

³³ *Ibid.* C. 413.

³⁴ *Ibid.* C. 417.

Land has always remained an integral part of people's concerns and popular rumors. The agrarian reforms of the 1860s failed to resolve the peasant land shortage problem, and neither did the Stolypin reforms. If we compare information about rumors and gossip among peasants, as cited in the moral and political reports of the Third Section, with data from the Police Department in the early 20th century, we see how little essentially changed.

The difficulties of implementing Stolypin's reforms were compounded by various rumors, which, as before, the political police meticulously documented. We have at our disposal an extremely informative source: reports on public sentiment compiled and sent to the Police Department monthly from 1909 to 1915 by governors in response to the orders of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Internal Affairs P.A. Stolypin (circulars of May 8 and November 16, 1907), as well as, traditionally, by provincial gendarmerie directorates.

We need to keep in mind that the conditions of the reform assumed freedom to leave the community with the due assignment of the part of the communal land as personal property. Any land in excess of the per capita allotment could be obtained at the redemption prices of 1861; if no land redistribution had occurred in a given community for 24 years, it could be obtained free of charge. A peasant had the right to demand that all his land be allocated to a "single place" in the form of a farmstead.

As we already know, the idea of land grants never left the peasants, reviving at every opportunity perceived by the public as a significant historical event. And then, as before, the peasants expected an improvement in their situation from the generosity the Tsar-father, in connection with various anniversaries, of which there were two in the near future: the 100th anniversary of the Patriotic War of 1812 and the 300th anniversary of the House of Romanov.

In the summer of 1911, a rumor was recorded in Nizhny Novgorod Governorate about the upcoming "confiscation of land from landowners" in 1912, who would be left with only their estates³⁵. By September 1911, the rumor had become more concrete. In Tver Governorate, they were saying that "community peasants would receive additional

³⁵ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 255. Д. 55. Л. 25 об., 41.

allotments, and that state, appanage, and landlord lands would be converted into these allotments”³⁶. The spread of this rumor was associated with a deterioration in the peasants’ attitude toward large landowners.

In Vladimir Governorate, there was talk that “deputies of the State Duma allegedly reported in the summer that they had introduced a bill on the forced alienation of landowners’ land in favor of the peasants, but this bill was ‘put on the back burner’ by the current Duma, and the new Duma will consider it first”³⁷. Indeed, on the eve of the Duma elections, unrest among the peasant masses could have been fueled by pre-election propaganda. For example, rumors circulated in Voronezh Governorate about widespread strikes expected in 1912, through which the Social Democratic Party, with the assistance of “troops allegedly opposed to the government”, would lift the peasants out of their oppressive situation³⁸. In Tambov Governorate, amid unrest during land management work and fires on landowners’ estates, there was persistent talk of dividing up the landowners’ lands in preparation for the upcoming 1912 uprising. Influenced by this news, peasants refused to secure their lands even under the most favorable terms, “fearing they would lose an additional allotment if they left the commune”³⁹.

When discussing the life of the peasant world, one cannot ignore such phenomena as crop failures or, conversely, good harvests, harvest seasons, and similar factors of rural life. In 1911, the Volga region suffered a crop failure, and completely fantastic rumors arose in Kazan Governorate: “Supposedly, the Emperor intended to abdicate the throne and go abroad; that the Empress, before the birth of the Heir, the Tsarevich, vowed to allocate land to the peasants, but His Majesty did not allow this to be fulfilled, as a result of which the Empress already left abroad three years ago, to join her Most August Parent, with the Heir, the Tsarevich, who had not even been baptized...”⁴⁰ In Tver Governorate, they said, “The Emperor supposedly had a second son, who remained unbaptized for two months, due to the reluctance of Empress Maria Feodorovna to agree to the need for additional land grants to the

³⁶ Ibid. A. 30 o6.

³⁷ Ibid. A. 41.

³⁸ Ibid. A. 53 o6.

³⁹ Ibid. A. 50.

⁴⁰ Ibid. A. 54. A. 54.

peasants on the occasion of this event”⁴¹. For some reason, the Dowager Empress often figures in such rumors as an opponent of land grants to the peasants. B. Kolonitsky, who worked with materials from Russian State Historical Archive, mentions rumors circulating among the people in 1914–1915: Maria Feodorovna “fell in love with Stolypin and had a child with him”, which is why “the peasants weren’t given land”, or “they would have been given land, but the old hag is in the way”⁴².

They also reasoned that “in 1912 the peasants will be given land, and if for some reason this does not happen, then we should expect unrest similar to that which occurred in 1905; that the coincidence of the first day of Holy Easter with the day of the Annunciation was in this regard a very important omen, etc.”⁴³ In Tver Governorate, “informed” people reported that “Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovich will seek, by force of arms, with the help of peasants and soldiers, the restoration of his lost rights to the throne, which His Highness has been deprived of by his enemies, and as a reward for this assistance, he will distribute landed estates free of charge”⁴⁴. Thus, we see again the legend of the “deliverer”, without whom it is so difficult for the people to cope with their troubles.

In January 1912, in Voronezh Governorate, rumors were circulating among the peasants about a “special ‘people’ government, which in the spring, during the general strike, will take all the land from the landowners and the peasants who have left the commune, and will give it to the community members; the landowners and the community leavers will be burned; there is no point in buying land through the bank, since subsequently the land will be distributed to everyone for free; that in the spring there is no need to sow grain, since an armed militant party will appear, which will gain the upper hand over the landowners, rob them and distribute everything to the peasants, who will have enough free food for the whole year”⁴⁵. By the spring of 1912, rumors had again intensified that changes were to be expected at Easter – on

⁴¹ Ibid. Л. 69.

⁴² Колоницкий Б.И. Вдовствующая императрица Мария Федоровна в слухах эпохи Первой мировой войны // Слухи в России XIX–XX веков. С. 42.

⁴³ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 255. Д. 54. Л. 54; Д. 55. Л. 1 об.

⁴⁴ Ibid. Л. 57.

⁴⁵ Ibid. Д. 55. Л. 1 об. – 2, 5.

Holy Saturday, the destruction of landowners' estates was to take place, and the "confiscation of landowners' land in favor of the peasant community" was expected⁴⁶. Compared to the 19th century, peasant sentiments increasingly show an element of aggression, and we now hear the word "take away" more often than "equally distribute".

An extremely informative report was received by the Police Department in February 1912 from Saratov Governorate. "The mood of the peasants is generally calm, but their lasting peace is hampered by dissatisfaction with the new forms of land management and the almost universal crop failure, which is expected to continue this year". According to a report by the Head of the Provincial Gendarmerie Directorate, "the revolutionary mood of the peasants has not weakened since 1905, and revolutionary agitation is currently being carried out not by the weak attempts of individual propagandists and not by the work of individual revolutionary organizations, which do not exist in the governorate, but by the general development of the self-awareness of the peasantry, interested not only in local but also in world events, which is why newspapers and especially popular rumors are increasingly spreading among the peasants, undermining those principles that the peasantry used to believe in earlier, and the fabrication of rumors is facilitated by certain failures in the matter of land management and the fight against crop failure, arising from the lack of preliminary development of these issues, as well as the lack of planning and order in their implementation"⁴⁷.

In general, the peasant perception of reality perfectly reflects the persistent opinion that "our crop failure is from God, and our famine is from the government"⁴⁸. The government and landowners, as the agents of its will in the countryside, were distrusted; even the seemingly best intentions of those in power were suspected of being flawed. Reliance on the Tsar-benefactor was increasingly diminishing, and the tendency toward radical solutions to pressing problems through one's own efforts, often resulting in violence, was growing.

Violence had often been used by the masses before to combat another persistent scourge: epidemics. One of the most devastating was

⁴⁶ Ibid. A. 7.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid. A. 14.



Emperor Nicholas I during the cholera riot in Sennaya Square, 1831.
From open sources

undoubtedly the cholera of the summer of 1831, which spread from the southeastern regions of the country all the way to the capital and its environs. The measures taken by the authorities provoked an extremely negative reaction from the population.

“...The police, whether from excessive zeal or, better yet, from the ignorance of their enforcers, began seizing and sending to cholera hospitals not only cholera patients, but also all manner of sick people, even drunks and weak people encountered on the streets. In the hospitals, most of those brought in soon died due to the doctors’ inexperience in treating this new disease. Even those who didn’t have cholera died from taking the very strong medications, for they were treated in the same way as cholera patients”⁴⁹. The Polish Uprising of 1830–1831 was in full swing, and rumors immediately spread that the people were being poisoned by “doctors bribed by the Poles”, that this was a “conspiracy to destroy the Russians”⁵⁰.

The political police noted that “the people had been acting willfully for a long time”, seizing anyone they considered suspicious on the streets; medical workers, Jews, Poles, and ordinary foreigners were

⁴⁹ Россия под надзором. С. 80.

⁵⁰ Ibid.



Emperor Alexander III visiting a cholera hospital.

From open sources

the ones most affected. Moreover, during one of the subsequent cholera outbreaks, the famine of 1891–1892, rumors circulated that people were being killed by criminals on the orders of a certain foreign tsar, who was planning to wage war against Russia but was afraid he would be unable to cope⁵¹. Provincial gendarmerie directorates reported to the Police Department that the people “placed the blame for the spread of cholera on the British or their Queen Victoria”⁵². As Stefan Wiese reports, the rumor about the British may have seemed convincing given that a delegation of British doctors was indeed working in the Volga region at the time. “It’s difficult to say”, the researcher notes, “what significance the press reports about the clash of interests between the Russian and British empires in the Middle East, as well as memories of the Crimean War, had in this context”⁵³. It seems to me that, it is worth mentioning in this context the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, which we will discuss later.

Just as in the 1930s, in the early 1990s, cholera hospitals were being burned and doctors beaten in the Volga region, rumored to be burying

⁵¹ Успенский Д.И. Опр. cit. С. 185.

⁵² Quoted in: Визе Ш. Слухи и насилие: холерные бунты в Саратове в 1892 г. // Слухи в России XIX–XX веков. С. 309.

⁵³ Ibid.



Illarion Mikhailovich Bibikov.
From open sources

ordinary people alive. "In the Saratov area, there was talk of doctors being bribed by non-Christians; in Simbirsk Governorate, they explained that the killings were a measure to combat the disease (similar to the culling of diseased livestock). In Kazan Governorate, they said that mass deaths under the guise of cholera were occurring because 'there was no money to feed the hungry'. ...In Nizhny Novgorod, they said the number of doctors had grown so much in recent years that they now needed more land to live on, and so they were killing people"⁵⁴. From Saratov to Kazan and Nizhny Novgorod, the rumor spread that the local administration had squandered funds allocated to help the starving, and was now spreading rumors about an epidemic in the region in order to prevent the Tsar (or, in other versions, the Tsarevich) from visiting for an inspection⁵⁵. Stefan Wiese attributes this rumor to the fact that aid to the peasants was partially provided in the form of land, which they viewed as a gift. When the Saratov governor declared that this aid would have to be repaid, the peasants perceived this as an injustice⁵⁶. That is, we see again that the main concerns of the peasants were

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid. C. 310.

⁵⁶ Ibid. C. 319.



Alexander Alekseevich Panchulidzev.
From open sources

connected with land, the shortage of which was becoming increasingly obvious by the end of the 19th century.

Another terrible disaster, invariably the subject of rumors and gossip, was fires. Very often, probably since the Time of Troubles, they were attributed to the criminal activities of the Poles. Such explanations sounded especially plausible after the Polish uprisings. The report of the Third Section for 1833 states that fires in St. Petersburg “were naturally attributed to the Poles”⁵⁷; the people also believed that the cause of the Moscow fires of 1834 was “deliberate arson by the Poles”⁵⁸. The political police’s investigations demonstrated the baselessness of the popular rumors, but they could not change the traditional attitude toward the Poles as rebels and criminals.

Sometimes popular beliefs about the causes of certain events baffle not only researchers but also contemporaries. In 1839, rumors attributed the spread of fires to “His Highness the Heir to the throne marrying the Turkish Sultan’s daughter and, in his joy, burning down three governorates. The peasants believed it!”⁵⁹ The compiler of the

⁵⁷ Россия под надзором. С. 99.

⁵⁸ Ibid. С. 118.

⁵⁹ Ibid. С. 205.

Third Section report was himself astonished. Surprising rumors have spread in Simbirsk Governorate that "landowners are setting fires to ruin their peasants, who were to be freed or given as dowries to Her Imperial Highness Grand Duchess Maria Nikolaevna. There was talk of the appearance of the late Grand Duke Konstantin Pavlovich; of the execution of nobles; and finally, they believed that the government was setting the fires to resettle estates according to a new plan"⁶⁰. They probably didn't expect anything good from the landowners and the government, just as they didn't expect anything good from the Poles.

In the same year of 1839, prolific in fires, residents of the Saratov Governorate came to the "universal conclusion that the Jews were setting fires under the secret influence of the Poles and in retaliation for the conscription service" to which Jews had been subject since 1827. "They talked about the Jews everywhere, adding that first they would burn houses and standing grain throughout Russia, and then kill people with poison". The matter did not stop with gossip and rumors; "the embittered people went wild, seeing homes and property destroyed", and lynching and immediate reprisals became commonplace⁶¹.

Moreover, even administration officials could be swayed by the crowd's strong opinions. Saratov Governor Illarion Mikhailovich Bibikov officially informed his Penza counterpart, Alexander Alekseevich Panchulidzev, that "the fires were being set by Jews bribed by the Poles to weaken Russia"⁶². And the rumor, reinforced by the authoritative opinion of the authorities, spread throughout the Volga region.

Gendarme General Stepan Vasilyevich Perfilyev, dispatched to the epicenter of the disaster, concluded that the fires were mostly caused by residents' carelessness during a prolonged drought. Arsonists were also found, but their motives were simple robbery or hatred of neighbors. "No malicious intent on the part of the Poles was found, and, in general, all the most rigorous investigations and inquiries revealed no common, deliberate mentality, no external instigation, or political goal to disrupt the Empire"⁶³.

⁶⁰ Ibid. C. 203.

⁶¹ Ibid. C. 204–205.

⁶² Ibid. C. 205.

⁶³ Ibid. C. 207.



Stepan Vasilyevich Perflyev.
From open sources

Meanwhile, fires continued to spread across Central Russia — across Nizhny Novgorod, Kazan, Orenburg, Perm, Tambov and Kostroma governorates. Some rumors circulated that the arsonists were forestry officials concealing illegal logging; others blamed dissenters persecuted by the authorities; but “the general consensus attributed the malicious acts to the Poles”⁶⁴.

A “stranger” is always suspect in the traditional mindset, and there are always ill-wishers abroad. Popular rumor in the 1890s claimed that “some foreigners appeared in Moscow and began riding around the city in carriages drawn by fine horses. They had incendiary ointment tied under their carriages. Sometimes, such a gentleman would ride up to a house and smear it with this ointment; and when the sun warmed it, the house would burst into flames. And these villains would have burned down all of Moscow, but thankfully, they were caught with lassos”⁶⁵. They explained this as the machinations of a foreign tsar who wanted to weaken Russia before going to war against it.

War, which directly affected the peasantry, the backbone of the army and the main taxpayer, was also always the subject of various

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Успенский Д.И. Опр. cit. С. 185.

rumors. In the second half of the 19th century, the Balkan crisis and the subsequent Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 provoked the strongest public response.

In 1875, an uprising against Turkish rule by the Christian population of Bosnia and Herzegovina began, and in the spring of 1876, an uprising broke out in Bulgaria, suppressed with unprecedented brutality. The media spread reports of “Turkish atrocities”, as they called it in the Balkans. In Russia, which had long considered it its sacred mission to protect the interests of its brothers in faith, a social movement was growing. Slavic committees raised funds for the rebels and victims, and thousands of volunteers went to the aid of the warring Southern Slavs.

For the average Russian, no war waged by the Russian Empire, with the possible exception of the Patriotic War of 1812, was so relatable and understandable. They sincerely sympathized with the Slavs suffering under the Turkish yoke, and rejoiced just as sincerely at the successes of the Russian troops. Literate people read newspapers, while the illiterate spread the most outlandish rumors, such as that “the Englishwoman” (Queen Victoria), who was constantly “screwing up” Russia, “had built an underground railway to Plevna and was using it to deliver troops and provisions to the Turks, but Chernyaev immediately saw the Englishman’s road and ordered it to be blocked. Well, that’s when Plevna was taken”⁶⁶.

The peasants also discussed how to pacify the “Englishwoman”, and they saw the surest way to do so was to convert her and her subjects to Orthodoxy. “...They began to talk about a recruitment of young women, that the Tsar would give these women as a dowry for the daughter who was going to live with the Englishwoman. The women, they reasoned, would be married to Englishmen converting them to our faith”⁶⁷. These rumors were fueled by the wedding of Grand Duchess Maria Alexandrovna and Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, Queen Victoria’s second son. In 1874, he arrived in Russia, and “the presentation of the Smolensk Icon of the Mother of God to the Prince of Edinburgh gave rise to abundant speculation and rumors, all of

⁶⁶ Энгельгардт А.Н. *Op. cit.* C. 220.

⁶⁷ Ibid. C. 228.



Grand Duchess Maria Alexandrovna with her fiancé Alfred,
her father, and her brother Alexei, 1873–1874.

From open sources

which can be summarized as follows: we are trying to convert the Englishwoman to our faith”⁶⁸.

For some reason, the people saw China as Russia’s ally in this and future wars. “China will rise up for us. The Tsar doesn’t trust China, afraid of being deceived, and says: ‘You, China, guard your own shores of the Black Sea, and I’, he says, ‘will guard mine’”⁶⁹. In the 90s, there was also talk about how “Tsar China” would be on our side in the upcoming war⁷⁰.

But from any foreign policy discussions, the peasants turned to the most pressing issue – the land. After the capture of Plevna, when it became clear the war was drawing to a close, talk arose of a new “Regulation” being drafted, “surveyors would come in the spring to divide the land”, and the landowners “would be paid by the treasury with what they took from the Turks”⁷¹. After the decisive victories at Shipka-Sheinovo and Philippopolis, peasants wondered how much Turkish land they had taken, and rumors swirled that “the landless would be

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid. C. 220.

⁷⁰ Успенский Д.И. Оp. cit. C. 186.

⁷¹ Энгельгардт А.Н. Оp. cit. C. 211.

resettled on Turkish soil”⁷². Rumors that “as a reward for the sacrifices made... during the war” the peasants would be given all the privately owned land⁷³, were recorded by the political police during the First World War.

Thus, identifying the range of problems that were most often the subject of rumors in the peasant environment, we can state that it begins and ends with the question of land, the centuries-old hope for a “Black/Land Repartition”.

The nature of rumors as a social phenomenon has recently attracted the attention of researchers. Rumors are defined as “unconfirmed messages that, in problematic situations, spread through informal communication channels as news about significant changes in the social or natural environment”⁷⁴. The authors emphasize that they circulate within a specific group, for which they are, firstly, understandable and, secondly, important. Rumors compensate for the lack of reliable information, adapting the information received to the needs of the society in which they circulate, “revealing social phobias and hopes”⁷⁵. B.V. Dubin sees rumor as a tool that allows to interpret disturbing and incomprehensible phenomena of reality. He calls the rumors “a traditionalist reaction to a broader context, to something new and unusual”⁷⁶, when the alien and foreign is translated into understandable, one’s own, categories.

In her historiographic review *Rumors in the Modern Sociocultural Environment*, E.V. Osetrova notes that the systematic study of rumors began after the First World War, with German and American

⁷² Ibid. С. 216.

⁷³ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 255. Д. 57. Л. 203 об.

⁷⁴ Горбатов Д.С. Слухи как коммуникативный феномен // Слухи в России XIX–XX веков. Неофициальная коммуникация и «крутые повороты» российской истории. Сборник статей. Челябинск: Каменный пояс, 2011. С. 36.

⁷⁵ Никонova О.Ю. Война, рассказанная по секрету: слухи и возможности их интерпретации // Слухи в России XIX–XX веков. Неофициальная коммуникация и «крутые повороты» российской истории. Сборник статей. Челябинск: Каменный пояс, 2011. С. 98.

⁷⁶ Дубин Б.В. Слово — письмо — литература: Очерки по социологии современной культуры. М.: Новое литературное обозрение, 2001. С. 70. See: Дубин Б.В., Толстых В.А. Слухи как феномен обыденной жизни // Философские исследования. 1993. № 2. С. 136–141.

psychologists pioneering the field. The domestic tradition “exists only within the realms of Russian historiography and folklore studies”⁷⁷, although a significant number of authors have drawn on these materials in their research. Historians have reached similar conclusions: rumors play a vital role in the life of traditional societies, constituting a crucial source of knowledge and a way of understanding the world around us. Furthermore, rumors that conform to popular stereotypes can influence people’s behavior, as we have seen in the example of peasant resistance to the reforms of 1861 and 1906.

E.V. Osetrova draws attention to the attitude toward rumors and their use by government institutions. “The 1960s marked the time when US security agencies became familiar with the issue”, the author notes. “The dynamic mechanisms of unofficial information were professionally studied at the CIA and the Pentagon, based on the belief that propaganda through rumors, especially in foreign policy, is comparable to propaganda through the media”⁷⁸. Intelligence agencies can not only record and analyze rumors but also exploit them. But, as far as I know, such technologies were not yet used in the Russian Empire.

The materials of the information and analytical activities of the political police in general and those concerning rumors in particular are a valuable historical source that “opens a window for the historian into the collective mentality of society”⁷⁹. However, the social stratum that primarily interests me, namely the Russian peasantry, allows us to judge only those aspects of their lives that are obvious to the outside observer. The gulf between the educated society and the common people, which opened up during the Peter the Great era, created enormous difficulties in interpreting peasant behavior and perceptions, even for analysts from the political police. As A.N. Engelhardt, who spent part of his life in direct contact with the people, wrote: “...We, the people unaccustomed to peasant speech, mannerisms, and the way they express

⁷⁷ *Осетрова Е.В.* Слухи в современной социокультурной среде: историографический обзор // Антропологический форум. СПб., 2011. Online. № 15. С. 59–60. [Electronic resource]. <https://anthropologie.kunstkamera.ru/files/pdf/015online/osetrova.pdf>

⁷⁸ Ibid. С. 57–58.

⁷⁹ *Джонстон Т.* Слухи в СССР сталинского времени // Слухи в России XIX–XX веков. С. 25.

thoughts, facial expressions, will never understand anything if we are present at some division of land or some settlement between peasants. ...It is even more difficult for us to understand the meaning of political rumors circulating among the people and to ascertain their views on current events”⁸⁰.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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Original paper



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Count P.A. Shuvalov and the Reorganization of the Corps of Gendarmes during the Era of the Great Reforms

Abstract

This article examines the historical origins of the establishment of the Corps of Gendarmes in the Russian Empire and the organizational structure it acquired under the two Statutes on the Corps adopted in 1827 and 1836. It highlights the institutional weaknesses of the gendarmerie and the rudimentary nature of its investigative practices, which were largely confined to routine surveillance of the population in provincial capitals. As a result, the Corps proved unable to identify in a timely manner or prevent the growth of the public movement and acts of political terrorism. The article seeks to determine the role of Pyotr A. Shuvalov in the reorganization of the Corps of Gendarmes during the 1860s–1870s and to analyze the principal directions of the reforms undertaken in response to the new challenges posed to the autocracy by radical political movements, including those rooted in



nationalist activism. The study is based primarily on archival sources. It also draws upon memoirs, legislative materials, and the works of contemporary Russian and foreign historians. During this period, Count Shuvalov, who exercised considerable influence over the Emperor, initiated reforms that significantly expanded political surveillance by involving non-commissioned gendarmerie personnel in intelligence gathering and establishing additional observation posts throughout the governorates. Beginning in the early 1870s, gendarmerie officers also assumed new professional responsibilities as investigators of state crimes, substantially enhancing their importance within the imperial system of governance. The article concludes that the reorganization of the Corps of Gendarmes was consistent with the historical context and aligned with Shuvalov's political program, which sought to strengthen conservative tendencies within the Russian Empire.

Keywords:

Corps of Gendarmes; The Third Section; Great Reforms; Russian Empire; P.A. Shuvalov; Political surveillance

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In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Corps of Gendarmes, represented by its regional units, served as a state paramilitary structure responsible for the security of the autocratic political system. The idea of involving gendarmes in political police activities belonged to Benckendorff, who implemented it in 1827, when, on his initiative, the Corps of Gendarmes was created, its first Statute was issued, and the local gendarmerie detachments already in existence were incorporated into it¹. During the reign of Nicholas I, despite its modest size, the Corps had a rather unwieldy structure: in addition to the headquarters located in St. Petersburg, it was divided into districts, which in turn were subdivided into sections, each encompassing one or more governorates. A district was commanded by a general, and a section by a staff officer, ranging in rank from major to colonel. Initially, five gendarmerie districts were established in European Russia. In the 1830s, their number increased to eight, bringing the Kingdom of Poland, Transcaucasia, and Siberia under gendarmerie supervision.

In July 1836, taking into account the accumulated experience, a new *Regulation on the Corps of Gendarmes* was adopted. According to it, the previous sections were to be liquidated, and a staff officer was henceforth appointed to each governorate, where he headed a specially created Directorate. For example, the staff of the Directorate of the Staff Officer of the Corps of Gendarmes in Voronezh Governorate, in addition to the staff officer himself, also included an aide-de-camp and two non-combatant clerks from the cantonists². At the same time, local gendarmerie teams came under the jurisdiction of the provincial gendarmerie staff officer. This organizational structure remained unchanged until the era of the Great Reforms.

Historical literature often confuses the responsibilities of the various ranks of the Corps of Gendarmes from the 1830s to the first half of the 1860s, although they were strictly delineated. The tasks related to political policing in a region were performed only by the staff officer,

¹ Gendarme detachments, which performed the functions of mounted city police, appeared in Russian cities during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Prior to the establishment of the Corps of Gendarmes, they formed part of the Separate Corps of Internal Guards.

² ПСЗРИ. Собрание II. Т. XI—2. № 9355. Штаты и табели. СПб., 1837. С. 339.

and to a lesser extent, by his aide-de-camp. The members of the Gendarme detachment were virtually not involved in political investigation, carrying out only isolated secret missions that occupied an insignificant place in their overall activities.

Thus, the existing system of political investigation in the governorates for thirty years was relatively simple and amounted to routine surveillance of the population, primarily residing within the provincial capital, where a few gendarme officers were stationed. Numerous district (uyezd) towns, with rare exceptions, remained without adequate surveillance. The intensification of social movement during the Great Reforms and the first attempts on the emperor's life led to a recognition of the primitive nature of the country's political investigation system and the need for extensive reforms, such as increasing the number of gendarmes, involving not only officers but also lower ranks in surveillance duties, assigning officers a new professional role as investigators and raising their educational level through courses at corps headquarters, and publicizing the gendarmes' activities to win public sympathy.

In our study, we will attempt to rethink traditional perceptions of the political police in the pre-revolutionary period, particularly the role of its representatives in the state apparatus and their influence on decision-making in the corridors of power. This topic has been understudied in historiography, and the influence of P.A. Shuvalov's views on the transformation of the political police has not previously received due attention from researchers. We will explore Shuvalov's role in the reorganization of the Corps of Gendarmes in the 1860s and 1870s. The main thrust of his reforms was a response to new challenges to the autocracy from radical groups, including those motivated by nationalism.

In the works of Soviet scientists – P.A. Zaionchkovsky³, N.P. Eroshkina⁴, I.V. Orzhekhovsky⁵ – the political investigation agencies of the 19th century were already recognized as part of the state apparatus of

³ *Зайончковский П.А. Кризис самодержавия на рубеже 1870–1880-х гг. М.: Изд-во Московского ун-та, 1964.*

⁴ *Ерошкин Н.П. Самодержавие накануне краха // Российское самодержавие. М.: РГГУ, 2006. С. 283–433.*

⁵ *Оржеховский И.В. Самодержавие против революционной России (1826–1880). М.: Мысль, 1982.*



Count Pyotr Andreevich Shuvalov.
Photograph, 1880s

the Russian Empire, its punitive element. Their study – their genesis, evolution, and the specifics of their functioning at various historical stages – conducted from a class perspective, in the context of the struggle against social movements and the resulting crisis of the autocracy.

In modern historiography, there has been a tendency to reconsider the established notion of the Corps of Gendarmes in its early period as the executive body of the Third Section. In all likelihood, in Benckendorff's own understanding, these were distinct agencies that were to interact not on the basis of institutional subordination, but rather display a division of functions. The presence of one Chief did not transform one of these agencies into the executive body of the other⁶.

G.N. Bibikov, author of a dissertation on Benckendorff and his policies during the reign of Emperor Nicholas I, later published as a monograph⁷, rightly concluded that political police functions in the regions were performed by only one provincial staff officer, or, less frequently,

⁶ See: Леонтьев А.А. Отчетная документация Корпуса жандармов и устройство высшей полиции в 1820–1830-е гг. // Российская история. 2021. № 2. С. 111.

⁷ Биби́ков Г.Н. А.Х. Бенкендорф и политика императора Николая I. М.: Три квадрата, 2009.

by his aide-de-camp. The gendarme officer in charge of the gendarmerie detachment, as well as the members of the detachment itself, performed primarily the duties of mounted city police. This demonstrates how small the corps' structure was at that time and how primitive the organization of political investigation was, concentrated, for obvious reasons, in the capital rather than the provinces.

It should be noted, however, that literature devoted specifically to the study of the Corps of Gendarmes is extremely limited. This is explained by the fact that the gendarmerie was viewed in the context of the entire political police and, primarily, its central body – first the Third Section and subsequently the Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Consequently, the creation of dedicated works was seen as entirely unnecessary. Many books have discussed, to varying degrees, the reorganization of the Corps of Gendarmes during the Great Reforms, but it was presented primarily as a response to the growth of the revolutionary movement, with the goal of strengthening the state law enforcement apparatus. This study attempts not only to identify the preconditions and analyze the main directions of the reforms but also to relate them to the political views of Count P.A. Shuvalov.

Shuvalov's political program and the Corps of Gendarmes

During the first years of Alexander II's reign, the size of both the Third Section and the Corps of Gendarmes under its jurisdiction remained unchanged. Quoting from a letter by Russian literary historian P.A. Efremov to an acquaintance in December 1861 "on Thursday, the entire Third Section gathered for dinner at the Znamenskaya Hotel. I don't know what they were celebrating, but they shouted 'Hurrah!' and, among other beverages, drank 35 bottles of champagne between 32 people"⁸. According to data from 1856, the total number of the Corps was 5,458 people. A sharp increase occurred in the mid-1860s, to 7,047 people in 1865⁹.

⁸ Quoted in: *Алексушин Г., Панов А. Жандармерия Российской империи // Рейтар: Военно-исторический журнал. 2007. № 38 (5). С. 77.*

⁹ *Ibid.* С. 84.



Emperor Alexander II.
Photograph, 1878–1881

The reorganization of the Corps took place during the era of the Great Reforms. There were several reasons for the changes in this area: the implementation of the peasant liberation reform, the uprising in the Kingdom of Poland, and the subsequent assassination attempts on the emperor. A key role in these changes was played by Count Pyotr Andreevich Shuvalov, who served as the Chief of the Third Section and Chief of Gendarmes from 1866 to 1874.

Many people disliked Shuvalov, considering him the leader of a retrograde party in power and a figure around whom conservative official circles consolidated¹⁰. In memoir literature, the unofficial court nickname “Peter IV”, which stuck with him, became widespread. He was considered an opponent of liberal bureaucracy and the Great Reforms, and rumor dubbed him “Arakcheev the Second”¹¹.

Occupying a key position in the government, Shuvalov attracted the attention of the Emperor with his skillful political maneuvers. A window of opportunity opened for him, which he was quick to seize.

¹⁰ See, for example, the censor Nikitenko's diary entries for 1870: *Никитенко А.В. Записки и дневник: В 3 т. Т. 3. М., 2005. С. 165, 167, 191.*

¹¹ See: *Захарова Л.Г. Александр II и отмена крепостного права в России. М., 2011. С. 692.*

According to the American historian Alfred J. Rieber, to “penetrate the main citadel of power”, Shuvalov chose the tactic of forming a “united government”. This involved creating a powerful factional foothold within the bureaucracy, winning support from the press, and infiltrating other departments with the goal of “colonizing” them, replacing rival ministers with trusted supporters or protégés¹².

Having replaced Prince V.A. Dolgoruky as Chief of Gendarmes, the ambitious P.A. Shuvalov easily transformed his security service into a springboard for his rise to power. Having become close to the Emperor and gradually gathering a group of supporters from the security agencies, he extended his influence throughout the administration. Harsh criticism of Count Shuvalov came from, for example, Prince V.P. Meshchersky, who accused him in a letter from late 1866 of “an all-consuming and all-suppressing lust for power... vilely assuring the Tsar that everyone is his enemy”¹³. According to the Prince, Shuvalov alienated honest people from the Emperor, denigrating them out of the same “vile intention of lust for power”. Moreover, Shuvalov “flatters the one he serves, and recognizes the salvation of Russia in himself alone”¹⁴. Shuvalov chose the instrument of his power to “incite and maintain distrust in the Tsar”¹⁵.

Meshchersky could not ignore Shuvalov’s activities as the Chief of the Corps of Gendarmes. “The mighty hand of P.A. Shuvalov extended to the Volga as well: a gendarmerie detachment of 80 men appeared in these areas, an echo of April 4 and May 25”, he noted at length in a letter in July 1867. “As gendarmes they may be useful, but, unfortunately, as gendarmes they are placed between heaven and earth, that is, they do not serve as an aid to the police and do not report directly to either police officers or governors, but are guided by secret instructions and higher considerations, which significantly reduces their share of usefulness, since espionage and secret surveillance alone here, that is, up to Nizhny [Novgorod], are not essentially necessary, as on these banks

¹² Рибер А.Дж. Групповые интересы в борьбе вокруг Великих реформ // Великие реформы в России. 1856–1874. М., 1992. С. 49–50.

¹³ Меццеский В.П. Письма к великому князю Александру Александровичу, 1863–1868. М.: Новое литературное обозрение, 2011. С. 207.

¹⁴ Ibid. С. 213.

¹⁵ Ibid. С. 361.



Prince Vasily Andreevich Dolgorukov. *Portrait Gallery of Russian Statesmen. Vol. 1.*
Published by A. Münster. St. Petersburg, 1865. Plate 25.

of the Volga there have never been either conspirators, arsonists, or propagandists”¹⁶.

“Shuvalov works tirelessly: he constantly sends one person after another to distant governorates, rounds up people and locks them up – all this in secret”, A.V. Nikitenko wrote in his diary on December 25, 1870. “Everyone is in fear; there are likely countless spies... Conspiracies are concocted according to all the rules of police art, or insignificant circumstances are given the scale and character of conspiracies. Is it any wonder that this also gives rise to real conspiracies, which”, Nikitenko sarcastically notes, “are, of course, more difficult to deal with than the products of one’s own inventions?”¹⁷

According to some foreign researchers, P.A. Shuvalov “did not have clear political principles”, but was firmly convinced of the need to strengthen the position of the aristocracy without entering into conflict with the autocracy¹⁸. He set himself the goals of reviving the nobility as an active political class, isolating the revolutionaries by winning

¹⁶ Ibid. C. 326. By the “echo” the author refers to the assassination attempts against Alexander II carried out by D. Karakozov in St. Petersburg on 4 April 1866 and by A. Berezovsky in Paris on 25 May 1867. Before long, in the early 1870s, the governorates of the Upper and Middle Volga region would be swept by the *Going to the People* movement.

¹⁷ Никитенко А.В. Опр. cit. C. 291.

¹⁸ Рубер А.Дж. Опр. cit. C. 66.

public opinion to his side, and strengthening the connection between the restive border regions and the core of the Russian Empire¹⁹.

Clearly, Shuvalov's political program placed great emphasis on the gendarmerie and strengthening its role in the system of state power. The reorganization of the Corps of Gendarmes fit well within the historical context and met the objectives of the political program of "Arakcheev the Second". On his initiative, a new *Regulation on the Corps of Gendarmes* was adopted in September 1867, which remained unchanged until 1917.

Reorganization: reasons and implementation

In the late 1860s, P.A. Shuvalov explained the initiative for the reforms as follows: "Having assumed the post of Chief of Gendarmes and having delved into the duties of the gendarmes, I came to the conviction of the need for fundamental changes both in the composition of the Corps' units and in the direction of its members' activities, so that this institution could be used with the greatest possible benefit and expediency. <..> With a few exceptions, all combat gendarme units that were not bringing due benefit to the service were abolished, and in return, the Corps' surveillance resources were strengthened by the formation of surveillance staff of the Corps of Gendarmes in many provinces of the Empire"²⁰.

Indeed, the gendarmerie districts, with the exception of Siberia and Warsaw, were abolished. Along with them, the gendarmerie corps headquarters in the governorates were also abolished. On their basis, a fundamentally new structure of the local political police apparatus was created – the provincial gendarmerie directorate, which was intended to strengthen surveillance of the population, extending it to the entire governorate, not just the provincial capital.

The gendarmerie teams were also abolished. In their place, each governorate formed a Surveillance Branch of the Gendarme Corps, which several years later was renamed the additional staff of the Provincial

¹⁹ Ibid. C. 67.

²⁰ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 3. Д. 1169. Л. 29–29 об.

Gendarme Directorate. The Directorate commanders were advised to select for it “people fully suited to the conditions of surveillance service and worthy of promotion to non-commissioned officers” from among the enlisted men of the abolished mounted gendarmerie teams, as well as retired enlisted men from the field and local troops²¹. Since the Surveillance Branch would now be expected to exercise political oversight, literacy became the main criterion for their admission to service. The additional staff was headed by one or more senior officers – assistants to the head of the Provincial Gendarme Directorate.

On December 30, 1867, the Corps Headquarters notified the institutions under its jurisdiction: “Non-commissioned officers of the Surveillance Branch should under no circumstances have common quarters, because if they were quartered together, they would not be able to bring any benefit to the service in the matter of surveillance”²², in light of which it was proposed to house them not in barracks, but in government-owned apartments, partly in the provincial capital and partly in the districts (uyezds). The dwelling location was also determined by operational considerations – primarily, the outskirts of the city, the most advantageous for monitoring the local population, as “the most unreliable portion is usually concentrated in suburban settlements”²³.

The formation of the Surveillance Branch within the Gendarme Directorate in some areas of the empire was not without difficulties, caused, as a rule, by insufficient salaries. This was particularly the case in multinational Odessa, where Russian was spoken on the streets alongside Greek, Hebrew, Italian, and French. “The residents of Odessa”, wrote Colonel K.G. Knopp, Head of the Gendarme Directorate, to headquarters in November 1867, “generally speaking, are little involved in politics. All their aspirations are directed toward one goal: the acquisition of capital. <...> The most effective assistance is provided by people without any moral virtue, not particularly busy with anything, who know everyone and are ready to betray a friend for a decent reward”²⁴. According to Knopp, in such an expensive city,

²¹ Ibid. А, 1091. А. 32.

²² Ibid. А. 125.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid. А. 97–98.

no one would serve for a salary of 10 rubles, while, for example, a conductor's position on the Odessa-Baltic Railway earns 20 rubles. In this regard, the opinion was expressed that secret agents were more useful than surveillance teams²⁵. At the Corps headquarters, it was believed that "a non-commissioned officer's environment does not require any luxury, but should be limited to what is necessary"²⁶. At the same time, until the late 1870s, Odessa non-commissioned officers received salaries twice as high as their colleagues in other regions of the country. This was due to the 10-ruble monthly supplement paid by the Chief of Gendarmes.

Over time, the size of the Corps increased. For example, in 1872, 25,000 rubles were spent on these purposes²⁷. Staff expansion was based on reports from the localities, and if the arguments presented proved convincing, the request was granted. The need to add new ranks to the existing ones was justified by various reasons. For example, in April 1871, the Head of the Kharkov Directorate, Major General D.M. Kovalinsky, requested that the staff be reinforced by two non-commissioned officers, explaining that in the provincial town of Slavyansk in Izyumsky District, "a considerable number of people flock to the local mineral waters every year in the summer, and with the construction of the railway, the population of this town has increased", reaching a total of over 10,000 people. The non-commissioned officers needed to reside in Slavyansk would also monitor the Svyatogorsk Monastery, located near the provincial town and "where a large number of pilgrims flock in the summer"²⁸.

In February 1872, the Head of the Novgorod Gendarme Directorate requested an assistant officer, complaining about the vastness of the area: "...there are uyezds where the entire Moscow governorate could fit into one, and the Novgorod Governorate itself is larger than some European kingdoms <...> There are areas that are even 800 miles apart. Several waterways pass through the Governorate, where there is a significant influx of people in the summer <...> The territory is so vast

²⁵ Ibid. Л. 96 об. – 97.

²⁶ Ibid. Л. 107 об.

²⁷ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 3. Д. 1204. Л. 45.

²⁸ Ibid. Л. 4–4 об.

that one doesn't even have time to look into the places that might not be a bad idea to visit"²⁹.

The expansion of the Corps' Surveillance Branch in the early 1870s was dictated, among other things, by the challenging crime situation in several southern regions of the empire. Murders, robberies, and thefts were common in Kherson and Yekaterinoslav governorates, where the police were unable to cope on their own. "To maintain peace and security for the citizens", it was necessary to strengthen police oversight³⁰.

The Surveillance Branch in Northwestern Krai proved itself to be excellent. "The lower ranks are behaving excellently, diligently and competently fulfilling their duties, keeping a close eye on all developments in the areas entrusted to them"³¹, wrote the head of the Livonian Gendarme Directorate in his report in the spring of 1869. "The people respect them, but at the same time fear them, surprised that the gendarmes, who mingle with the people daily, are themselves quite reserved and never give in to the weakness of chatting with the people". The extension of gendarmerie supervision to the entire Livonian province initially caused bewilderment among the inhabitants: "Dorpat society was accustomed to seeing representatives of the gendarmerie department as old, quiet, sedentary men who had only the city limits under their supervision", wrote the Head of the Directorate in the same report. "The vigorous activity of Captain [F.N. — A.P.] Remer, a young man, observing two uyezds, surprises the local public, arouses suspicions and gives them abundant food for all sorts of assumptions"³².

True, in the very same Baltic governorates, there were some incidents. For example, the head of the Courland Gendarme Directorate complained that many non-commissioned officers "cannot express their thoughts coherently, which often happens among Latvians partly due to an insufficient knowledge of Russian speech patterns, and partly to a lack of practice in reading and expressing their thoughts on paper"³³.

²⁹ Ibid. А. 51—51 о6.

³⁰ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 3. А. 1169. А. 17 о6.

³¹ Ibid. А. 1146. А. 7.

³² Ibid. А. 6 о6.

³³ Ibid. А. 2581. А. 107. Although this archival file is dated 1900—1901, this does not substantially alter the nature of the phenomena documented therein.



Headquarters of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes.
40 Furshtatskaya Street, St. Petersburg.
Photograph, 1915. ЦГАКФФД СПб. Е2423

At the same time, the Headquarters could have refused to expand the local Corps, as happened, for example, in Nizhny Novgorod, where the commander requested the addition of a third clerk. Colonel Koptev argued that the reorganization (the creation of the Directorate, the liquidation of the gendarmerie detachment, and the establishment of two observation posts) would significantly increase the volume of correspondence, which would now be entirely concentrated within the Directorate. However, in St. Petersburg in October 1867, the view was different: “All outgoing papers amount to 1202 numbers <..> Such correspondence, amounting to less than two papers per day per clerk, cannot in any way be considered either heavy or burdensome”³⁴.

The expansion of the gendarmerie directorates in the governorates and their staffing largely depended on the State’s financial resources. It was no coincidence that P.A. Shuvalov, in December 1869, when asking Finance Minister Reiter for a gradual increase in the Corps of Gendarmes’ budget, admitted: “When discussing the changes I had planned <..> all my efforts were directed toward ensuring that the reorganization of the Corps would take place without any burden on the treasury with new expenses”³⁵. The transformation of the

³⁴ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 3. Д. 1091. Л. 6, 9 об.

³⁵ Ibid. Д. 1169. Л. 29.

Corps, and especially the formation of the Surveillance Branch, after two years, “brought the expected benefit to the government”, concluded P.A. Shuvalov. “The activities of the officials of this latter institution had the good fortune to repeatedly attract the attention and full approval of the Sovereign Emperor, and His Majesty was pleased to express the desire that the limited staff of the Branch, consisting in most governorates of only 16 non-commissioned officers, be increased as much as possible in view of the benefits they bring”³⁶. According to the Chief of Gendarmes, the insufficient number of supervisory personnel approved in 1867 was a consequence of the limited resources at his disposal. His arguments were so compelling, and Shuvalov’s authority so unquestionable, that no obstacles arose from the Ministry of Finance, and in January 1870, the Corps’ budget was authorized by the Emperor to be increased³⁷.

A study and analysis of archival documents revealed another reason for Shuvalov’s limited financial resources: in 1867, the War Ministry attempted to exclude the Corps from its budget. However, Emperor Alexander II personally wrote on the War Minister’s report: “Consult the Chief of Gendarmes for this matter”, who, predictably, was categorically opposed and “responded with complete disagreement”³⁸. Despite repeated attempts by the War Ministry to remove the gendarmerie from its balance sheet, this plan failed to materialize. At Fontanka 16, they firmly believed that “the Corps of Gendarmes, as an institution with a military organization and composed of people on active military service, must inevitably remain part of the War Ministry’s budget. This, in addition to the example of all Western European countries, where the duties of gendarmerie officials are almost identical and where the gendarmerie is subordinate to the War Ministry and even counted as part of the armed forces, is also in the best interests of the government to maintain this principle”³⁹.

For example, in the summer of 1882, during the latest reorganization of the political investigation agencies after the regicide, the Chief

³⁶ Ibid. А. 30.

³⁷ Ibid. А. 31.

³⁸ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 3. Д. 1773. А. 1–2.

³⁹ Ibid.

of Gendarmes listed numerous disadvantages of separating the Corps from the War Ministry's budget: it would increase the costs of maintaining the Separate Corps of Gendarmes, deprive employees of housing allowances and supplementary pension, reduce their social status, make it difficult to recruit the best people, etc.⁴⁰ Thus, for decades, the chosen course of consistently defending the interests of the Corps remained unchanged.

Much time would pass before, at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, a debate would unfold among the heads of the Provincial Gendarme Directorates regarding the advisability of gendarmerie surveillance as such, with assessments of its effectiveness differing dramatically. For example, the head of the Moscow Directorate, General K.F. Schramm, called gendarmerie non-commissioned officers "the foundation for successful surveillance and investigative activities"⁴¹. However, there were also those who believed otherwise. For example, the head of the Novgorod Directorate asserted that "surveillance is an abstract activity, leading to laxity and inaction. You can monitor one or two people (via agents), but it's impossible to monitor a population of tens or hundreds of thousands. Without knowing what and where to monitor, the exercise is useless"⁴². The head of the Kyiv Directorate, General Novitsky, an opponent of non-commissioned officer posts, echoed him: "In the uyezds, at individual posts, they [non-commissioned officers – A.P.] very quickly turn into half-farmers, half-non-commissioned officers, who do practically nothing. Rare visits from officers... to check on their actions and keep them in good order will not save these non-commissioned officers from the influence of the non-combatant environment that surrounds them. <...> Our non-commissioned officers", the general continued, "enter the army ranks straight from the plough. For such people, access to the more educated circles of the uyezd inhabitants always remains closed, for the soldier's uniform does not enjoy the honor it deserves among us, and therefore much escapes the observation of the gendarmerie non-commissioned officer in the uyezd, which becomes known in due time to the district police officer,

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid. Д. 2581. Л. 300 об.

⁴² Ibid. Л. 343 об., 355.

who, if not always by origin, then by his rank, belongs to the privileged class of society, in whose circles he constantly moves”⁴³.

New roles and officer training system

P.A. Shuvalov sought to strengthen the role and influence of the Corps of Gendarmes under his jurisdiction in the country’s political life. To this end, at his initiative, on May 19, 1871, gendarme officers were assigned new duties – investigations into state crimes, which they were to conduct under the supervision of the Prosecutor’s office. At the same time, the position of legal adviser was established under the Chief of Gendarmes. His duties included explaining the legal intricacies of these new duties⁴⁴.

“The time that has passed since the introduction of judicial statutes [1864. –A.P.], made it clear”, wrote P.A. Shuvalov in a circular dated May 23, 1871, “that the activities of the police as the only aid provided by law to the prosecutor’s supervision for initiating criminal cases and detecting the accused in them, are very insufficient”, due to the small number of its members and the “burden of many other cases”⁴⁵. For this reason, “it was deemed possible and useful to provide prosecutorial oversight with the assistance of members of the Corps of Gendarmes, who, by virtue of their service, possess important information for solving crimes”. Particular attention was paid to the desirability of gendarmes’ participation in cases of state crimes, “the detection of which constitutes their main purpose”⁴⁶.

Following the coming into force of the law of May 19, 1871, which transformed the gendarmes from bystanders into investigators, significant changes occurred in their training for the new realities. Former line officers were required to have specialized knowledge they simply could not possess. This prompted the establishment of short-term training courses at the Corps Headquarters in St. Petersburg. Their organization

⁴³ Ibid. А. 23.

⁴⁴ ГА ПФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 3. Д. 1184. А. 94.

⁴⁵ Ibid. А. 36.

⁴⁶ Ibid. А. 36 о6.



Building that housed the Third Section and the Police Department.

Photograph by Anirina

was the personal initiative of the Chief Shuvalov. In May 1871, N.P. Khitrovo, a senior graduating student from the Military Law Academy, was invited to lecture on criminal law to army officers wishing to transfer to the gendarmerie. He delivered 30 lectures over the course of two months. Upon completion, all students successfully passed an examination before a commission chaired personally by Shuvalov.

In addition to courses, future gendarme officers were also trained through familiarization with political case files from the archives of the Third Section. As a rule, due to its passive nature, this training was not considered useful. Thus, V.D. Novitsky, who was transferred to the Corps of Gendarmes in the early 1870s thanks to patronage and subsequently rose to the rank of general, spoke skeptically of the theoretical training in his memoirs: “Count P.A. Shuvalov, before appointing me to the position of Chief [of the Tambov Gendarme Directorate – A.P.] allowed me, in order to become familiar with the service in the Corps of Gendarmes, to read all the files of the Third Section of His Imperial Majesty’s own Chancellery. <..> From the files of the Third Section that I read, I, however, did not acquire any practical knowledge for the service”⁴⁷.

⁴⁷ Новицкий В.Д. Из воспоминаний жандарма // За кулисами политики 1848–1914. / Сост. А. Либерман; послесл. С. Шокарев. М.: Фонд Сергея Дубова, 2001. С. 282–283.

Clearly, neither short-term training courses nor independent familiarization with the documents of the Third Section could compensate for the gendarmes' lack of qualified legal training. This predictably led to the task assigned to them proving difficult to accomplish. To provide practical assistance in conducting inquiries and ensuring their legality, prosecutors were called in to handle political cases. A.F. Koni, who generally spoke negatively of the proposed innovation and did not rate the gendarmes' qualifications highly, was largely correct: "Prosecutor's office officials began to take a very active personal role in conducting inquiries. Their legal knowledge and skill inevitably exerted moral pressure on the less experienced and less educated members of the gendarmerie, who were completely unprepared to handle the formalities and rituals associated with inquiries. The results of this pressure became apparent very quickly", Koni concludes, "and, with a few minor exceptions, the prosecutors became the actual and absolute masters of the investigations with the gendarme officers being reduced to the position of scribes of the decrees and protocols dictated by the prosecutors"⁴⁸. Sounded derogatory, but likely close to reality.

It should be noted, however, that the expansion of the gendarmes' duties during the Great Reforms led the Corps' leadership to recognize the need for training. However, as before, familiarization with gendarmerie duties generally occurred during service. So-called "tests" to determine the suitability of applicants for the gendarmerie were introduced on March 27, 1830, almost immediately after the establishment of the gendarmerie itself. The tests, held at the Corps headquarters, lasted for two to four months. They primarily tested the officers' moral and professional qualities, their aptitude for a particular type of service, their ability to use weapons, and their cavalry riding skills. At the end of the tests, applicants who passed them received instructions personally

⁴⁸ Кони А.Ф. Политическая записка 1878 года // Кони А.Ф. Собрание сочинений: В 8 т. Т. 2. М.: Юридическая литература, 1966. С. 333. The renowned jurist was generally highly critical of the Law of 19 May 1871 (especially in connection with the "Trial of the 193"), arguing that the lack of publicity, the prolonged duration of preliminary inquiry and investigation, and the release of suspects for lack of evidence had given rise to "latent but profound public discontent", with the result that "in everyday life society dissociates itself from solidarity with the government, while thoughtful people sorrowfully observe the growing lack of trust between the two". Ibid. С. 344–345.

from Benckendorff, along with written and oral instructions introducing them to the specifics of the governorate they were to work in⁴⁹. Only junior officers underwent the tests. Staff officers and generals, as a rule, only presented themselves to the Chief of Gendarmes and received the appropriate instructions from him⁵⁰. For them, there was no specific training at the Corps. This trend persisted for decades. Thus, the short-term courses instituted by P.A. Shuvalov at the Corps headquarters became an innovative approach in training future gendarmerie officers, remaining relevant in subsequent years while significantly evolving.

Curiously, the adoption of the law on May 19, 1871, led to the extension of gendarmerie supervision to the territory of the Don Cossack Host, which was under a special military and civil status. In 1873, this issue was raised by Senator Chemodurov, who was inspecting the region's judicial institutions. Since there were no gendarmes in the region, the question of who would conduct inquiries into crimes against the state remained open. "Now, with the introduction of a new legal procedure in its entirety <...> there is a genuine need to break the Don region's exclusive relationship with gendarmerie supervision, which, in all likelihood, was established entirely by accident"⁵¹, wrote Ataman Chertkov to the Chief of Gendarmes on December 31, 1873. After agreeing on this issue with the War Minister D.A. Milyutin, a regional gendarmerie administration (directorate) was established in Novocherkassk in 1874.

Keeping up with the times: from secret instructions to publicity and legality

Shuvalov's position on making the activities of gendarmerie officers transparent and legal is seen as relevant to the spirit of the times of the Great Reforms. "The publication of a law clearly defining the duties, scope of activities, and degree of responsibility of each gendarmerie

⁴⁹ See: Чукарев А.Г. Тайная полиция России, 1825–1855. М.; Жуковский: Кучково поле, 2005. С. 158.

⁵⁰ Оржеховский И.В. *Op. cit.* С. 47.

⁵¹ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 3. Д. 1323. Л. 11, 14.

agency will demonstrate to all the noble purpose of establishing the corps and completely eliminate the inconveniences that have hitherto adversely affected the social standing of gendarmerie officers and were a consequence of the uncertainty and secrecy surrounding their official assignments”⁵².

Shuvalov was convinced of increasing the authority of the gendarmerie service “under conditions of strict legality and complete publicity”, since “this gives the Corps of Gendarmes that highest position which it could not have achieved by publishing the gendarmerie instruction in the form in which it was developed in 1866”⁵³. Indeed, the move away from the aura of mystery inherent in the figure of the gendarme in the early days, which had generated controversy in society, toward publicity should have played into the authorities’ hands.

We will not presume to assert without evidence whether the above considerations were the subject of the Chief of Gendarmes’ own original thoughts or were borrowed. We will simply note that the conclusions consonant with those of Shuvalov were expressed in October 1867 by Colonel A.N. Koptev, head of the Nizhny Novgorod Gendarme Directorate: “At the present time, when society sees that the government itself has opened its s to publicity, <..> it is absolutely necessary that the activities of the Corps of Gendarmes officials not remain shrouded in the same secrecy in which they are currently held before the public”⁵⁴. The staff officer was convinced of the “extreme necessity” for the benefit of the service “to make public the main foundations of the activities of the officers of the Corps of Gendarmes”, since this would allow them to be placed “on that solid ground of activity and official influence that is expected and required of them; publicity would arouse the direct sympathy of the majority”, Koptev continued, “when it clearly sees what influence should belong to them, and therefore the public will not adhere to *a vague belief that the Corps of Gendarmes is a secret police whose only activity is denunciations* [italics mine. — A.P.], which are looked at with prejudice”⁵⁵.

⁵² Ibid. A, 1184. A. 37.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid. A, 1091. A. 1.

⁵⁵ Ibid. A. 4–4 o6.

The reorganization of the Corps of Gendarmes in the second half of the 1860s and early 1870s fit perfectly within the historical context and aligned with the political agenda of “Arakcheev the Second”, as the Chief of Gendarmes, P.A. Shuvalov, was called behind his back. We cannot provide evidence of such a program, but judging by memoirs, its existence is highly probable. Be that as it may, the attacks of Karakozov and Berezovsky led to the development of Shuvalov’s conservative ideas, which soon took on concrete form. Given his influence over the Emperor and the *carte blanche* he was granted for further actions, the changes were not long in coming.

The reorganization altered the structure of the Corps of Gendarmes and streamlined its work. This was achieved by converting combat units into surveillance teams. In addition to increasing the staff, supervision and political investigation were now carried out not only by officers but also by enlisted men, whose personal qualities were now given special consideration during selection. Furthermore, keeping pace with the times, the actions of the Corps of Gendarmes were placed within a new legal framework. Through the efforts of P.A. Shuvalov, it was possible not only to retain the Corps of Gendarmes within the Ministry of War but also to completely militarize it, eliminating the previous practice of recruiting civilian officials. Due to the specific nature of the gendarmerie service, familiarization with its various aspects was only possible by donning the blue uniform. To facilitate the adaptation of future officers, short-term training courses were established at the Corps headquarters, with lectures delivered by lawyers, among others. This practice became permanent, allowing for an increase in the gendarmes’ educational level. The extensive apparatus of the political police, as well as the new professional roles that its officers were to assume starting in 1871, was intended to facilitate the speedy achievement of Shuvalov’s goals. However, his early departure from the political arena had repercussions, including on the political police, preventing the full implementation of his plans.

The impact of the above-mentioned innovations on the effectiveness of the gendarme service is a matter of debate. On the one hand, the trends established by P.A. Shuvalov were further developed during the subsequent history of the Corps. On the other hand, they proved insufficient to defuse the revolutionary struggle that culminated the

Great Reforms with the regicide of March 1, 1881. This led to repeated reforms in the search for an optimal model of political investigation over the next two reigns.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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Original paper



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The Trajectory of a Political Criminal Case in the Russian Empire: From Intelligence Reports to Statistical Tables (1870s)

Abstract

This article examines the transformation of record-keeping and administrative practices relating to political cases in the Russian Empire during the 1870s. The post-reform decades marked a crucial stage in the evolution of approaches to safeguarding state and public security in the Russian Empire. The study focuses on the complete trajectory of a political criminal case – from initial gendarmerie intelligence reports and the covert collection of operational information, through the procedures of formal preliminary investigation, to the systematization of the resulting data in departmental tables, nominal registers, and statistical summaries. Particular attention is devoted to the impact of the Judicial Reform of 1864 and the Regulations of 19 May 1871, which assigned gendarmerie officers the leading role in conducting preliminary

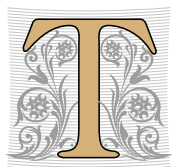
investigations into crimes against the state. The article also analyzes the terminological ambiguity surrounding the concepts of “state crime” and “political crime”, which created significant practical difficulties both in the imposition of administrative penalties and in the classification of persons under investigation. Drawing on a wide range of archival sources from the collections of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of the Interior, the Third Section of His Imperial Majesty’s Own Chancellery, and the Moscow Governorate Gendarmerie Administration, the study reconstructs the specific mechanisms by which information on “politically unreliable” individuals was collected, recorded, and summarized. Special attention is paid to the internal tensions between the Third Section, the Gendarme Corps, and the procuracy (Prosecutor’s Office), which reflected an intense struggle for control over the information gathered through political surveillance. The article concludes that, during the 1870s, investigations of political offenses evolved from procedures aimed at proving a specific crime into processes designed to establish the social “profile” of political radicals and the revolutionary milieu itself. This evolution in bureaucratic record-keeping became a key instrument in the construction and institutionalization of the category of “political unreliability”.

Keywords:

Political surveillance; The Third Section; Gendarme Corps; Ministry of Justice; Political crime; Criminal statistics

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he 1870s in the history of the Russian Empire marked a time of intense search for new forms of political control, prompted by both the reforms of the previous decade and the unprecedented growth of the revolutionary movement. The judicial reform of 1864, which enshrined new principles of legal proceedings, and the law of May 19, 1871, which transferred the investigation of state crimes to gendarme officers, created a fundamentally different legal and administrative reality. Under these circumstances, the bureaucracy faced the task not only of investigating specific crimes but also of developing a unified language for describing, systematizing, and accounting for the people classified as “politically unreliable”. This article examines the trajectory of criminal cases for political crimes in the 1870s, from the use of primary data during gendarme investigations to attempts to create departmental tables summarizing information on defendants. During this period, not only did the institutional restructuring of political investigation take place, but also those office forms (circulars, statements, lists, tables) were formed that would become the basis for subsequent practice.

A study of records management allows us to see the mechanisms of political control “from within” – not as an abstract repressive policy, but as the daily work of officials faced with the need to classify new phenomena that did not fit within the previous legal framework. The focus is on the “political vocabulary of the era” – the conceptual apparatus with which officials of the Third Section, the Gendarme Corps, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs described and, thereby, constructed the figure of the political criminal. Terminological ambiguity and the gap between the legally enshrined concept of “state crime” and the widely used, but legally unstated, concept of “political crime” created serious difficulties in practice – from confusion over the degree of supervision for exiles to conflicts between departments over who had the right to store and use accumulated information.

The historiography of the political police of the Russian Empire has a large number of serious studies¹. Many of them examine in detail the

¹ Рууд Ч., Степанов С.А. Фонтанка, 16: политический сыск при царях. М.: Мысль, 1993; Жандармы России. Политический розыск в России XV–XX вв.: новейшие исследования / Ред. В.С. Измозик. СПб.: Нева, 2002; Севастьянов Ф.Л. Между тайной экспедицией и III Отделением: от тай-

practices of investigating state crimes, including the internal aspects of conducting investigations by officers of the Gendarme Corps². In recent years, works have appeared that highlight various areas of activity of both the Third Section and the Gendarme Corps, which also pay attention to the specifics of gendarmerie office work³. However, it should be noted that most authors skip the study of the 1870s, which is inconsistent with the significance of this decade for the history of both the gendarmerie and political investigation in general.

I would like to separately note the research of the American historian J. Daly⁴, which indicates that the Russian political police were incapable of preventing major social upheavals and could effectively combat only well-hidden radical groups. Without contesting this assessment in its entirety, this work aims to demonstrate that the agencies responsible for state and public security were fully aware of the challenges posed by the mass revolutionary movement and made significant efforts to ensure the state had the capacity to counter it.

In order to fully understand the process of investigating political crimes in the 1870s, it is necessary to address the concept of “legality” in the post-reform period. In the historiography of the Russian Empire, one of the important debates revolves around the question of whether a strong legal tradition had developed in Russia or whether legality

ного сыска — к политическому розыску. СПб.: МИЭП, 2008; *Перебудова* З.И. Политический сыск России, 1880–1917. 2-е изд., перераб. и доп. М.: РОССПЭН, 2013; *Щербакова Е.И.* Органы безопасности Российской империи XIX — начала XX в. // *Тайная стража России. Очерки истории отечественных органов госбезопасности* / Под ред. А.Ю. Попова. М.: Алгоритм, 2017. С. 51–126; *Страхов Л.В., Перебудов А.В.* Воронежские жандармы в эпоху модерна. Воронеж: Издательский дом ВГУ, 2019.

² *Суворов А.И.* Борьба с терроризмом в России в XIX — начале XX века: Историко-правовое исследование антитеррористической деятельности правоохранительных органов дореволюционной России. М.: ЮНИТИ-Дана, 2002; *Краковский К.П.* Политическое дознание во второй половине XIX — начале XX в. Историко-правовые проблемы: Новый ракурс. 2012. № 5. С. 315–344.

³ *Абакумов О.Ю.* «Безопасность престола и спокойствие государства»: политическая полиция самодержавной России (1826–1866). М.: РОССПЭН, 2019; *Бибиков Г.Н.* Жандармский надзор в системе государственного управления Российской империи (1826–1856 гг.). М.: Квадрига, 2023.

⁴ *Daly J.W.* Autocracy under siege: Security police and opposition in Russia, 1866–1905. DeKalb: Northern Illinois university press, 1998.

was weak, and what were the distinctive features of the imperial legal regime in Russia⁵. Within this approach, I adhere to a viewpoint that affirms the diversity and flexibility of governance and legal approaches as necessary aspects of imperial policy.

Of course, the problems of shaping the authorities' language regarding political threats deserve special mention. These issues are examined in monographs devoted to the study of major criminal trials⁶ and the work of the gendarmes⁷. Thus, in her book, L.V. Ulyanova addresses the problem of creating a political language for the Russian Empire. An important component of this language were the categories by which structures and individuals involved in political activity described other participants and their positions. The subject of this monograph is the concept of "a liberal" as perceived by the political police. The approach employed in the work is crucial. It analyzes the political marker "liberal", used to describe the positions of individual figures or groups, not as a fixed position, but as a specific scale along which a set of meanings associated with the concept of "liberal" was located. Thus, from the author's perspective, political police officials could, by varying their framing and use of the available set of meanings and ideologemes, define the positions of various individuals as more or less liberal. The overall conclusion is that, while there was a general consensus among political police officers that liberalism posed a threat to state security, officials in different structures could assess the degree of this threat differently, and this consequently influenced the behavioral models developed in political investigations regarding "liberals". A similar practice – determining a person's position on a scale of "(political) unreliability" and choosing measures based on this assessment – was used by gendarmes and prosecutors against the "unreliable" individuals in the 1870s.

⁵ For an overview of the historiography, see: *Wirtschafter E.K. Russian Legal Culture and the Rule of Law* // *Kritika*. 2006. № 1. P. 61–70; *Borisova T., Burbank J. Russia's Legal Trajectories* // *Kritika*. 2018. № 3. P. 469–508; *Демичев А.А. Историография судебной реформы 1864 года* // *Памятники российского права*. В 35 т. Под ред. Р.А. Хачатурова. Т. 13. Судебная реформа 1864 года в Российской империи. М.: Юрлитинформ, 2015. С. 9–51.

⁶ *Verhoeven C. The Odd Man Karakozov: Imperial Russia, Modernity and the Birth of Terrorism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009.

⁷ *Ульянова Л.В. Политическая полиция и либеральное движение в Российской империи: власть игры, игра властью, 1880–1905*. СПб.: Алетейя, 2020.

Political vs. state crimes

On December 22, 1879, the Acting Governor-General of Eastern Siberia K.N. Shelashnikov sent a letter to the Minister of Internal Affairs with a request to clarify what kind of exiles should be called state and what kind political⁸. The question arose because those charged with “criminal propaganda” in the empire had begun to be exiled to Eastern Siberia through administrative means. Most of those accused in this case were not brought to trial due to a lack of evidence incriminating them. However, the authorities had no intention of releasing them from punishment, so many were ultimately given administrative penalties, one of which was exile to various parts of the empire. Shelashnikov’s confusion stemmed from the lack of a clear legal distinction between those exiled administratively (“political”) and those sentenced by the courts (“state”). This created a practical problem in determining the supervisory measures to be applied to the different categories of exiles.

The Main Administration of Eastern Siberia did not find an answer to this question, since the category of state criminals is defined in the *Code of Punishments*, while “the category of political exiles is not”⁹. The Administration of Eastern Siberia contacted the Ministry of Internal Affairs for clarification. However, as can be seen from the marginal notes “following the report of the Minister, it is permitted to leave it unanswered”¹⁰. The question reflected the important problem of categorizing political criminals and exiles and, consequently, the direction of the measures applied to them. This terminological contradiction is fundamentally important for understanding the trajectory of criminal cases – from the initiation of investigation to sentencing – in the sphere of political and state crime.

In post-reform Russia, “political crime” was systematically synonymous with “state crime”. This equivalent substitution can be found in office documentation, journalism, and the scholarly literature of the

⁸ РГИА. Ф. 1286. Оп. 41. Д. 524. Л. 2.

⁹ Ibid. Л. 1 об.

¹⁰ Ibid. Л. 1.

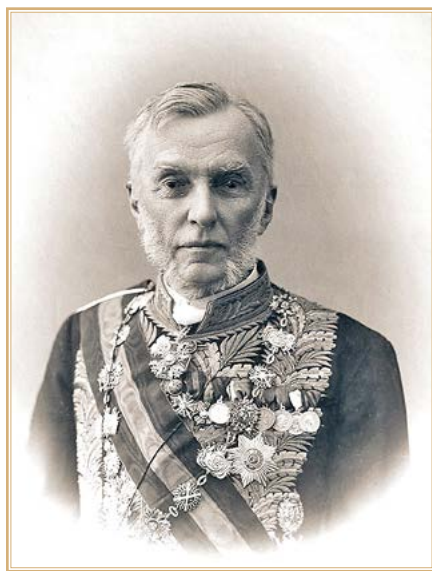


Konstantin Nikolaevich Shelashnikov.
From open sources

time¹¹. However, the term “political crime” was not legally defined: it was absent from legislation, had no legal status, and in practice could encompass a variety of illegal acts. In contrast, “state crimes” in the 1870s constituted a strictly defined legal category – they included actions falling under the relevant articles of the *Penal Code* of 1845 and its subsequent revisions.

Officials frequently used the term “political crime”, so a clearer definition was needed. However, the initial vagueness of the concept proved convenient, as it allowed for a wide variety of forms of political activity to be treated as “criminal”. This, in turn, served as a justification for the use of police and administrative measures in the context of the growing revolutionary movement. Thus, in the 1870s, the meaning of this concept simultaneously expanded (new actions were included under it) and became more precise, since the authorities attempted to find a balance between a convenient tool and a formal definition. This process can be linked with the pan-European trend in European criminal law and state-building. Historian Lindsay Farmer notes that the verb ‘to criminalize’ was used in two meanings: to turn a person into a criminal,

¹¹ See also: Краковский К.П. Политическая юстиция в России во второй половине XIX – начале XX в.: историко-правовое исследование. М.: Юрист, 2012.



Count Konstantin Ivanovich Pahlen.
From open sources

especially by making his actions criminally punishable, or to turn (some action) into a criminal offense by making it illegal. The first recorded use of this sense dates back to 1832 and belongs to Jeremy Bentham¹². Farmer notes that criminalization in this sense is linked to the emergence of a certain type of modern legislative thinking. The world was understood to operate according to certain principles of order, which could be discovered and manipulated by those possessing the requisite knowledge and understanding. Thus, criminal law can be viewed as a kind of tool that can have positive or negative social consequences and be used accordingly.

Understanding the growing gap between the concepts of “state” and “political” crime in the 1860s and 1870s requires an analysis of their legal content. According to the legal historian Krakovsky, in the Russian Empire in the 19th century, “the term ‘political crime’ became an update (modernization) of the term ‘state crime’. To the ‘traditional’ Russian rebels and traitors (state criminals) were added ‘committed’ fighters for the common good, persecuted by the reaction (political criminals)”¹³.

¹² Farmer L. Making the Modern Criminal Law: Criminalization and Civil Order. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. P. 4.

¹³ Краковский К.П. Политическая юстиция в России... С. 67.

This distinction was reflected in a memorandum addressed to the Emperor, prepared on May 27, 1871, by the Ministry of Justice at the behest of Count Pahlen. It outlined considerations for an international agreement to clarify the definition of “political crime”. The authors of the document assumed the existence of universal characteristics of political crimes, independent of national legal systems, and aimed to identify common grounds uniting international legal concepts in this area¹⁴.

The authors believed that the differences in the political systems of European countries led to the adoption of a number of exceptions, where the same act could be assessed differently by two states with different political systems. In practice, this could lead to difficulties in the event of the need to request the extradition of a Russian citizen suspected of a political crime from another country.

The memorandum was prompted by the events of 1871 in France. It reflected an attempt to understand the difficulties the French government faced in trying to bring to justice the Communards who had fled abroad. This circumstance became the starting point for a critique of the existing system of international extradition of political criminals. However, one can also speculate that there was an unstated reason. The memorandum’s composition coincided with the preparation of the Nechaev trial, so the considerations expressed in it were likely intended to form the basis for the policy of persecuting Russian citizens accused of political crimes and hiding abroad – including Sergei Nechaev.

It’s worth noting that the range of phenomena that could be considered political threats was not limited to this formal definition. Referring to academic theories, the authors noted that “political crimes are recognized as those that have as their target the form of government established by the fundamental laws and the integrity of the state, and in monarchical states, in addition, the Head of State as the source of all legal order”¹⁵. This definition fully corresponded with the crimes specified in the Penal Code. However, the formal definition did not exhaust the entire spectrum of phenomena that could be classified as political threats in practice.

¹⁴ ГА РФ. Ф. 109. Оп. 4а. Д. 147. Л. 1.

¹⁵ Ibid. Л. 10 об. – 11 об.



Sergei Gennadyevich Nechaev.
From open sources

In this regard, the memorandum stated that “as a result of the development of certain destructive and harmful trends in European society, crimes are currently being committed which, although they are caused by certain theoretical teachings, and although they therefore have some external similarity with political crimes, can hardly in themselves be considered crimes of this category”¹⁶. Thus, a distinction was made between which actions could be considered state crimes, and which actions, caused primarily by “new theoretical teachings”, did not.

The authors pointed out that the parties that emerged under the influence of the “new teachings” “do not aim to establish this or that form of government, but strive only <...> to destroy property, family union, and the religious and moral principles of class society. For these people, a change in the form of government is not an end in itself, but only a means to an end”¹⁷. For the authors, the lack of desire for a change in the form of government indicated the absence of political motives on the part of such parties, and therefore their actions should not be considered “state crimes”.

Thus, the memorandum reveals the basic distinction that became fundamental in understanding political crime throughout the 1870s: it

¹⁶ Ibid. А. 13–13 о6.

¹⁷ Ibid. А. 13 о6. – 14.

could be either political (meaning anti-state) or anti-social. The memorandum expressed doubts that the described new manifestations of socio-political struggle in the West could be called “political crimes” if the latter were understood as synonymous with “state crimes”. Although this interpretation was not the only possible one, it was based on a solid legal tradition.

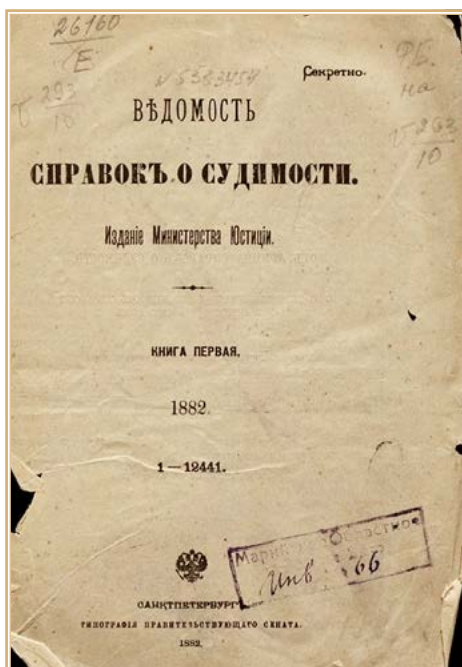
The memorandum on the draft international agreement aimed at defining the concept of “political crime” discussed above is just one of many examples of how attempts were made in the 1870s to legally accommodate the expanding spectrum of revolutionary activity. Officials sought to align the changing political reality and growing protest dynamics with existing legislation. It is in this context that multiple interpretations of “state” and “political” crimes arise, as well as debates over which acts fall under them.

This state of affairs, which persisted throughout the 1870s, was sometimes misleading, as proves the above-mentioned case of the Acting Governor-General of Eastern Siberia. The growing number of participants in the revolutionary movement, as well as the increase in the number of political investigations, led to a larger number of defendants. Not all of them were brought to trial, and most often, due to a lack of evidence, the cases against such individuals were resolved administratively. The growing number of individuals under investigation and the issues associated with organizing their exile and supervision necessitated the categorization of those under investigation for political cases.

From suspicion to punishment

Under the new judicial regulations of 1864, prosecutorial oversight officials were required to prepare reports in a format approved by the Minister of Justice. These documents were to reflect information on the progress of cases and data on defendants for the previous year¹⁸. The statutes, however, did not specify the format for organizing such

¹⁸ On the basic principles governing the organization of criminal statistics after 1864, see: *Остроумов С.С. Очерки по истории уголовной статистики дореволюционной России*. М.: Б.и., 1961. С. 131–136.



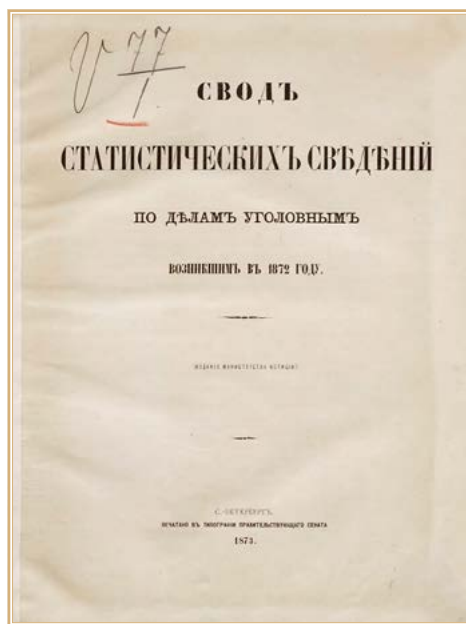
Bulletins of Criminal Records.
From open sources

statistics. Therefore, until the 1870s, the data in the Ministry of Justice's reports could be so disparate that it was extremely difficult to compare them. The situation changed in 1870 with the creation of a new system of criminal statistics, which began to more accurately reflect both the work of the courts and the actual crime picture¹⁹. However, the key objective in registering criminals remained not so much statistics as law enforcement: the records could show repeat offenders so that the court could impose a more severe punishment²⁰.

The new system of criminal statistics was based on the clear organization of primary records. It was carried out on an individual basis, when the criminal case and the accused were registered on a separate card. On January 15, 1870, the rules for the issuance of certificates of criminal records by the Ministry of Justice were approved by the Emperor. The courts were required to compile certificates on

¹⁹ Остроумов С.С. Преступность и ее причины в дореволюционной России. М.: Изд-во МГУ, 1980. С. 25–26.

²⁰ Жаров С.Н. Регистрация преступников и оперативные учеты // Памятники российского права. В 35 т. / Под ред. В.А. Хачатурова. Т. 22. Спецслужбы Российской империи: учеб.-науч. пособие. М.: Юрлитинформ, 2015. С. 204–219.



Collections of Statistical Information on Criminal Cases Initiated in 1872.

From open sources

each convicted person sentenced to a punishment with imprisonment and above. The Ministry of Justice sent specially prepared forms to the courts, which were filled out for each defendant. They contained the following seven points: 1) the court that passed the sentence; 2) rank, first name, patronymic, last name or nickname of the defendant; 3) age; 4) place of birth, permanent residence, registration, occupation or craft; 5) the criminal act for which the defendant was convicted; 6) the punishment to which he/she was sentenced; 7) the time of execution of the sentence²¹. In 1870, *Bulletins of Criminal Records* began to be published. These were official publications of the Ministry of Justice, recording data on court verdicts, including name, article, punishment, and duration of sentence.

As of January 1, 1872, criminal case records system was reformed. Courts were now required to submit criminal record certificates to the Ministry of Justice, regardless of whether the defendant was convicted or acquitted. The number of fields to be filled out by investigators

²¹ *Rules Approved by the Emperor for the Publication by the Ministry of Justice of the Bulletins of Criminal Records*, 15 January 1870 // Сборник правил и распоряжений по изданию ведомости справок о судимости. СПб.: Тип. Правительствующего Сената, 1880. С. 1–5.



Ivan Yakovlevich Foinitsky.
From open sources

and prosecutors was increased to twenty. The list of required information was supplemented by items on the legitimacy or illegitimacy of birth, religion, rank (social status and social class), literacy and education, and family relations. In addition to information about the defendant, sections were added concerning the circumstances of the crime. Essentially, all established characteristics could be divided into two groups: demographic and legal. In this form, criminal record certificates became the main primary documents for criminal statistics in the 1870s²². The information thus provided was carefully processed by the Ministry of Justice. Based on the collected material, *Collections of Statistical Information on Criminal Cases* were then published. The first *Collection* was published in 1873, and four more volumes followed by 1878²³.

²² *Supplement to the Rules Approved by the Emperor on 15 January 1870 Concerning the Submission by Judicial Institutions to the Ministry of Justice of Criminal Record Information*, 9 December 1871 // Сборник правил и распоряжений по изданию ведомости справок о судимости. СПб.: Тип. Правительствующего Сената, 1880. С. 11–13.

²³ Министерство юстиции за сто лет. 1802–1902. Исторический очерк. СПб.: Сенатская типография, 1902. С. 142.

The renowned pre-revolutionary lawyer I.Ya. Foinitsky, in his review of the *Collections* for 1872, noted that the initial registration of criminal and legal data met all the requirements of contemporary statistical science. However, he harshly criticized the poor arrangement of the data in the *Collections*, which greatly complicated the use and analysis of information²⁴. Yet, despite the shortcomings and criticism, in the early 1870s, a relatively streamlined procedure for compiling criminal statistics was established in the imperial judicial system – from the initial recording of information to the annual compilation of the *Bulletins* and the *Collections*.

The general trend toward improving criminal statistics naturally affected such a specific area as the recording of political crimes and the individuals involved in their investigation. The expansion of the record system in this area was consistent with nationwide reforms. Nevertheless, the unique nature of cases and the organizational nuances of investigative bodies led to the development of a unique approach: this was evident in the initial data recording stage and in the methods of their subsequent grouping, both in the departmental tables of the Ministry of Justice and in the analytical summaries conducted by the Third Section.

The legal historian S.S. Ostroumov noted, regarding the statistical sources of political crime in Tsarist Russia, that “the vast majority of political crimes were repressed extrajudicially or tried by military courts. In both cases, the number of such crimes was not even included in the ‘*Collections*’”²⁵. Ostroumov particularly noted the extremely limited statistical data on political crime in Russia in the mid- to late 19th century. Indeed, there is no published aggregate information on “politically unreliable” individuals punished administratively. However, the records of political crimes retained a wealth of data, often presented in tables, on individuals under investigation or punished administratively. Such surveys were compiled ad hoc, unsystematically, in the 1870s; however, they were organized around a number of general principles.

²⁴ Фойницкий И.Я. Системы размещения цифровых данных в таблицах уголовной статистики: по поводу «Свода статистических сведений по делам уголовным, возникшим в 1872 году». СПб.: Изд-во. Министерства юстиции, 1873. Отт. Из Судебного журнала. № 6. 1873. С. 4.

²⁵ Остроумов С.С. Очерки... С. 263.

The reports that, under the new judicial statutes of 1864, new judicial rulings and prosecutorial oversight bodies were required to prepare likely served as a benchmark.

The regulations of May 19, 1871, changed the procedure for prosecuting crimes against the state, significantly impacting the initial registration of political offenders. From now on, preliminary investigations of these cases were assigned directly to gendarmerie officers. Consequently, they were now responsible for recording initial data on individuals brought to trial on political charges.

The key ideas that help us understand the general logic of the reform of political investigation in Russia in the early 1870s were presented in *Conclusion of the Legal Adviser on the Memorandum by the Minister of Justice and the Chief of Gendarmes on the Procedure for Conducting Investigations into Cases of State Crimes*²⁶. The document contained a detailed justification for the need to involve members of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes in the investigation of state crimes, a task previously assigned exclusively to the police under the supervision of the Prosecutor's office, according to the 1864 Charter of Criminal Procedure. The legal advisor argued that the regular police were overburdened and not always successful in solving crimes, whereas the gendarmes, relieved of numerous secondary duties and with an extensive surveillance network, possessed both specialized information and material resources for the effective investigation of political cases. At the same time, the need to retain the Prosecutor's supervision of investigations was emphasized, in order to ensure the legal validity of the materials collected and their compliance with the new judicial statutes. As a negative example, the activities of the imperially established Investigative Commission were cited: its materials, compiled according to the old rules, proved unsuitable for consideration in the new judicial systems. The document placed particular emphasis on the specific nature of state crimes, which often involved not isolated incidents but extensive conspiracies requiring coordinated actions across vast territories and consideration of connections with previous cases. For such instances, it proposed the introduction of a special procedure: the investigation would be entrusted to a specially appointed person attached

²⁶ РГИА. Ф. 560. Оп. 35. Д. 39.

to the Chief of Gendarmes (with powers equal to those of a prosecutor), acting jointly with the prosecutor of the judicial chamber under the supreme supervision of both agencies. The document also detailed a mechanism for resolving potential conflicts between the gendarme and prosecutorial authorities, particularly regarding the application of preventive measures, where it was proposed to refer contentious issues for approval to the Minister of Justice and the Chief of Gendarmes. This conclusion not only substantiated the future legislative changes of 1871 but also revealed the rationale for the formation of a new order of interaction between the political police and the judiciary system, assigning to the gendarmes a leading role in the investigation of state crimes while maintaining procedural control by the Prosecutor's office.

In practice, the legal adviser to the Chief of Gendarmes was tasked with explaining the nature of investigations into state crimes under the new rules. The position was established in 1871. The adviser's role was twofold: on the one hand, he was responsible for ensuring that the gendarmes complied with the law, and on the other, he was tasked with upholding the interests of the Corps. In his work, the legal adviser typically relied on precedential materials, using these as examples to analyze any errors or conflicts that arose.

One such precedent was the investigation conducted in Moscow in 1871–1872. It began with a report filed by a certain physician, Lehman, against his printing house partner, Leontyev. M.N. Bazhenov, the appointed legal adviser, after reviewing the case materials, found a number of significant errors in the actions of the Corps's staff captain, Ya.T. Dudkin, who conducted the investigation. First of all, Bazhenov combined two different aspects of the gendarmes' activities – observational and investigative – under the term “investigation”. In his opinion, gendarme officers should distinguish between “two aspects to investigations into state crimes: the first is the secret collection of information <...> and the adoption of various measures for the initial verification of the truth of the rumor that has reached them about state crime, all of which they are not obliged to report to the Prosecutor”. The second moment occurred when it became necessary to begin some kind of investigative actions, such as searches, etc., “which must be reported to the Prosecutor without fail, unless the above-mentioned case prevents this, i.e., if there is no fear, through reporting to the Prosecutor, of losing the

traces of the crime and the time to capture these traces”²⁷. Thus, the collection of information was already becoming part of the investigation, and the second stage, which required an appeal to the Prosecutor, was intended to serve as a legal framework for the actions already taken and began to be more functional than independent in nature.

Bazhenov then criticized the actions of Staff Captain Dudkin, pointing out that the gendarme had used the methods typical of general criminal investigation, whereas in cases of state crimes, “every piece of information must be used and verified by multifaceted questioning, and not by repeating the same thing”²⁸. This again emphasized the key role of gathering of evidence, which constituted the gendarmes’ primary responsibility and made them indispensable participants in the investigation of political crimes. In his conclusion, the legal adviser noted a violation of established procedure, manifested in the lack of prior approval of the case’s merits by the Prosecutor. Such an approval could have led to the recognition of the collected evidence as sufficient to initiate proceedings, and then the case would not have been devoid of “internal substance”. In this case, the Prosecutor was tasked with the legal assessment of the facts, i.e., determining whether the information obtained complied with legal norms. However, relations with the Prosecutor’s office were once again purely formal; according to the legal adviser’s logic, the investigation should nevertheless have been the exclusive purview of the gendarmerie corps.

Bazhenov believed that the gendarme conducting the investigation did not fully understand the distinction between general criminal and state crimes, and therefore made a number of mistakes at the beginning of the investigation. In fact, the *Charter of Criminal Procedure* established a general investigative procedure for all criminal offenses. The idea of applying different procedures to investigations into state crimes was influenced by law enforcement practices that developed after the *Charter’s* adoption. The development of new methods occurred promptly during internal discussions on similar challenging cases.

Bazhenov’s commentary contains a reference to his own opinion on the conclusion of the Commission, which in 1872 considered the

²⁷ ГА РФ. Ф. 58. Оп. 1. Д. 5. Л. 7–7 об.

²⁸ Ibid. Л. 7 об. – 8 об.



Petrovsky Barracks. 1913.

From open sources

question of amending the articles on “illegal associations” in the Penal Code. In his *Dissenting Opinion* on the Commission’s draft, he noted that in investigating state crimes, it is far more important to identify all those involved in anti-government activities and to fully reconstruct the connections of “state criminals”²⁹. He considered the interrogation of witnesses to be a particularly productive means for this purpose and considered their importance in the investigation of state crimes higher than the establishment of other evidence in the case.

I.L. Slyozkin, Chief of Moscow Provincial Gendarme Directorate, entered into a debate with the legal adviser regarding the specifics of inquiries into state crimes. Citing the circumstances of the case, which began with Lehman’s denunciation of Leontyev, he argued that the need for an inquiry was due precisely to Leontiev’s long-standing reputation as a “liberal” figure. This was supported by information about his interactions with students of the Petrovskaya Academy, whom the authorities viewed with suspicion after the Nechaev case. Thus, Slyozkin argued that the available information about the suspect’s “unreliability” was sufficient to initiate a full-fledged inquiry³⁰.

²⁹ РГИА. Ф. 1405. Оп. 72. Д. 7073. Л. 70 об. — 71.

³⁰ ГА РФ. Ф. 58. Оп. 1. Д. 5. Л. 9–10.



Nikolai Vladimirovich Mezentsov.
From open sources

The Chief sought to defend the investigative methods used by the Gendarme Corps in investigating political crimes and to introduce new practices into the inquiry process. Slyozkin provided an extensive commentary, covering the general problem of conducting inquiries into crimes against the state. He pointed out that the method for conducting inquiries into crimes against the state was not precisely defined by law, “but it is only indicated in the explanation to Article 21 of the Law of May 19 that the communication of initial information during an investigation must be accompanied by extreme caution, deliberation, and generally with a certain tact, under the condition of completely covert surveillance”³¹.

Drawing on his experience, he advocated for greater autonomy for Gendarme Corps officers during the initial stages of investigation, as this provided greater efficiency in investigative actions and a more complete collection of evidence during the initial stages of the investigation. In correspondence with his subordinates, Slyozkin offered recommendations on how to conduct surveillance and investigation without separating them. In one of his circulars, he included clarifications regarding the specific data required to be collected on a person

³¹ Ibid. A. 12.



Konstantin Nikolaevich Zhukov.
From open sources

suspected of a state crime. “The following information [collected secretly about the personality of the accused] must be gathered in as much detail as possible: 1) lifestyle; 2) behavior; 3) morality; 4) level of development of the accused; 5) what he/she does; 6) his/her acquaintances; 7) his/her political standing and reliability; and 8) in particular, the reason or motive for committing a crime or for uttering a criminal idea”³². This template long determined the structure of many investigative materials in political cases. Applying years of accumulated experience in surveillance and covert intelligence gathering, the gendarmes significantly transformed the investigative procedure itself. The recording procedure they proposed differed significantly from the rules for compiling criminal records established by the regulations of January 15 and the amendments of December 9, 1870: the emphasis shifted to the social circle and mentality of the person suspected of a political crime.

The information collected by Gendarme Corps officers might not be directly related to the circumstances of a specific crime. However, as part of political investigations, there was an increasing desire to systematically record the data necessary to elucidate the environment in which revolutionary ideas were spreading.

³² Ibid. A. 49 о6.

Primary materials collected by members of the Gendarme Corps served as the basis for documents subsequently compiled by officials responsible for prosecutorial oversight. Prosecutors' reports and reports were sent to the Ministry of Justice. They contained "all criminal acts committed that go beyond the ordinary, and thus the Minister of Justice received the opportunity to direct the activities of the Prosecutor's office in criminal cases from the very moment they arose until their final resolution"³³. The information contained in these documents formed the basis, among other things, for the tables describing defendants in political cases. Thus entered the next stage in the criminal case's trajectory: beginning with the recording of initial information by gendarme officers, the process continued through the systematization of data in the form of summary tables.

The Ministry of Justice's archives contain materials from the investigative and administrative proceedings in the case of propaganda in Moscow and Vologda Governorate from 1876 to 1878, which demonstrate how a typical investigation into political crimes was completed³⁴. Of particular interest in this case is the content of departmental tables and their role in the document flow of the Third Section and the Ministry of Justice: "List of 20 persons accused in the case of criminal propaganda" and "General list of persons involved in this investigation".

First of all, an analysis of these tables allows us to create a social portrait of the accused: among them, the majority were people from the clergy (children of priests), nobles, commoners and students; most were young people aged 17 to 24³⁵. Women and minors were generally subject to more lenient preventive measures. The document recorded not only personal information and the nature of the charges (active participation in propaganda, possession of banned books, membership in a "criminal society") but also the length of pretrial detention, which

³³ Министерство юстиции за сто лет. 1802–1902. Исторический очерк. СПб.: Сенатская типография, 1902. С. 140.

³⁴ РГИА. Ф. 1405. Оп. 74. Д. 7413.

³⁵ The data presented in the tables confirm the established historiographical view regarding the social composition of the revolutionary populist (*narodnik*) movement. See: Лурье А.Я. Перепись народников: От Нечаева до Дегая. СПб.: Нестор-История, 2022.



Dmitry Nikolaevich Nabokov.
From open sources

for some reached two years and eight months, as well as the requested penalties – from exile to Eastern Siberia to overt or covert police surveillance.

Of particular value is the correspondence between the Third Section and the Ministry of Justice included in the case file, revealing the decision-making mechanism and disagreements regarding punishment. For example, the Minister of Justice initially considered limiting Survovtsev and Polikarpov to police supervision, but the Head of the Third Section, Mezentsev, insisted on their administrative exile³⁶. Subsequently, Deputy Chief Prosecutor K.N. Zhukov proposed to bring to trial only two of the twenty defendants, citing the length of their pretrial detention and the young age of the accused. This was ultimately supported by Justice Minister D.N. Nabokov, who proposed resolving the case administratively for all defendants, with differentiated punishments³⁷.

The document also contains interesting clarifications regarding the identity of the defendant Khazov. The difficulty in determining his identity lay in the fact that two different individuals with the same surname were involved in the case. Correspondence between the Third Section and the Ministry of Justice revealed that the defendant in the present case was Grigory Ivanov Khazov, a tradesman accused of

³⁶ РГИА. Оп. 74. Д. 7413. Л. 73–74 об., 113–115.

³⁷ Ibid. Л. 173–177.

propaganda in Moscow and Vologda Governorate. However, there was initial confusion with another individual – Nikolai Nikolaev Khazov, a teacher who was being prosecuted in a different political case (“Society of Friends”) and for whom exile to Eastern Siberia had already been proposed. In the Third Section’s communication to the Minister of Justice, it was specifically stated that “in this case, the townsman Grigory Ivanov Khazov is only the namesake of the teacher Nikolai Nikolaev Khazov”³⁸. This clarification was necessary to avoid applying a punishment intended for another person to Grigory Khazov, and to limit his detention to covert police surveillance, as with the other defendants.

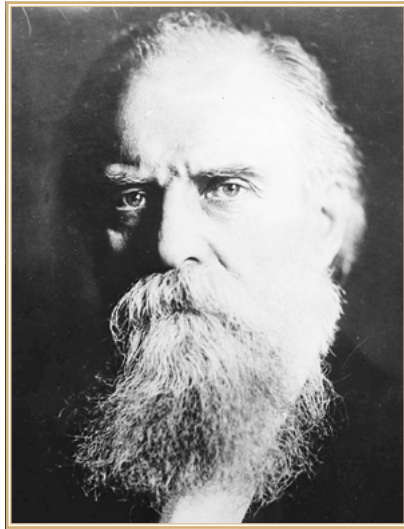
The above-mentioned episode, with the clarification of the identity of the defendant Khazov, demonstrates the importance of cooperation between the Third Section and the Ministry of Justice in the 1870s. The joint work of the two agencies not only allowed for the prompt exchange of information but also avoided serious errors in the imposition of administrative penalties. Thanks to the fact that the Section’s officials had information on various “politically unreliable” individuals³⁹, for the Ministry of Justice, cooperation with the central political investigation agency at that time turned out to be extremely important.

However, in the 1870s, this interaction was also marked by inevitable conflicts caused by the struggle for influence over the course of large-scale political criminal cases. In 1875, one of the prosecutors involved in the investigation of the “propaganda case in the Empire” drafted a *Memorandum on the Organization of the Political Case Archives*⁴⁰, which constituted a unique testimony to the intradepartmental clashes. The author consistently refuted three key theses, apparently advanced in the original memorandum (not present in the file). First, he emphasized an important institutional difference: gendarmerie was subordinate not to the Third Section, but to the Headquarters of the Corps of Gendarmes, and the Regulations of May 19, 1871, made no mention of the Section and assigned it no role in conducting investigations. Second, the author

³⁸ Ibid. Л. 178–178 об.

³⁹ Сидорова М.В. Архивы центральных органов политического сыска // Сидорова М.В. О жандармах, императорах и изобразительном искусстве. Архивные заметки. СПб.: Алетейя, 2023. С. 140–152.

⁴⁰ РГИА. Ф. 1405. Оп. 530. Д. 1108. Л. 133–136.



Nikolai Vasilyevich Tchaikovsky.
From open sources

attributed the gendarmes' effectiveness in solving state crimes not to access to the archives of the Third Section, but to the very nature of their service as a specialized police force, with the time and resources to conduct such activities.

The last accusation was the most pointed: the Third Section not only failed to facilitate the investigations, but also deliberately concealed the information it had, refusing to cooperate. A specific example was cited: the refusal to provide access to the N.V. Tchaikovsky file, which contained important propaganda data, which, in the author's view, directly hindered the investigation. Therefore, the author proposed redefining the role of the Third Section, limiting it to its originally intended function, that is, "the concentration and development of all data of the past and present regarding the internal policy of the country for guidance to the highest government"⁴¹. In other words, the Third Section was assigned the role of a central political archive, where all completed cases would be stored, but which was not to interfere with the ongoing operational work of the gendarmes and their interactions with the prosecutor's office. The document not only justified the need to create a specialized archive of political cases but also documented the profound conflict of jurisdiction and departmental

⁴¹ Ibid. A. 135.

interests that arose shortly after the new system for investigating state crimes was enshrined in law.

This radical proposal to transform the Third Section was never implemented, and the situation in the organization of political investigations only changed in 1880 with the Section's liquidation. Therefore, in the mid- to late 1870s, this essentially central political police body continued to influence criminal investigations of state crimes and shape government opinions about the revolutionary movement. Therefore, following the trends already noted, officials of the Section also resorted to a statistical approach.

In addition to the importance of identifying individuals involved in radical political activity (propaganda, distribution of illegal literature), the authorities recognized the need to study the environment in which revolutionary activity developed. In 1875, the Third Section submitted to the Committee of Ministers the question of a more thorough study of the causes of the development of radical political movements in the Russian Empire. The result of this discussion was a memorandum containing statistical data on propagandists in the 1870s, compiled by Section official M.M. Merkulov.

The structure of this memorandum was built around the identification of four groups of people, who were divided based on the degree of participation and the political unreliability established as a result of the investigations conducted⁴². The author thoroughly analyzed the social and professional composition of each group, as well as the distribution of people within them by gender and age. This allowed him to draw conclusions about the environments in which "anti-government activity" was most active and what might have led to it. The statistical approach and the dynamics of its development also influenced the description of the revolutionary movement, which (description) changed as the "propaganda case" unfolded.

The compilation of political investigation materials acquired particular importance in the 1870s for a number of reasons. First of all, it was on the basis of this data that administrative penalties were imposed, and they were applied increasingly widely as the number

⁴² Статистические сведения о пропагандистах 70-х годов в обработке III Отделения. Сообщил Н.И. Сидоров // Каторга и ссылка. 1928. №1(38). С. 29–30.

of defendants expanded⁴³. Furthermore, the accumulation of information made it possible to track repeat offenders, which influenced the severity of sentences – both administrative and judicial. Finally, the desire to understand the nature of the revolutionary movement prompted the authorities to turn to social analysis, resulting in numerous departmental memos proposing various strategies for combating “revolutionary propaganda”.

The 1870s marked a turning point in the evolution of political case management in the Russian Empire. Under the influence of the Judicial Reform of 1864 and the law of May 19, 1871, a new procedure for investigating state crimes emerged, in which gendarme officers played a central role, and the collection of information on “unreliable” individuals became a systematic procedure. This reflected the general trend toward rationalization of record-keeping, characteristic of criminal statistics at the time.

However, the specific nature of political cases – the vagueness of the concepts of “state” and “political” crimes, and the administrative nature of most of them – led to the development of specific data recording practices aimed less at proving a specific crime than at revealing the social “portrait” of the revolutionary milieu. The debate that erupted between the Third Section, the Gendarme Corps, and the Prosecutor’s office demonstrates that the unification of records ran into institutional contradictions and created differences in understanding the goals of investigation. Nevertheless, it was during this period that the foundations for the subsequent centralization of political investigation were laid. The evolution of record-keeping in the 1870s not only reflected changes in the mechanisms of political control but also became a tool for constructing categories of “political unreliability”, shaping the descriptive language the authorities used to understand and classify the revolutionary movement.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.

⁴³ Рубцов А.А. «Политическая неблагонадежность» и административная ссылка в Российской империи в 1870–1880-е годы: наказание, контроль, интеграция // Под ред. А.Б. Богомолова. Пятые Карамзинские чтения, Санкт-Петербург, 15–16 мая 2024 года. СПб.: Аврора, 2024. С. 120–126.



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Original paper



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The Formation of the Social Base of Revolutionary Terrorism in the Russian Empire in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Abstract

This article examines the process by which the social base of revolutionary terrorism in the Russian Empire expanded during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The author argues that one of the principal factors behind the growth of revolutionary terrorism was not only the development of terrorist organizations themselves, but also the gradual expansion of their social base to include young people, segments of the student body, the radical intelligentsia, socially unstable urban strata, women, and other groups experiencing political alienation and social frustration. Particular attention is devoted to several interrelated issues: the current state of scholarship on the subject; the profile of the typical terrorist bomber; the mechanisms by which terrorist attacks were carried out; the role of the social environment and the press in disseminating a culture of terrorism; the ethics of bomb terrorism as

a system of moral justifications for violence; the ideological infrastructure of terrorism, represented by the *Narodnaya Volya* movement and related organizations, as well as their programmatic texts; the image of the female terrorist and its significance for the expansion of the terrorist milieu; and, finally, the social and political groups that opposed the ideology and practice of bomb terrorism. The article concludes that revolutionary terrorism should be understood not merely as a form of political practice or a collection of underground organizations, but also as a distinct social process possessing its own environment of formation, expansion, ideological self-reproduction, and public resonance.

Keywords:

Revolutionary terrorism; Social base of terrorism; Russian Empire; Political violence; Terrorist bomber; Public attitudes; Youth radicalization; Female terrorist; *Narodnaya Volya*; *Catechism of a Revolutionary*; Late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

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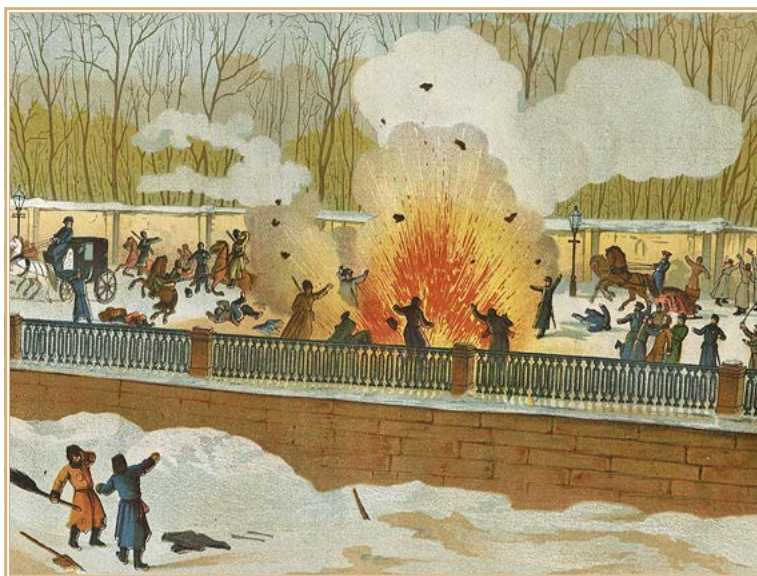


evolutionary terrorism in the Russian Empire during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries remains one of the most dramatic and methodologically challenging subjects in Russian history. It cannot be reduced either to the history of individual assassination attempts, to the biographies of the best-known terrorists, or to the activities of underground political parties as such. The terrorism of this period was not merely a form of political violence, but also a distinctive social process that encompassed the ideological justification of assassination, the creation of a sympathetic and imitative milieu, the glorification of violent action, and the establishment of a stable mechanism for reproducing the revolutionary underground.

The history of Russian terrorism is often narrated through its most striking episodes: Dmitry Karakozov's attempt on the life of the Tsar, the activities of *Narodnaya Volya*, the assassination of Alexander II, the Socialist Revolutionary Party's Combat Organization, assassination attempts against ministers and governors-general, and the wave of mass terrorism that accompanied the Revolution of 1905–1907. Such an approach inevitably highlights the dramatic character of political violence, yet at the same time obscures a more fundamental question: why did terrorism come to be regarded by a segment of Russian society not merely as an intelligible, but as an attractive method of political action?

Without answering this question, it is impossible to understand either the scale of revolutionary terrorism or the reasons for its persistence. Revolutionary terrorism expanded not simply because underground organizations and militant groups existed, but because late imperial Russian society produced a social environment in which violence could be perceived as an expression of historical duty, righteous retribution, sacrificial heroism, and even personal self-realization. This environment was not identical with the terrorist organizations themselves. It was considerably broader, encompassing sympathizers, apologists, admirers, imitators, supporters, those who provided shelter, and those who disseminated terrorist mythology, thereby expanding the social base of political violence.

It is for this reason that the present study aims to analyze not only revolutionary terrorism as a form of political practice, but also the process by which its social base was formed. To achieve this objective, several tasks are undertaken: to reconstruct the profile of the average



Assassination of Emperor Alexander II. 1 March 1881. Postcard.
From open sources

terrorist bomber; to demonstrate the role of the social environment, the press, and the concept of “propaganda by the deed” in the expansion of terrorism; to trace the emergence of the ethical framework of bombing terrorism; to examine the significance of ideological texts and *Narodnaya Volya* organizations in cultivating a terrorist milieu; to analyze the role of the female terrorist as a distinctive symbolic figure; and, finally, to characterize the social and political circles that opposed terrorist ideology and practice.

Methodologically, the article proceeds from the premise that terrorism should be understood as a socio-communicative system encompassing organization, ideology, moral justification, the symbolic image of the heroic martyr, the dissemination of terrorist acts through information channels, and an environment conducive to imitation. Only within such a framework is it possible to understand why revolutionary terrorism in Russia outgrew the confines of a narrow underground movement and became a major factor in the destabilization of society.

Revolutionary terrorism in the Russian Empire of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is among those subjects that, despite their apparent historiographical maturity, continue to contain significant internal gaps. Historians have produced a substantial body of scholarship devoted to individual terrorist attacks, the biographies of



Alexander II's uniform, torn apart by the bomb explosion.
Collection of the State Hermitage Museum

prominent militants, the programs and practices of revolutionary parties, and the government's efforts to combat political violence. Yet, as T. Rocchi rightly observes, there is still no comprehensive study covering the entire period from Dmitry Karakozov's assassination attempt in 1866 to 1911 while simultaneously analyzing the ideology and tactics of the various parties and movements, government policy, public attitudes towards terrorism, and the distinctions between terrorism proper and other forms of mass violence¹.

This historiographical incompleteness is of fundamental importance for the subject of the present article. When scholarly attention is focused primarily on *Narodnaya Volya* and the Socialist Revolutionary Party's Combat Organization, the impression is created that terrorism consisted merely of a succession of spectacular attacks carried out by a relatively small circle of conspirators. Such a perspective, however, leads to an underestimation of the true scale of terrorism, particularly during the First Russian Revolution, when terrorist activity involved representatives of a wide variety of parties, political currents, and peripheral groups².

¹ Рокки Т. Политический терроризм в Российской империи в 1901–1911 гг. и его место в исторической памяти России // Известия АлтГУ. Исторические науки и археология. 2020. № 6 (116). С. 51–52.

² Ibid. С. 52–53.

Anna Geifman has specifically emphasized that, although both Soviet and Western scholarship addressed nineteenth-century Russian terrorism – especially the “heroic period” of 1878–1881 – the massive wave of revolutionary violence that unfolded in the early twentieth century long failed to receive adequate monographic treatment. Her own study was conceived precisely as an attempt to move beyond the established historiographical canon, in which *Narodnaya Volya* had been examined in considerable detail, whereas the outbreak of terrorism between 1894 and 1917 remained much less thoroughly investigated³.

Another characteristic of the existing historiography is its fragmentation. Some studies focus primarily on terrorist organizations, others on political ethics, still others on government countermeasures, and yet others on the place of terrorism in public memory and ideological debate. The question of terrorism’s social base, however, generally remains peripheral. Even when scholars discuss the radicalization of the intelligentsia, young people, women, or ethno-confessional minorities, these issues are usually treated as secondary rather than as central to understanding the mechanisms by which the terrorist milieu expanded.

Particular attention should also be paid to the evolution of interpretations of terrorism within Russian historiography. Soviet scholarship was largely subordinated to the overarching conception of the Revolution of 1905–1907 as the “dress rehearsal” for 1917. Within this framework, Socialist Revolutionary and anarchist terrorism was typically portrayed as politically misguided, petty-bourgeois, or objectively harmful, whereas Bolshevik violence was justified through a different vocabulary, often employing euphemisms such as “guerrilla actions”. As a result, the issue of terrorism’s social appeal and the extent of its public support was effectively relegated to the background⁴.

Although post-Soviet historiography has benefited from greater intellectual freedom and thematic diversity, it has not fully remedied this deficiency. On the one hand, a growing number of substantial studies have appeared on pre-revolutionary terrorism; on the other, there remains either a tendency to concentrate on individual assassination

³ Гейфман А. Революционный террор в России, 1894–1917. С. 5–8.

⁴ Рокки Т. Опр. cit. С. 53–55.

attempts or an inclination to situate terrorism exclusively within broader discussions of political turmoil, the crisis of statehood, or revolutionary catastrophe. Consequently, the social mechanisms underlying the expansion of the terrorist milieu remain insufficiently reconstructed.

In this regard, the historiographically most significant works are those that examine terrorism as a phenomenon possessing its own moral and social logic. Foremost among these are the studies of B.N. Kashnikov and O.V. Budnitsky. In Kashnikov's interpretation, terrorism is inseparable from the concept of justice and, consequently, from the social environment prepared to regard violent acts as morally permissible. From this perspective, terrorism cannot be reduced to the mere technique of assassination; rather, it depends upon the moral consent of at least part of society. For the purposes of the present study, it is therefore particularly important to shift the focus from the history of individual terrorist attacks to the history of the social milieu capable of justifying, disseminating, and reproducing such acts⁵.

Accordingly, the principal historiographical task today is to examine terrorism as a distinctive form of political culture encompassing ideological justification, organizational structures, moral legitimization, public resonance, and the self-reproduction of its human resources.

The average terrorist bomber

The most emblematic figure of revolutionary terrorism in the early twentieth century was the terrorist bomber. He embodied the convergence of individual political violence, public spectacle, and the symbolism of self-sacrifice. In public perception, the bomber appeared not merely as a member of an underground organization but as an individual of direct action, capable of challenging the state single-handedly. Reconstructing his social and psychological profile is therefore of fundamental importance for understanding the mechanisms through which the social base of terrorism expanded⁶.

⁵ *Кашников Б.Н. Идея справедливости в теории и практике русского терроризма конца XIX — начала XX века // Российский научный журнал. 2008. № 4. С. 12–15.*

⁶ *Гейфман А. Опр. cit. С. 167–169.*

The historiography, together with evidence drawn from archival sources, makes it possible to identify several recurring characteristics of this type. Above all, the terrorist bomber was typically young and occupied a transitional social position. He was most often a former student, a current student, or a first-generation industrial worker, originating from the *meshchanstvo* (petty bourgeoisie), the *raznochintsy* (educated commoner), or the lower intelligentsia. Such individuals had not yet become firmly integrated into the existing social order but had already entered a state of political and moral radicalization. It was precisely this condition of social incompleteness that made them especially receptive to terrorist propaganda⁷.

An equally important characteristic was a pronounced tendency towards self-dramatization. The bomber perceived his actions not as ordinary criminal offences but as historical gestures, acts of righteous retribution, and expressions of personal heroism. Particularly significant in this respect is B.N. Kashnikov's conclusion that Russian terrorism constituted not only a political but also an ethical practice: its participants sought to interpret violence as morally justified. This ethical framework made it possible to combine a willingness to kill with an unshakable conviction of one's own moral righteousness⁸.

The demonstrative function of bomb attacks was no less significant. A terrorist act was intended not only to eliminate a particular representative of the authorities but also to generate a powerful public effect. Consequently, figures such as Karpovich, Balmashov, Sazonov, and Kalyaev became not merely participants in individual assassination attempts but revolutionary symbols. Their historical significance derived not solely from the acts of violence themselves but also from the powerful impression these acts produced upon the wider radical milieu⁹.

Particularly revealing is the image of Ivan Kalyaev, whose place in revolutionary mythology became associated with the motif of moral selectivity. His refusal to throw a bomb when he saw children in the Grand Duke's carriage was subsequently transformed into a symbol

⁷ Ibid. C. 5–8, 167–169.

⁸ Ibid. C. 167–169.

⁹ Кафтан В.В., Путятин В.Д. Исторические корни и эволюция терроризма. Новосибирск, 2015. С. 27–34.

suggesting that terrorist violence supposedly retained certain moral limits. Regardless of the extent to which this episode was later mythologized, the essential point remains that the bomber came to be portrayed as an individual who combined unwavering determination with an appearance of moral purity. This image proved especially attractive to a segment of the younger generation¹⁰.

Archival materials from the political police, widely employed in the historiography, demonstrate that by the beginning of the twentieth century the terrorist milieu could no longer be reduced to a narrow circle of ideological conspirators. Official documents reveal much broader networks, transitional groups, and peripheral forms of radical activity in which the terrorist bomber appeared not as an isolated exception but as a product of an expanding environment of political agitation and revolutionary mobilization¹¹.

Thus, the average terrorist bomber of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries may be characterised as a young man occupying a transitional social position, most commonly originating from the *raznochintsy*, the petty bourgeoisie, the working class, or the lower intelligentsia, experiencing social insecurity, political radicalization, and moral maximalism, and inclined to perceive violence as both a form of historical action and a personal heroic mission. It was precisely the combination of these characteristics that made the terrorist bomber one of the central figures in the expansion of the social base of revolutionary terrorism.

The social environment and the expansion of the social base of terrorism

The expansion of the social base of revolutionary terrorism occurred not only through the direct recruitment of new members into militant organizations but also through the formation of a broader social environment in which terrorist violence gradually ceased to be perceived as entirely alien or unequivocally criminal. Terrorism became sustainable

¹⁰ Кашиников Б.Н. *Оп. cit.* С. 23–24.

¹¹ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. ОО.242. Д. 113. Л. 1; Д. 25. Ч. 101. Л. 6; Оп. 246. Д. 122. Л. 55.

when it was surrounded by a circle of sympathizers, apologists, admirers, or those who regarded it as historically explicable¹².

One of the principal preconditions for this development was the combination of social discontent, the political exclusiveness of the autocratic regime, and a growing crisis of confidence in legal forms of political participation. Under such circumstances, terrorism came to be viewed by part of society as an effective response to governmental arbitrariness. Anna Geifman convincingly demonstrates that revolutionary violence extended far beyond the confines of clandestine circles and acquired the character of a socially significant mass phenomenon. This development cannot be explained without taking into account the broader social environment that provided terrorism with public resonance¹³.

The youth milieu was of particular importance. For many young people, the terrorist act was perceived not merely as an isolated episode of political struggle but as an example of decisive historical action. Youthful idealism, the uncertainty of social status, and disillusionment with legal methods of political struggle made the figure of the terrorist bomber especially attractive. In this sense, a terrorist attack was directed not only against the authorities but also towards potential recruits, serving simultaneously as a political signal and a mechanism of emotional contagion¹⁴.

This is precisely how the historical practice of “propaganda by the deed” should be understood. A terrorist act derived its significance not only from the elimination of its intended target but also from its demonstrative character, designed to produce a powerful public impression: to reveal the vulnerability of the state, inspire sympathizers, and establish a behavioral model for others to emulate. The terrorist bomber thus functioned not only as an operative but also as an exemplar¹⁵.

The public sphere likewise played a significant role in this process. Through the periodical press, terrorism moved beyond the confines of

¹² Рокки Т. *Op. cit.* С. 54–55.

¹³ Гейфман А. Революционный террор в России, 1894–1917. С. 32–34, 167–169.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* С. 167–169.

¹⁵ Будницкий О.В. Терроризм в российском освободительном движении: идеология, этика, психология (вторая половина XIX — начало XX в.). С. 145–178; Кашиников Б.Н. *Op. cit.* С. 12–15.



The carriage destroyed by the bomb explosion in which Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich was traveling. Moscow Kremlin, February 1905.
State Archive of the Russian Federation. Ф. 124. Оп. 67. Д. 591а. Л. 30

the underground into the realm of public discussion. Newspapers and journals communicated not only fear and condemnation but also moral ambiguity, latent sympathy, and elements of admiration for “decisive action”. In doing so, they fostered not legal acceptance but a form of cultural tolerance towards terrorism¹⁶.

Archival materials produced by the Russian political police confirm that the authorities confronted not only individual terrorists but also a much broader radical milieu comprising transitional associations, peripheral groups, circles of sympathizers, and other forms of unstable revolutionary activity. The central problem therefore lay not simply in the existence of terrorists but in the existence of an environment that made their emergence and continual reproduction possible¹⁷.

Thus, the social environment of revolutionary terrorism emerged at the intersection of social discontent, political dissatisfaction, youthful idealism, and the moral legitimization of violence. It was this environment that transformed terrorism from the practice of relatively small underground circles into a socially reproducible phenomenon.

¹⁶ Кашиников Б.Н. *Op. cit.* С. 15–18.

¹⁷ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 242. Д. 88. Л. 1, 7–7 об.; Оп. 244. Д. 9. ч 55 лит. В. Л. 7–7 об., 14; Д. 340. Л. 22 об. – 23; Оп. 246. Д. 122. Л. 55.

The mechanism of terrorist acts and the expansion of the social base of bombing terrorism

A historical analysis of revolutionary terrorism in the Russian Empire demonstrates that a terrorist act was not a spontaneous outburst of violence but rather a relatively stable technology of political action. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, terrorist practice had developed its own established pattern: the selection of a symbolically significant target, preliminary surveillance, clandestine preparation, the acquisition of weapons and explosives, the allocation of responsibilities within the group, and, finally, the public exploitation of the completed act as an instrument of political and psychological influence. A terrorist attack should therefore be regarded not merely as an isolated criminal offence but also as an element of a broader social and communicative strategy¹⁸.

It is revealing that Dmitry Karakozov's assassination attempt of 4 April 1866 already embodied this logic. In his proclamation, he declared that even if he failed to kill the Emperor, others would nevertheless "follow his path", and that his own death would serve as "an example" to them. This formulation already contained one of the central ideas of subsequent revolutionary terrorism: the terrorist act was conceived not only as the elimination of a target but also as an example intended to inspire future imitation. From the very outset, terrorist violence was planned as an act possessing not only immediate physical consequences but also a broader social afterlife¹⁹.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, this logic had become much more explicit. The early acts of Socialist Revolutionary terrorism – Pyotr Karpovich's shooting of Nikolai Bogolepov in 1901, Stepan Balmashov's assassination of Dmitry Sipyagin in 1902, Egor Sazonov's killing of Vyacheslav Plehve, and Ivan Kalyaev's assassination attempt on Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich – demonstrate an already established model of revolutionary action. The victim was expected to possess political symbolic value; the attack itself had to be

¹⁸ Гейфман А. *Революционный террор в России, 1894–1917* / Пер. с англ. Е. Дорман. М.: КРОН-ПРЕСС, 1997. С. 5–10.

¹⁹ Кафтан В.В., Путятин В.Д. *Ор. cit.* С. 12–13 (о Д.В. Каракозове, ишутинской «Организации» и прокламации «Друзьям-рабочим!»).

bold, spectacular, and easily recounted; and the perpetrator had to be perceived as a person of exceptional determination. In this sense, the terrorist act constituted a form of political drama in which not only the outcome but also the manner of its execution was of crucial importance²⁰.

B.N. Kashnikov rightly emphasizes that the early activities of the Socialist Revolutionary Combat Organization made such a profound impression precisely because of the “scope and precision” of its terrorist operations. The first attacks were perceived as highly selective, creating the impression that each “Tsarist satrap” was being punished specifically for his own actions. This moral and political framework made it possible to present assassination not as random violence but as a form of revolutionary justice. In this way, public sympathy – and, consequently, the expansion of terrorism’s social base – became possible²¹.

The mechanism of a terrorist attack itself consisted of several recurring stages. The first was ideological justification and the selection of a target. The intended victim had to personify state authority, repression, or “reaction”, thereby lending himself to political symbolization. The second stage involved organizational and clandestine preparation: surveillance of the target, selection of the route, preparation of safe houses, establishment of communications, and acquisition of weapons and explosives. The third stage was the technical execution itself, including the manufacture of bombs, the allocation of operational roles, and the calculation of the optimal moment for the attack. The fourth and final stage was public dissemination, when the attack began to assume a new existence as a political message and a signal to society²².

It is particularly at this fourth stage that the connection between the terrorist act and the expansion of terrorism’s social base becomes most apparent. Geifman demonstrates that with the emergence of the Socialist Revolutionary Party (SR), terrorism acquired not only an ideological foundation but also an organizational infrastructure. The party possessed an extensive organizational network, financial resources,

²⁰ Кафтан В.В., Путьтин В.Д. *Op. cit.* С. 34–42; Возникновение терроризма. С. 18–27.

²¹ Кашиников Б.Н. *Op. cit.* С. 20–22.

²² Гейфман А. *Op. cit.* С. 57–63.



Assassination of Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich.
 Cover of *Le Petit Journal*, No. 746, 5 March 1905. *Bibliothèque nationale de France*

and a technical base that facilitated the production of bombs and the maintenance of militant operatives. Even more importantly, however, the first successful bombing was conceived as a means of attracting “thousands of supporters”. Thus, from the outset, the terrorist act was regarded as an instrument for expanding the movement through shock, emotional impact, sympathy, and imitation²³.

In this respect, the press played an especially significant role. As Geifman observes, newspapers throughout the Empire reported almost daily on assassination attempts, bombings, political expropriations, armed attacks, kidnappings, and acts of extortion. The very regularity of this reporting transformed terrorism into a permanent feature of public life. It ceased to be perceived as an exceptional occurrence and instead became integrated into everyday political consciousness²⁴.

The press amplified the social impact of terrorist attacks in several ways. First, through the serial nature of its reporting: society was

²³ Ibid. C. 60–63.

²⁴ Гейфман А. *Op. cit.* C. 32–34, 95–101.

constantly confronted with new accounts of political violence and gradually came to perceive terrorism as an established method of political action. Second, through personalization: readers became familiar with the names of terrorists and their victims and followed the details of assassination attempts, trials, executions, and escapes. Third, through unintended romanticization: even while condemning terrorism, newspapers were compelled to describe the boldness, precision, self-sacrifice, and dramatic character of the attacks. Finally, through the effect of imitation: terrorist acts became easily retold public narratives suitable for discussion in political circles and for incorporation into the mythology of radical youth²⁵.

It is particularly significant that Geifman's empirical research drew, in part, upon the SR's archive of newspaper clippings, which contained extensive reports on terrorist attacks and the government's efforts to suppress them. Among the materials she cites are clippings from *Russkie Vedomosti*. This demonstrates that the periodical press was not merely a passive backdrop but an essential component in the functioning of terrorism as a social phenomenon. It transformed terrorist attacks from clandestine events into publicly visible occurrences and thereby unintentionally contributed to the expansion of their social resonance²⁶.

It is at this point that a direct connection emerges with the previously outlined portrait of the terrorist bomber²⁷. His appeal was determined not only by his personal characteristics — youth, moral absolutism, and transitional social status — but also by the fact that society witnessed his actions through the press. Newspapers transformed an underground militant into a public figure. Even where formal condemnation was expressed, the detailed descriptions of courage, precision, and dramatic execution elevated the bomber into a recognizable type of political hero.

Biographical narratives further reinforced this effect. Pyotr Karpovich was presented as a former student who shot the Minister of

²⁵ Ibid. C. 95–101.

²⁶ Ibid. C. 27–28.

²⁷ Русские ведомости. 1908. 16 марта. Архив Партии социалистов-революционеров.

Education; Stepan Balmashov as a young Socialist Revolutionary who appeared before the Minister of the Interior disguised in an officer's uniform; Egor Sazonov as the bomber who assassinated Vyacheslav Plehve; and Ivan Kalyaev as a figure surrounded by an aura of moral selectivity. Each of these cases conformed to the same social pattern: a young man carrying out a decisive and historically significant act against the state. Consequently, the terrorist attack became not merely an event but a model of possible life for future radicals²⁸.

Equally revealing was the response of the revolutionary milieu itself to the first attacks of this new wave of terrorism. Geifman notes that following Karpovich's assassination attempt and Balmashov's killing of Sipyagin, many independent socialists and revolutionaries associated with the traditions of *Narodnaya Volya* celebrated the heroic deeds of both men. This indicates that the expansion of terrorism's social base occurred not only at the level of the general public but also within the intellectual and political opposition itself. The terrorist act came to symbolize a new style of revolutionary struggle that could be glorified and presented as a model for emulation²⁹.

The opposing reactions are equally instructive. Precisely because terrorist methods possessed genuine social appeal, Social Democrats – including Georgy Plekhanov, Vera Zasulich, and others – considered it necessary to wage a sustained polemic against them. Plekhanov argued that under contemporary conditions terrorism was “not expedient and therefore harmful”, while Zasulich opposed entrusting the cause of liberation to a “handful of heroes”, thereby reducing the masses to the role of passive spectators. The very necessity of such polemics demonstrates that the attraction of individual terrorism was not merely theoretical but represented a tangible social force³⁰.

The process by which terrorism's social base expanded is even more clearly illustrated by the records of the political police. Documents preserved in the State Archive of the Russian Federation reveal not only individual terrorists but also a much broader radical environment

²⁸ Кафтан В.В., Путятин В.Д. *Op. cit.* С. 34–42; Возникновение терроризма. С. 18–27.

²⁹ Гейфман А. *Op. cit.* С. 49–53.

³⁰ *Ibid.* С. 53–55.

comprising transitional associations, peripheral groups, unstable terrorist alliances, and circles of sympathizers extending well beyond the core membership of political parties. These records provide documentary evidence that terrorism spread not simply through the activities of several organizations but as an environment of progressive involvement, in which the path to participation might begin with curiosity, develop into sympathy, and ultimately culminate in logistical assistance or direct participation in terrorist operations³¹.

Particularly striking is the episode recorded by Geifman in which adolescents, “following the example of adults”, attempted to disarm policemen, while one boy even fashioned a Browning pistol replica out of soap and succeeded in confiscating several genuine revolvers from police officers. The importance of this incident lies not in its anecdotal character but in what it reveals. It demonstrates that the behavioral model of terrorism penetrated youth culture – and even childhood – not primarily through profound ideological conviction but through imitation, play, and fascination with exemplary conduct. The expansion of terrorism’s social base therefore occurred not only within the organized underground but also within the broader culture of violent political action³².

Thus, the mechanism of terrorist action in the Russian Empire during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries encompassed not only preparation, clandestine organization, technical execution, and the attack itself, but also its subsequent social existence. A terrorist act became a political event, a media phenomenon, a subject of moral controversy, an object of imitation, and an instrument for recruiting new adherents to the radical movement. This constituted one of the principal mechanisms through which the social base of bombing terrorism expanded. The terrorist bomber was not merely a product of his social environment but also one of its principal creators: his biography, his actions, his visibility in the press, and his subsequent mythologization all served to produce new generations of potential bombers.

³¹ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 242. Д. 88. Л. 1, 7–7 об.; Оп. 244. Д. 340. Л. 22 об. – 23; Д. 9. Ч. 55. Лит. В. Л. 7–7 об., 14; Оп. 246. Д. 122. Л. 55.

³² Гейфман А. *Op. cit.* С. 121–123.

The ethics of bombing terrorism and the expansion of its social base

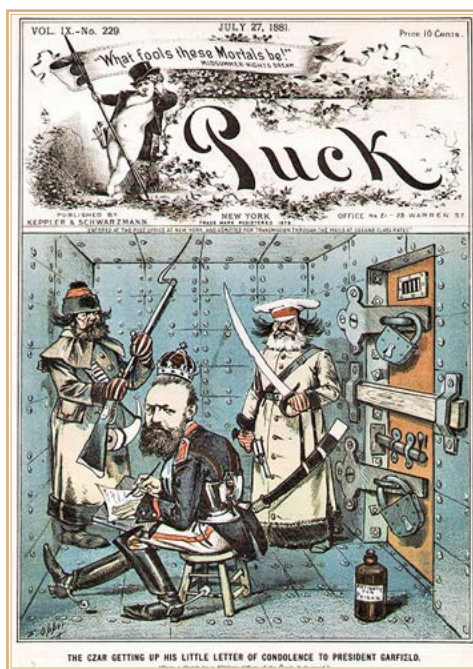
To understand the mechanisms underlying the expansion of the social base of revolutionary terrorism, it is insufficient to describe only the organizational structures of the underground movement, the techniques of assassination, or the social composition of militant groups. Equally important is an examination of the ethics of bombing terrorism that gradually emerged within revolutionary circles and rendered violent action not only internally justifiable but, in many cases, attractive to young people. This ethical framework consisted of a distinctive set of ideas in which the terrorist act was understood as morally permissible, politically meaningful, and personally ennobling. It was precisely this ethical system that transformed terrorism from an isolated criminal offence into a mechanism for expanding its social base³³. As Kashnikov demonstrates, Russian terrorism possessed not only a political but also a distinctly ethical dimension. Its participants sought to portray violence not as mere murder but as historical retribution, a sacrifice undertaken for the people, and a means of restoring justice. In other words, bombing terrorism rested upon a particular moral logic in which the terrorist appeared not as a criminal but as a person fulfilling a moral duty³⁴.

This ethical system consisted of several interrelated elements. First was the idea of the terrorist's moral superiority over a "passive" society: the militant was portrayed as someone who acted rather than merely spoke. Second was the concept of selective retribution: violence was directed not indiscriminately but against representatives of state authority, political reaction, or police repression. Third was the ideal of self-sacrifice: the terrorist consciously accepted arrest, execution, penal servitude, or death as integral components of a heroic mission. Fourth was the principle of exemplary action – the belief that a single decisive act could morally and politically inspire others.

It is this final element that is especially significant. Karakozov's proclamation already contains a clear formulation of this principle:

³³ Гейфман А. *Op. cit.* С. 49–55; Кашиников Б.Н. *Op. cit.* С. 12–15.

³⁴ Кашиников Б.Н. *Op. cit.* С. 15–18.



Alexander III receives condolences from U.S. President James A. Garfield.
Cover of Puck, 27 July 1881. From open sources

even if his attempt failed, “there will be others who will follow my path”, and his own death “will serve as an example and inspire them”. Here we encounter an early and highly revealing expression of terrorist ethics: the terrorist act is conceived as a moral example intended to encourage imitation. Thus, even during the earliest phase of Russian revolutionary terrorism, violent action was understood not merely as an act of violence but as a means of educating future revolutionaries³⁵.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, this ethical framework assumed a more explicit and widespread form. The first prominent figures of the new wave of terrorism – Pyotr Karpovich and Stepan Balmashov – rapidly acquired significance not merely as perpetrators of individual attacks but as moral and political symbols. Contemporary sources explicitly note that, following their actions, many independent socialists and revolutionaries associated with the traditions of *Narodnaya Volya* celebrated the heroic deeds of Karpovich and Balmashov.

³⁵ Шушунов А.С. Возникновение и развитие терроризма в истории России на разных этапах ее становления. Отличие терроризма и террористического акта // Вестник науки. 2025. № 1 (82). С. 402–407; Кафтан В.В., Путятин В.Д. *Op. cit.* С. 12–13.

This demonstrates that the terrorist act functioned not only as an event but also as a model of behaviour that could be admired, glorified, and presented as a norm for a new generation³⁶.

The appeal of the ethics of bombing terrorism to young people derived from several factors. It offered a simple moral framework that divided the world into oppressors and fighters, the guilty and the vengeful, the passive and the active. It transformed violence into the language of heroism. It resolved the moral contradiction between killing and conscience by proposing that violence became ethically permissible if committed “in the name of the people”, “in the name of justice”, or “against executioners”. Finally, it was closely connected with the principle of “propaganda by the deed”: the terrorist act was understood as an action intended to inspire others. Every “heroic” deed thus became an instrument of moral contagion within the revolutionary milieu³⁷.

The press played an exceptionally important role in disseminating this ethical framework. Newspapers throughout the Empire reported almost daily on assassination attempts, bombings, “expropriations” (*exes*), armed attacks, and other forms of revolutionary violence. As a consequence, terrorism ceased to appear as an exceptional underground phenomenon and became a familiar element of the public information space³⁸. At the same time, newspapers communicated not only the fact of the terrorist act but also its ethical framing: courage, audacity, self-sacrifice, refusal to repent, and willingness to face execution.

Thus, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Russian Empire had developed not merely a practice of bombing terrorism but also an ethics of terrorism — a system of moral norms, values, and behavioral models that rendered violent action internally legitimate and socially contagious. This ethical framework became one of the principal factors in the formation and expansion of terrorism’s social base.

³⁶ Гейфман А. *Op. cit.* С. 49–53.

³⁷ *Ibid*; Кашиников Б.Н. *Op. cit.* С. 18–24.

³⁸ Гейфман А. *Op. cit.* С. 27–28; Кашиников Б.Н. *Идея справедливости в теории и практике русского терроризма конца XIX — начала XX века*; Geifman A. *Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894–1917*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993. P. 5–12; Budnitskii O.V. *Op. cit.* P. 145–178.

Narodnaya Volya organizations and ideological texts as factors in the formation of terrorism's social base

The formation of the social base of revolutionary terrorism proceeded not only through individual assassination attempts, militant organizations, and the practice of “propaganda by the deed”, but also through the creation of a stable ideological environment in which violence received a comprehensive worldview-based justification. This environment was shaped by revolutionary circles, secret societies, populist organizations, and programmatic texts that interpreted terrorism as a morally permissible, historically necessary, and politically effective method of struggle. In this sense, the social base of terrorism was not only socially constituted but also doctrinally constructed³⁹.

Historically, the most important precursors of developed revolutionary terrorism were the organizations and circles of the 1860s and 1870s, within which a gradual transition occurred from propaganda, conspiratorial activity, and revolutionary romanticism to the acceptance of political violence as an independent method of struggle. Already within the early Ishutin circles and the associated “Organization”, to which Dmitry Karakozov belonged, the propaganda of utopian socialism was combined with terrorist tactics. This is of particular importance, for terrorism emerged here not as an external addition to ideology but as one of its practical means of implementation⁴⁰.

A special place in the early genealogy of Russian terrorism belongs to Sergei Nechaev's organization *Narodnaya Rasprava* (“People's Retribution”). Unlike the later *Narodnaya Volya*, it never developed into a mass movement, yet it played an exceptional role in formulating the radical ethics of the revolutionary underground. Its historical significance lay less in its practical achievements than in its creation of an extreme model of the revolutionary, for whom neither private morality,

³⁹ Покку Т. *Op. cit.* C. 51–55; Geifman A. *Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894–1917*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993. P. 27–35; Daly J.W. “Political Crime in Late Imperial Russia”. *The Journal of Modern History*. 2002. Vol. 74. No. 1. P. 74–103; Stockdale M.K. “Politics, Morality and Violence: Kadet Liberals and the Question of Terror, 1902–1911”. *Russian History*. 1995. Vol. 22. No. 4. P. 455–504.

⁴⁰ Шушунюв А.С. *Op. cit.* C. 402–407; Geifman A. *Op. cit.* P. 5–12.

nor social obligations, nor personal attachments possessed any value outside the cause of destruction. It was here that the idea first emerged with particular force that the revolutionary must become completely alienated from ordinary society and recognize as morally legitimate everything that served the cause of revolution⁴¹.

The next stage was associated with the organization *Zemlya i Volya* (*Land and Liberty*), which became the principal organizational center of revolutionary populism. Its importance lies in the fact that within its ranks emerged the fundamental division from which two radically different models of revolutionary practice subsequently developed. The split of 1879 into *Narodnaya Volya* and *Cherny Peredel* (*Black Repartition/Distribution*) represented not merely a tactical disagreement but a fundamental choice between two distinct conceptions of revolutionary action⁴².

Cherny Peredel remained committed to political agitation, land redistribution, and long-term work among the peasantry, thereby representing an anti-terrorist alternative within the populist movement. Its significance for the present study lies precisely in this contrast: it demonstrates that the revolutionary movement contained an alternative path that did not revolve around the cult of individual political violence.

The path chosen by *Narodnaya Volya*, however, was fundamentally different. This organization was the first to provide terrorism with a relatively coherent political and moral framework. *Narodnaya Volya* became one of the earliest mass organizations to regard terrorism as the shortest path to equality and justice. Its historical uniqueness lies precisely in the fact that it transformed terrorism from an occasional tactic into a normative element of revolutionary strategy, integrated into its conception of revolutionary morality⁴³.

Narodnaya Volya is significant not merely because of its assassination of Alexander II. The organization's historical importance lay in the fact that it developed a model in which the terrorist act became a means not only of combating the state but also of consolidating its own ranks, demonstrating in practice that resistance to the government

⁴¹ Кашиников Б.Н. *Op. cit.*; Budnitskii O.V. *Op. cit.* P. 145–178.

⁴² Шушуннов А.С. *Op. cit.* С. 403–404; Кафтан В.В., Путятин В.Д. *Op. cit.* С. 14–18; Geifman A. *Op. cit.* P. 13–20.

⁴³ Кашиников Б.Н. *Op. cit.* С. 49–50; Budnitskii O.V. *Op. cit.* P. 156–161.

was possible, sustaining revolutionary morale, and cultivating “forces fit for and accustomed to struggle”. Terrorism was thus conceived not simply as a blow against the enemy but also as an instrument for educating and strengthening the revolutionary milieu itself⁴⁴.

In this context, Nechaev’s *Catechism of a Revolutionary* assumes particular significance. For the purposes of the present study, it is one of the key texts because it did more than merely justify violence: it established a normative code of revolutionary conduct. Studies of Russian terrorism have therefore described it, not without reason, as a kind of “Bible” of revolutionary terrorists and a “code of honor” defining the aims, principles, and way of life of the revolutionary engaged in the struggle against the existing social order⁴⁵.

The historical significance of the *Catechism* may be summarized in several fundamental respects. First, it formulates the ideal of the revolutionary as an individual who has completely renounced conventional morality. Personal life, family ties, civic obligations, compassion, friendship, and even one’s own identity are all sacrificed to the cause of destruction. Such a personality type is especially dangerous not merely because it is prepared to employ violence but because it transforms violence into an internal moral norm.

Second, the *Catechism* presents the revolutionary as a person of absolute duty. This conception proved particularly attractive to young people undergoing periods of social and psychological transition. Where ordinary life appeared meaningless or degrading, Nechaev offered a complete moral framework: renounce everything, become a person of action, acquire a clear purpose, and attain historical significance.

Third, the text abolishes the boundary between political struggle and moral crime. As Kashnikov observes, Nechaev’s principle effectively reduces morality to a single proposition: “everything that contributes to the triumph of the revolution is morally justified”. For this reason, the *Catechism* should be understood not merely as a revolutionary manifesto but as a mechanism for producing the ethics of terrorism⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ Шушунов А.С. *Op. cit.* С. 403–404; ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 242. Д. 88. Л. 1, 7–7 об.

⁴⁵ Geifman A. *Op. cit.* P. 21–24.

⁴⁶ Кашиников Б.Н. *Op. cit.* С. 50–51; Budnitskii O.V. *Op. cit.* P. 162–166.

Fourth, the *Catechism* places particular emphasis on establishing connections with the most destructive elements of popular life. Nechaev urged revolutionaries to align themselves not with the moderate “people” understood as a moral community but with those forces that opposed the state “not merely in words but in deeds”. This is a crucial point. The social base of terrorism is conceived here not as an enlightened political nation but as a radicalized milieu prepared for destruction. Thus, the *Catechism* not only justified violence but also proposed a social strategy for expanding the revolutionary movement by forging alliances with the most extreme elements of society⁴⁷.

Organizations associated with the populist and *Narodnaya Volya* traditions, together with ideological texts such as the *Catechism of a Revolutionary*, contributed to the expansion of terrorism’s social base in several ways. They created a language through which violence could be justified; established a normative model of the revolutionary; provided an organizational framework for recruitment and participation; and ensured historical continuity, allowing terrorist norms to survive the destruction of individual organizations and to be transmitted to subsequent generations of radicals. In this sense, *Narodnaya Volya* organizations and revolutionary ideological texts should be regarded as part of the infrastructure through which terrorism’s social base expanded.

The image of the female terrorist and its influence on the expansion of the social base of bombing terrorism

The participation of women in revolutionary terrorism within the Russian Empire was neither accidental nor peripheral. On the contrary, the female terrorist became one of the most powerful and socially influential figures in the revolutionary culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Her historical significance lay not only in her direct involvement in assassination attempts, clandestine activities, and militant organizations but also in the symbolic impact her image exerted upon society. The appearance of women within the sphere of political violence challenged established gender norms, intensified the

⁴⁷ Кашиников Б.Н. *Op. cit.* С. 51–52; ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 1914. Д. 340. Л. 22 об. – 23.



Caricature of a Socialist Revolutionary woman terrorist.
Early twentieth-century postcard. Artist: E. Sokolov. From open sources

public impact of terrorist acts, and made terrorism itself more visible and attractive to new groups of sympathizers and potential recruits⁴⁸.

A number of scholars have noted that by the beginning of the twentieth century women constituted nearly one-third of the SR Combat Organization and approximately one-quarter of all terrorists. This development has been linked to rising female literacy, restricted access to higher education, the crisis of traditional gender roles, and women's desire for self-assertion beyond conventional social boundaries. Within the revolutionary movement, women found opportunities that ordinary society largely denied them: respect, responsibility, danger, a sense of mission, and the feeling of participating in a historically significant cause. It was precisely these opportunities that made the terrorist milieu especially attractive to many young women⁴⁹.

A special place in the history of female political violence belongs to Vera Zasulich. Although she later became a critic of individual

⁴⁸ Hilbrenner A. The Perovskaia Paradox, or the Scandal of Female Terrorism in Nineteenth-Century Russia // *Parliaments, Estates and Representation*. 2012. Vol. 32. No. 2. P. 195–210.

⁴⁹ Гейфман А. *Op. cit.* С. 167–169, 211–214; Geifman A. *Op. cit.* P. 152–160.



"The Terrorist." Painting by N.A. Yaroshenko. 1881.
The heroine was modeled on V.I. Zasulich. N.A.
Yaroshenko Memorial Museum-Estate, Kislovodsk

terrorism, her shooting of Fyodor Trepov in 1878 established a crucial precedent that made the female terrorist a publicly recognized figure. Scholarship demonstrates that Zasulich became the principal point of reference for subsequent Russian women terrorists: through her example, society learned to perceive female political violence either as scandal, heroism, or a form of political martyrdom⁵⁰.

No less significant was Sofia Perovskaya. She shattered two deeply rooted stereotypes simultaneously: that women were passive by nature and that they occupied only secondary positions in politics. Her participation in the conspiracy of 1 March 1881 and her role in organizing the assassination of Alexander II transformed the female terrorist from an exceptional participant into a leader within the revolutionary movement. In the public imagination, Perovskaya inspired both horror and admiration, making her an exceptionally powerful symbolic figure⁵¹.

Maria Spiridonova represents a later stage in the evolution of revolutionary terrorism, one in which political violence became fused with

⁵⁰ Hilbrenner A. Op. cit. P. 195–210.

⁵¹ Ibid. P. 200–206.

the image of the suffering heroine. Her assassination of G.N. Luzhevsky and the subsequent story of her arrest, mistreatment, trial, and exile transformed her from a militant operative into a symbol of martyrdom and moral superiority over the authorities. This considerably strengthened the emotional appeal of the terrorist myth. Young people were offered not merely the image of a determined assassin but that of a woman who simultaneously avenged injustice, sacrificed herself, and suffered for the “people’s cause”⁵².

The participation of women produced a particularly powerful shock within traditional society. The female terrorist broadened prevailing conceptions of who could become a revolutionary. She endowed terrorism with additional associations of sacrifice, purity, and moral exceptionalism while intensifying the public resonance of terrorist acts through the violation of established gender expectations. The female terrorist also made the revolutionary movement more attractive to young women, who increasingly perceived it as a sphere of self-realization and historically meaningful action⁵³.

Whereas the “typical” terrorist bomber appealed to young people through his combination of determination, risk, clandestine elitism, and symbolic entry into history, the female terrorist intensified this appeal by adding the themes of moral purity, martyrdom, and cultural defiance. She represented not merely another participant in political violence but a figure whose very participation challenged the existing social order, thereby rendering revolutionary action even more significant. It follows that women’s participation cannot be regarded as a peripheral aspect of revolutionary terrorism. On the contrary, the image of the female terrorist became one of the most powerful channels through which the social base of bombing terrorism expanded.

⁵² McDermid J. Mariya Spiridonova: Russian Martyr and British Heroine? // *Women and Revolution in Russia, 1905–1917: A Documentary History* / Ed. by M. Buckley. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. P. 51–68.

⁵³ Broido V. *Apostles into Terrorists: Women and the Revolutionary Movement in the Russia of Alexander II*. London, 1977. P. 145–176; Findsen J.R. *Women and Violence in Revolutionary Russia, 1860–1925*. M.A. Thesis. Central Washington University, 2011. P. 34–57.

The social milieu and social type opposed to bombing terrorism

The terrorist bomber was opposed by a different social milieu, one for which revolutionary terrorism represented not a form of righteous retribution but a symptom of the disintegration of the state, the rule of law, and public morality. This milieu was far from homogeneous. It included representatives of the civil administration, the judiciary, the police, the armed forces, moderate liberal opinion, sections of the intelligentsia, and political groups which, while advocating reform, rejected individual terrorism as a legitimate method of political struggle⁵⁴.

Whereas the terrorist bomber embodied social transition, moral absolutism, and uncompromising action, his opponent was typically an older, socially established individual integrated into existing institutions and committed to legal order, political continuity, and gradual reform. For such people, terrorism represented not a path towards freedom but a route to chaos and the destruction of the historical fabric of society⁵⁵.

This social type is most clearly illustrated by several prominent individuals. Pyotr Stolypin exemplifies the model of the conservative reformer who combined a program of governmental reform with an uncompromising struggle against revolutionary violence. For him, terrorism constituted a threat not merely to individual officials but to the very existence of the state⁵⁶. Vyacheslav Plehve represented the type of the resolute administrator who regarded terrorism as a direct challenge to governmental authority and the integrity of the Empire⁵⁷. Alexander Guchkov embodied the moderate liberal parliamentary opponent of terrorism: in his view, terrorism did not advance the cause of liberty but instead delayed reform and strengthened political reaction⁵⁸. Georgy

⁵⁴ Рокки Т. *Op. cit.* С. 51–55; Гейфман А. *Op. cit.* С. 95–99; Stockdale M.K. Politics, Morality and Violence: Kadet Liberals and the Question of Terror, 1902–1911 // *Russian History*. 1995. Vol. 22. No. 4. P. 455–504.

⁵⁵ Кашиников Б.Н. *Op. cit.* С. 54–55; Stockdale M.K. *Op. cit.* P. 460–468.

⁵⁶ Шушунов А.С. *Op. cit.* С. 404–405; Кафтан В.В., Путятин В.Д. *Op. cit.* С. 28–31; ГА РФ. Ф. 102. ДПОО. Оп. 1916. Д. 122. Л. 55.

⁵⁷ Кафтан В.В., Путятин В.Д. *Op. cit.* С. 31–33; Geifman A. *Op. cit.* P. 102–110.

⁵⁸ Гучков А.И. Речь по поводу убийства П.А. Столыпина // *Государственная дума Российской империи: стенографические отчеты*. СПб., 1911. С. 45–47; Stockdale M.K. *Op. cit.* P. 480–486.

Plekhanov stands as the principal ideological critic of individual terrorism, rejecting it as politically harmful and strategically ineffective⁵⁹. Vera Zasulich is significant because, although she emerged from the revolutionary tradition of the nineteenth century, she ultimately came to criticize terrorism as a substitution of heroic individualism for genuine mass political struggle⁶⁰.

Opposition to terrorism in the late Russian Empire was therefore not merely a matter of police repression or governmental policy but also an intellectual, political, and social phenomenon. The average opponent of the ideology and practice of bombing terrorism may be characterized as a socially established, mature, institutionally integrated individual associated with the state, lawful public activity, or the moral and religious traditions of society, for whom terrorism represented not a path to liberation but a threat to the state, the rule of law, and the social order.

The foregoing analysis leads to the conclusion that the social base of revolutionary terrorism in the Russian Empire during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries emerged neither spontaneously nor instantaneously. Rather, it developed as the result of the prolonged interaction of ideological, organizational, socio-psychological, and communicative factors. Terrorism evolved not merely as the practice of individual underground circles or militant organizations but as a distinctive form of political culture capable of reproducing its own environment of support, imitation, and recruitment⁶¹.

First, ideological preparation played a decisive role in the formation of the terrorist milieu. From Nechaev's circle to the traditions of *Narodnaya Volya*, early revolutionary organizations and texts developed a language in which violence ceased to be understood simply as criminality and instead came to be interpreted as duty, retribution, sacrifice, and the shortest path to justice. Organizations such as *Narodnaya Rasprava*, *Narodnaya Volya*, and the broader radical populist movement thus created not only organizational forms of struggle but also a normative

⁵⁹ Гейфман А. *Op. cit.* C. 67–70; Geifman A. *Op. cit.* P. 57–63.

⁶⁰ Ibid. C. 70–72.

⁶¹ Рокки Т. *Op. cit.* C. 51–55; Гейфман А. *Op. cit.* C. 32–34; Daly J.W. Political Crime in Late Imperial Russia // *The Journal of Modern History*. 2002. Vol. 74. No. 1. P. 74–103.

model of revolutionary behavior that provided terrorism with a coherent ideological justification⁶².

Second, the turn of the twentieth century witnessed a qualitative expansion of terrorism's social base. Whereas earlier revolutionary circles had been largely confined to relatively narrow educated milieus, by the beginning of the twentieth century the terrorist movement increasingly attracted young people occupying transitional social positions: school pupils, university students, first-generation industrial workers, members of the *raznochintsy*, the petty bourgeoisie, the lower intelligentsia, women, and representatives of other groups experiencing social insecurity and political frustration. It was this new constituency that became the principal reservoir from which revolutionary terrorism expanded⁶³.

Third, the figure of the terrorist bomber acquired particular significance. He ceased to be merely the perpetrator of isolated assassination attempts and instead became one of the defining political heroes of the age. His youth, incomplete social integration, determination, willingness to sacrifice himself, and tendency towards moral self-dramatization made him especially attractive to a generation undergoing political radicalization. Through the biographies of Karpovich, Balmashov, Sazonov, Kalyayev, and others, terrorism offered a model of accelerated entry into history through a violent yet symbolically elevated act⁶⁴.

Fourth, the ethics of bombing terrorism played an essential role. This ethical framework reconciled murder with conscience by transforming violence into a form of "higher duty". Within its moral universe, the terrorist appeared simultaneously as avenger, martyr, judge, and exemplar. It was precisely this ethical framework that rendered terrorism internally legitimate and socially contagious. Particularly significant was the principle of exemplary action: the terrorist act was conceived as an event capable of inspiring future participants. From Karakozov's proclamation to the practices of the Socialist

⁶² Кашиников Б.Н. *Op. cit.* С. 47–57; Шушунюв А.С. *Op. cit.* С. 403–404; Буднитский О.В. *Op. cit.* Р. 145–178.

⁶³ Гейфман А. *Op. cit.* С. 167–169, 211–214; Geifman A. *Op. cit.* Р. 152–160.

⁶⁴ Кафтан В.В., Путятин В.Д. *Op. cit.* С. 12–18; Кашиников Б.Н. *Op. cit.* С. 50–52; ГА РФ. Ф. 109. ДПОО. Оп. 1912. Д. 113. Л. 1.

Revolutionaries in the early twentieth century, this logic is clearly discernible⁶⁵.

Fifth, the broader social environment – and especially the press – played an enormous role in expanding terrorism’s social base. Newspaper coverage transformed terrorism into a recurring feature of public life. Through the press, terrorist attacks moved from the secrecy of the underground into the sphere of public discussion, while the terrorist himself entered the realm of the public imagination. Even when condemning violence, newspapers inevitably conveyed its audacity, danger, self-sacrifice, and dramatic character, thereby reinforcing the appeal of the revolutionary militant as a political type. In this way, each terrorist act acquired a continuing existence as rumor, public narrative, object of imitation, and instrument for the moral recruitment of new adherents⁶⁶.

Sixth, the participation of women terrorists constituted a distinct channel through which terrorism’s social base expanded. Figures such as Vera Zasulich, Sofia Perovskaya, Maria Spiridonova, and others intensified the emotional and symbolic impact of revolutionary violence. The female terrorist challenged established social and gender norms, rendered terrorism even more visible, and, in the eyes of part of society, invested it with an aura of martyrdom, moral exceptionalism, and self-sacrifice. Consequently, the social base of terrorism expanded in a distinctly gendered dimension as well⁶⁷.

Finally, the present analysis demonstrates that the expansion of terrorism’s social base followed a discernible sequence. An ideological and ethical framework was first established, followed by a demonstrative terrorist act. This generated public attention and media resonance, which in turn produced sympathy, imitation, organizational recruitment, and the replenishment of militant groups. In other words, terrorism’s social base was formed not only “from below”, through socially discontented

⁶⁵ Шушунов А.С. *Op. cit.* С. 402–403; Кашиников Б.Н. *Op. cit.* С. 47–49; Geifman A. *Op. cit.* P. 5–12.

⁶⁶ Гейфман А. *Op. cit.* С. 27–28, 32–34; Русские ведомости. 1908. 16 марта; Daly J.W. Political Crime in Late Imperial Russia // *The Journal of Modern History*. 2002. Vol. 74. No. 1. P. 74–103.

⁶⁷ Гейфман А. *Op. cit.* С. 167–169; Hilbrenner A. *Op. cit.* P. 195–210; McDermid J. *Op. cit.* P. 51–68.

and politically frustrated groups, but also “from above”, through ideological texts, revolutionary organizations, the cultural glorification of terrorism, and the continual dissemination of violence through public communication⁶⁸.

Revolutionary terrorism therefore developed as a socio-communicative system in which underground organizations, ideology, ethics, terrorist acts, the press, heroisation, and imitation functioned together as mutually reinforcing elements. This explains why a strategy confined solely to police suppression of individual conspiracies and militant groups could never produce lasting results. The state confronted not only terrorists themselves but also a much broader social environment in which terrorism had already become politically intelligible, morally justified, and socially reproducible. This constituted the principal historical reason why revolutionary terrorism evolved from the practice of relatively small clandestine circles into a major factor in the destabilization of late imperial Russian society.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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⁶⁸ Шушуннов А.С. *Op. cit.* С. 404—405; Гейфман А. *Op. cit.* С. 27—34; Кашиников Б.Н. *Op. cit.* С. 47—52; ГА РФ. Ф. 102. ДП. Оп. 242. Д. 25. Ч. 101. Л. 6.

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Organizations of the Socialist Revolutionary Party in 1905 – Early 1906 According to Documents of the Police Department

Abstract

This article examines the organizational condition and prospects for the development of the illegal mass organizations of the Socialist Revolutionary Party on the eve of and during the early stages of the First Russian Revolution (1905–1906), based on documents from the Police Department. The study relies primarily on records of the Special Section of the Police Department, now preserved in the State Archive of the Russian Federation. The picture presented by police reports sent from various regions of the Russian Empire reveals, on the one hand, a process of active expansion, especially in the capital regions, and, on the other hand, organizational problems that prevented the Party from becoming a truly mass movement. The police noted conflicts between workers and the party intelligentsia, the penetration of revolutionaries into military and student circles, cooperation with other revolutionary

parties, and the consequences of the October Manifesto. It becomes evident that changes in organizational work and new principles for creating local cells did not remain secret from the police, which quickly gained access to internal party documents. In effect, the entire internal picture of the Party's attempts to build a mass organization was available to the security authorities. Particular attention was consistently directed toward the combat and military organizations of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, which were regarded as posing the greatest threat to the existing order. The article concludes that the Police Department possessed a clear understanding of both the prospects and the actual condition of the Socialist Revolutionary Party's development. These realities were not hidden from law-enforcement officials, and the insufficient operational activity directed against revolutionaries stemmed not from a lack of information but rather from internal problems within the police apparatus itself.

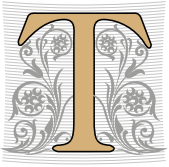
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he confrontation between the Police Department and revolutionary organizations in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century has been a popular subject for scholarly research and fiction. High-profile terrorist attacks, expropriations, betrayals, and reprisals against provocateurs created the image of the Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) as “evil geniuses” who secretly conducted their affairs, deftly eluding law enforcement. However, a closer examination of surviving sources from law enforcement agencies – the Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Moscow District Security Section, Moscow Provincial Gendarme Directorate, Department for the Maintenance of Public Safety and Order in Moscow, and Criminal Division of the First Department of the Ministry of Justice – reveals a more complex picture. The primary sources on this subject include circulars, reports, surveys, surveillance logs, reports on the revolutionary movement, intelligence reports, intercepted correspondence of organization members, and copies of internal party documents. The very fact of their mass scale speaks to the density of surveillance of the revolutionary movement.

The most informative source for understanding the extent to which the police knew the situation with revolutionary parties, and in particular with the Socialist Revolutionary Party (the SRP), are the reports (one for every governorate) sent to the Police Department by local political investigation agencies on the activities of city and other party committees and organizations associated with them: peasant, professional, etc. It is also worth noting the police reports on the activities of combat organizations of revolutionaries and on armed uprisings that were singled out as the most dangerous manifestations of the revolutionary struggle.

While certainly informative, police sources require a critical approach, as their reliability depended largely on the competence and professionalism of the gendarmes themselves and the presence of internal agents. In some cases, they reveal confusion in assessing the affiliation of a particular local organization with a particular party, or the assessment of the organization itself may have been unfounded. But overall, the reports provide insight not only into the state of the Socialist Revolutionary organizations themselves but also into the extent to which the police were in control of the situation.

Even before the events of early 1905, the SR organizations tried to expand their ranks, which did not escape the attention of the police. An episode from the history of the Tver Committee of the Socialist Revolutionary Party (SRP) serves as an example of the police's close supervision of their organizational efforts. An attempt to establish political SR discussion groups in Tver was made as early as late 1903 by A.I. Zilberberg, a tradesman living there under police surveillance. Meetings of Zilberberg's associates, all workers, were held, tellingly, in the apartment of an RSDLP member. The discussions were both educational and programmatic. In May 1904, intellectuals from Moscow began arriving in Tver and leading the groups. To increase membership, the SRs decided to stage a debate with the Social Democrats and also invite to the meetings those Social Democratic workers dissatisfied with the moderate direction of their Party's program. This produced no significant result. Nevertheless, it was decided to announce itself as the organization of the Tver group of the SRP by issuing a proclamation. The appeal also failed to achieve success, so it was decided to acquire a typewriter and engage in agitation and propaganda among the peasant population of the suburban volosts, which, in turn, again failed to produce the desired result. Overall, due to the lack of literature, the group's activity was quite low¹. After rumors of a provocation emerged in November 1904, it was announced that all kinds of meetings would be temporarily suspended and that a reorganization of the Tver group would be necessary². We see a very detailed chronological account of the organizational development of the Tver Socialist Revolutionaries. However, such detailed information was rare, due both to a lack of conspiratorial skills and a certain shortage of political police personnel.

With the onset of the active phase of revolutionary events, police oversight and analysis of the parties' organizational work began to expand, although they didn't always keep pace. The Police Department was aware of all major organizational changes within the SRP. The increase in the number of organizations in the first half of 1905 raised the question of geographically uniting them by region, consolidating, and establishing connections. In February, the *Caucasian Union of the*

¹ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 233а. Д. 80. Ч. 1. Л. 126.

² Ibid. Л. 29–31.



Poster "Banner of the Socialist Revolutionaries." Artist: L. Brodaty.
From open sources

SRP was formed; in March, the *Volga Union* was established; and in May, a regional organization in Ukraine was formed.

The Police Department understood that the largest PSR organizations were in the capitals. Judging by police reports, by 1905, St. Petersburg already had a fully established organization. At the beginning of the year, a Workers' Union was established under the SRP Committee, and the city was divided into six districts. The Union, created at the initiative of a Committee member, served as a liaison between the Committee and the workers' districts, where revolutionary propaganda was conducted in workers' discussion groups. The Union included two committee members, as well as workers' representatives from the districts³. In the report of the Head of the capital's Security Section to the Director of the Police Department, it was also specifically stated that already in January 1905, the Socialist Revolutionaries, together with the Social Democrats, had tried to create a workers' combat squad⁴.

In addition to the capital's SRP organizations, the police were also well informed about the organizational growth of the major provincial committees. For example, reports from early 1905 described in great detail the development of the Odessa Committee, which by mid-January,

³ Ibid. Ч. 27. Л. 41–42.

⁴ Ibid. Л. 11 об.

with five or six members, had developed a plan for organizing Socialist Revolutionary workers, created two agitation meetings, and established an organizational center, partly composed of workers, which was connected to the Committee. The activities of the center were limited to organizing discussion groups and supplying them with propagandists, raising funds for the maintenance of safe houses, assisting progressive unemployed workers, printing appeals, and resolving current issues⁵. The Committee had a passport bureau to supply illegal passports to party members who needed them⁶.

It should be noted that the work of the Odessa Socialist Revolutionaries was interrupted by the secret police as early as April 20, but by early summer the organization almost fully resumed its activities. By that time, it consisted of several district groups, headed by leaders appointed by the Committee. Together with representatives elected by the district workers and representatives from various unions, they formed a center that unified the activities of the entire Odessa organization. The center also included a representative from the local committee. There was also a special union of educational propagandists, several trade unions influenced by party workers, and a special combat squad⁷. All of these organizations played a role in the unrest that occurred in the city before the arrival of the battleship *Potemkin* in Odessa.

Sometimes police documents also depict failures in the expansion attempts of revolutionary organizations, which were not always due to law enforcement. Internal disagreements, most often between local and visiting workers, typically hindered the development of the revolutionary movement. The records of the Special Section of the Police Department for the Kyiv Socialist Revolutionary Organization contain references that clearly illustrate these problems: "In the very first days after the arrests, Potynsky, Moralevich and Efremov became the leaders of the Kyiv Socialist Revolutionaries who remained at large... these persons called themselves a Committee, and first wanted to separate themselves [apparently from the remnants of the previous

⁵ Ibid. Ч. 25. Л. 141.

⁶ Ibid. Л. 1.

⁷ Спиродович А.И. Партия социалистов-революционеров и ее предшественники. 1886–1916. 2-е изд., доп. Пг.: Военная типография, 1918. С. 168–169.

Committee. — E.O.], and did not want to allow them into their ranks no one else, but soon after some negotiations other persons were accepted into the Committee...”⁸ The Committee’s intercepted correspondence said: “...It is with regret that we have to note major internal disagreements. Of those taken away in October, some were released and wanted to continue working as before. The new members that had gathered during this time, led by the foreigners sent here, zealously eliminated them as tainted. This resulted in major misunderstandings. As a result, there are two committees here: one new official, the other unofficial, made up of former members”⁹.

It is interesting that at the end of 1905 the police also noted other organizational problems: “According to intelligence, it has been a long time since [year to date. — E.O.] some discord was observed between the workers and intellectuals of the local SRP organization, stemming from the workers’ mistrust of the intellectuals’ sincerity in participating in such manifestations of party activity as demonstrations and large meetings... This led to the workers’ desire to separate themselves from the local committee in their work. The latter (i.e., the SRP Committee) quite skillfully carried out this separation, proposing that the representatives form a *Workers’ Union of the Kyiv SRP*, which would operate independently under the leadership of two members of the Union Committee. These latter, however, were appointed by the local Party Committee, thereby, on the one hand, preserving the ability to influence the workers, and on the other, seemingly granting them freedom of revolutionary independence”¹⁰. This did not completely resolve the contradictions and after a short time another rupture occurs in the Kyiv Committee of the SPR and “a group of working socialist revolutionaries’ emerges, led by a visiting Jewish woman”¹¹; it is unclear whether the “visiting Jewish woman” played a major role in separating this group from the Committee.

The police also knew the sources of revolutionary organizations. For example, in some cities — Tambov and Mineralovodsk — SR

⁸ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 233а. Д. 80. Ч. 19. 1905 г. Л. 7.

⁹ Ibid. Л. 28.

¹⁰ Ibid. Ч. 20. 1905 г. Л. 45–46.

¹¹ Ibid. Л. 155.

committees emerged and operated out of local legal newspapers. In Tambov, the committee existed out of the newspaper *Tambovsky Golos*, where the entire staff, even the guard and the delivery boy, were SRs. Beginning in February 1905, the Tambov Workers' Union of the SRP began to operate under the Committee, followed by the SRP Peasants' Union, whose main activities were carried out by the newspaper's correspondents, who traveled the uyezds, interviewed and agitated peasants, and organized discussion and study groups. However, in late March, the entire group was arrested during a demonstration following a meeting of the "Society for the Care of Children". As the head of the local secret police wrote, "it suddenly turned out that almost the entire Workers' Union, the Committee, and the propagandists had been arrested"¹². An interesting detail should be noted: the members of the Workers' Union represented both the Executive City Committee of the Party and the Peasant Union, which was probably a feature of committees in small towns, where the same person participated in various party structures.

It's noteworthy that, when collecting information about revolutionary organizations, police officers also attempted to understand the nuances of the emergence of illegal parties. This was difficult in the case of the SRP, as different groups had completely different understandings as to when a revolutionary group became a party organization. For example, in September 1905, the Yaroslavl Committee of the SRP created a Workers' Union to lead the revolutionary movement of local workers. The Socialist Revolutionaries issued a special Manifesto justifying the Union's affiliation with the SRP: "To lead the struggle, one must have a program and tactics. A program is a clearly envisioned ideal of the new system; tactics are the surest means of achieving it. A group united by a single tactic and program forms a party. Therefore, the Yaroslavl Workers' Union recognizes the program and tactics of the SRP"¹³.

The Rostov-on-Don Committee, which appeared in July 1905, on the contrary, began not with the organization of a workers' union, but with statements that they "they intend to firmly establish themselves

¹² Ibid. Д. 80. Ч. 35. Л. 19–21.

¹³ Ibid. Ч. 61. Л. 25.



A.V. Gerasimov.
From open sources

first of all by killing the Mayor, Head of the Security Section, and the Chief of Police”. Moreover, the Committee acted in alliance with the Jewish Social Democratic Party Poalei Zion¹⁴. The workers’ discussion groups organized at the beginning of September began to conduct “proper activities” only in November, i.e., after the publication of the 1905 Manifesto¹⁵.

It should be noted that, for obvious reasons, the police paid particular attention to the student movement, where revolutionaries easily found a response. A particular surge in student self-organization and the formation of party groups occurred after the declaration of university autonomy in August 1905, when, according to the memoirs of A.V. Gerasimov, Head of St. Petersburg Secret Police, “an absolutely incredible commotion” began, with universities and virtually all educational institutions becoming strongholds of revolutionaries¹⁶. At the same time, the Socialist Revolutionaries themselves noted that the meetings often forced many students to repeat a year¹⁷.

¹⁴ Ibid. Ч. 11. Л. 7.

¹⁵ Ibid. Ч. 11. Л. 7.

¹⁶ Герасимов А.В. На лезвии с террористами. М.: Товарищество русских художников, 1991. С. 34.

¹⁷ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 233а. Д. 80. Ч. 10. Л. 8–10.

In Moscow, according to police data, during this period there was a central university body – a Coalition Council, which included student representatives, four representatives from the Social Democrats, two from the Social Revolutionaries, and two from the university organization¹⁸. At the same time, the student organization decided not to dissolve into the party ranks, but to coordinate revolutionary actions with them¹⁹. Therefore, even if the Party's influence was great, the Socialist Revolutionaries probably did not have complete and direct leadership.

The report of the Moscow Security Section to the Director of the Police Department contains a brief description of revolutionary work among students, which indicates the method of the emergence of organizations and their political self-determination: "From mid-1905, all revolutionary parties began to enjoy great popularity among young people studying in secondary schools. This was greatly facilitated by the student strike of 1905, during which revolutionary party agitators infiltrated the student body and, understandably, made a huge impression on the youth. Study groups began to form among high school students, aimed at self-education in a certain direction. Depending on the nature of their activities and the party affiliation of their leaders, these circles were called Socialist Revolutionary or Social Democratic student organizations"²⁰. However, sometimes student organizations emerged independently and primarily manifested themselves through crime. For example, a 15-year-old member of the "Combat Organization of the Tula Classical Gymnasium" killed the gymnasium Principal with a revolver shot²¹.

The police understood that the Socialist Revolutionaries' agitation among students largely coincided with the general student movement, sometimes merging with the work of other parties, primarily the Social Democrats. Socialist Revolutionary groups joined the councils of educational institutions, gaining party influence there.

A significant shift in assessments of the development of the revolutionary movement and the work of the SRP is evident from police

¹⁸ Ibid. Ф. 63. Оп. 25. Д. 26. Т. 1. 1905. Л. 230.

¹⁹ Ibid. Л. 234.

²⁰ Ibid. Ф. 102. Оп. 237. Д. 31. Ч. 3. Л. 10.

²¹ Ibid. Оп. 258. Д. 6. Л. 15.



A.V. Gerasimov (center) with department heads and investigators
of the St. Petersburg Security Section. 1905.

From open sources

documents compiled after October 1905. The police saw that most local SR organizations, including those crushed by law enforcement bodies, regarded the Manifesto as merely a sign of weakness and directly called for increased pressure on the authorities. The police, deprived of the right to conduct searches without a warrant after the Manifesto, were at a loss and unable to do anything about the growing revolutionary organizations²². In all the notes and reports from police officials, the consequences of the Manifesto were interpreted exclusively in a negative light: “The publication of the October 17 Manifesto, interpreted in a false light, did not produce a pacifying effect, but on the contrary, caused outstanding, serious events”, “the October 17 Manifesto was understood by revolutionaries as a victory over the government”, “after the publication of the Manifesto, the agitators of the extreme parties, mainly the teachers of the zemstvo schools and other zemstvo sympathizers, made every effort to misinterpret it for the population”, “the

²² Ibid. Оп. 235. Д. 20. Ч. 15. 1906 г. Л. 3.

Manifesto, unfortunately, served in the hands of revolutionaries as a powerful means of sowing discord among the population”²³.

The creation of party committees became significantly easier in places where they hadn't existed before. For example, police documents from Odessa and Odessa Governorate describe the emergence of a workers' organization of Socialist Revolutionaries in Nikolaev: “The local (Odessa) committee of the SRP always paid special attention to Nikolaev, as a factory center, and sent active workers there in an effort to establish an independent party organization there. These efforts were largely unsuccessful, as connections among the working class were primarily in the hands of SD organizations. After October 17, these efforts of the Committee were successful, as the propagandists sent there attended public rallies... They succeeded in creating the *Nikolaev Workers' Organization*... From this organization, an executive committee was formed, which co-opted new members from among the active workers who had arrived in Nikolaev, and after the Party Congress in Finland, it was recognized by the Central Committee as a separate party Committee”²⁴. It should be noted that the police were well aware of the nature of the Committee's origins: initially, a committee would emerge from among workers, to which active professional workers would subsequently be co-opted (invited). This demonstrates that, despite the apparent independence and democratic nature of the organization, the new committee's affairs were not left to local workers, but rather, its core would be formed by much more experienced visiting Socialist Revolutionaries – “professional” revolutionaries.

Many police reports indicated that in almost all the committees of the SRP during this period, combat squads or combat organizations sprung up. They were created both locally and by special traveling organizers²⁵. At the same time, both party and para-party formations emerged. For example, in Odessa, after the Manifesto was announced, a student affiliated with the local committee of the SRP organized the

²³ Ibid. Д. 393. Л. 2 об. – 50.

²⁴ Ibid. Оп. 234. Д. 20. Ч. 2 (I). 1906 г. Л. 41.

²⁵ Леонов М.И. Партия социалистов-революционеров в 1905–1907 гг. М.: РОССПЭН, 1997. С. 197.

“Odessa Committee of the Combat Organization Red Hundred” from several non-party students and intellectual youth, along with workers and sailors belonging to various revolutionary organizations. The goal of this organization was to assist socialist organizations with armed force, obtain weapons for their members, train them in such activities, and generally prepare the working masses for an armed uprising²⁶.

The release of the Manifesto on October 17 also galvanized the student movement, which had already come under the influence of the SRP organizations. Revolutionary students were often used as a catalyst for more serious events. For example, in the fall of 1905, in Kharkov, under the influence of the committees, the higher and secondary schools suspended classes and began intensifying agitation among workers, organizing large-scale mobile clubs, which contributed to the outbreak of strikes²⁷. Separately, the police noted that the Kharkov Students’ Union, formally subordinate to the RSDLP Committee, was aligned with the SRP committee in terms of organizing combat squads²⁸.

The Penza Committee of the SRP decided to create a special “student organization for organizing strikes”, which was intended to be affiliated with the SRP. A letter to one of the Committee members, intercepted by the police, contains a detailed description of the formation of the student organization: “These chaps are essential, and I would set [the work] up like this: Two representatives from each educational institution. Let these representatives, from across the entire institution, select three progressive individuals from each class. Let each of the three select seven, eight, or ten people from their class and begin with them. Then, feeling your strength, you should, as if on your own behalf, propose to the students to form a strong alliance”²⁹.

In this case, the revolutionaries’ tactics are obvious: the work was initially conducted not on a party platform, but was disguised as the students’ own activities. By December 1905, two revolutionary student organizations already existed in Penza: the RSDLP and the SRP groups, operating under the leadership of a special joint student committee

²⁶ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 235. Д. 20. Ч. 16. 1906 г. Л. 95–97.

²⁷ Ibid. Оп. 234. Д. 7. Ч. 27. 1906 г. Л. 3.

²⁸ Ibid. Л. 8.

²⁹ Ibid. Оп. 233a. Д. 80. Ч. 8. Л. 99–101.

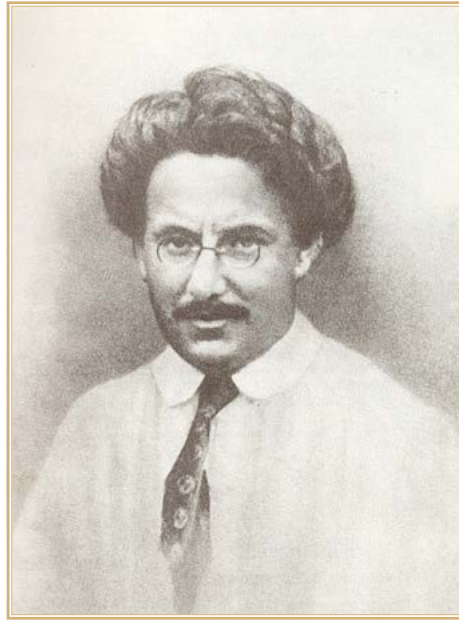


A.A. Argunov.
From open sources

located in the city. A report by the *Okhrana* section, written by the end of the year, noted that “these groups were founded back in 1902–1903, and their membership currently exceeds 100 people. Their activities are expressed through agitation and propaganda”. Along with this, the aforementioned organizations laid the foundation for the establishment of special groups among students of secondary educational institutions in Penza, from which a larger group was subsequently organized that named itself “Penza Student Youth of the Socialist Revolutionary Party,” which published its own hectographed magazine, *Vestnik Yunosti* (Herald of Youth)³⁰.

It is clear that the Socialist Revolutionaries, like other opposition parties, exploited the opportunities provided by the Manifesto and the authorities’ confusion for mass propaganda and agitation, both among the urban population and among the peasantry. Police sources indicate that, beginning in the autumn of 1905, the SRP entered a new phase of its development. Generally, M.I. Leonov described this newly acquired quality as “strengthening”. Its manifestations included the widespread formation of new organizations, a sharp increase in membership, and

³⁰ Ibid. A. 1800. Ч. 20. Л. 12.



A.R. Gots.
From open sources

the creation of workers', peasants', military, and student unions as well as combat squads everywhere³¹. The era of "October freedoms" completed the first stage of the process of establishing a mass illegal party. In all organizations for which information is available, workers and peasants by this time constituted the overwhelming majority³².

The end of 1905 and the beginning of 1906 were marked by a significant event for the Party: the First Party Congress, held in Imatra in the Grand Duchy of Finland, which, to a certain extent, streamlined and constituted the Party organization. The Congress was originally planned for the autumn of 1905, when it would have been particularly relevant for resolving organizational issues and disputes, but the events of the December Uprising in Moscow delayed its convening. An "organizational bureau" of approximately twenty people, including A.A. Argunov, A.R. Gots, V.M. Chernov, Y.F. Azef, I.A. Rubanovich, and others, was responsible for preparing for the Congress³³. The delegates were nominated by local committees, often on the recommendation of

³¹ Леонов М.И. *Op. cit.* С. 59.

³² *Ibid.* С. 48.

³³ *Ibid.* С. 228.



V.M. Chernov.
From open sources

the Central Committee and the Organizational Bureau. The core of the Congress consisted primarily of the people who had become closely acquainted through party work between 1902 and 1905³⁴. Overall, the First Congress was not fully representative and “not entirely properly composed”. The delegates arrived selected “not by a mass movement, but by committees and groups”. Fifty-one organizations were represented at the Congress, including four regional, 28 provincial and city committees, the Foreign and London Committees, the Central Committee and its subdivisions. The Congress’s lack of representativeness was constantly emphasized and explained by the exceptional circumstances, but it did not detract from the delegates’ elated spirits³⁵.

Both the Congress itself and the preparations for it were largely known to the police. The documents of the congress’s Organizing Bureau, which had appealed to all committees, have been preserved at the State Archive of the Russian Federation. The appeal was “to prepare for the Congress, ensure timely submission of reports and materials”³⁶.

³⁴ ГА РФ. Ф. 1699. Оп. 1. Д. 131. Л. 21.

³⁵ Леонов М.И. Опр. cit. С. 229.

³⁶ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 233. Д. 104. Ч. 2. Л. 27.

A specific set of organizational issues was formulated for discussion at the Congress. The police listed these issues in a report to the Chief of the Security Section: “Legal forms of party work, the elective principle, centralization, decentralization, autonomy, regional organizations, the Central Committee, political party clubs, professional and professional-political unions”³⁷.

The second revolutionary year for the Socialist Revolutionaries began not only with the convening of a Party Congress but also with mass police crackdowns on party committees, which began in late autumn 1905 and gradually gained momentum. The losses suffered by party organizations during the autumn and winter of 1905–1906 were enormous. Law enforcement officers destroyed, sometimes completely, many rural peasant organizations. Urban organizations were largely knocked out, too, especially in areas where armed uprisings had occurred. The heaviest losses were suffered by organizations in Moscow, Mineralnye Vody, Pyatigorsk, Yekaterinoslav, and Kharkov, as well as the provincial organizations of Saratov, Samara, Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod, Tambov, Penza, Kursk, and Voronezh. The entire congress of the Ukrainian region was arrested, and the Kiev organization was completely liquidated.

However, starting in late January and early February, within weeks, organizations began to revive in cities, primarily thanks to the remnants of committees and also students. This was the case in Minsk, Kharkov, and other provincial cities with numerous educational institutions³⁸. In a report on the state of revolutionary organizations in Moscow, the *Okhrana* officers described this process: “According to the system adopted by the revolutionaries for replenishing the attrition of regional committees, arrested activists are to be immediately replaced, partly by candidates summoned for this purpose, and partly by the activists liquidated earlier and exiled to Eastern Siberia. These, as experience shows, disappear immediately upon arrival, with the assistance of the Red Cross”³⁹. It should be noted that the role of the Red Cross in escaping

³⁷ Ibid. Д. 107. Ч. 2. Л. 27–29.

³⁸ Леонов М.И. Op. cit. С. 245.

³⁹ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 234. Д. 7. Ч. 14. Л. 8. It is unclear which Red Cross organization the police officials had in mind: either the official organization of the Russian Red Cross Society, or the so-called underground Red Cross organized with the participation of Vera Figner.



Y.F. Azef.
From open sources

and assisting political prisoners was a fairly common occurrence for all revolutionaries⁴⁰.

A vivid picture of the restoration of party organizations in the governorates is presented in a report from the Kharkov Security Section, which reveals the breadth of the Socialist Revolutionaries' work in the city: "The disruption of all revolutionary work forced revolutionary organizations to return to exclusively underground activities; workers' study groups began to be organized and illegal literature sent out"⁴¹. The local party committee, which began to grow stronger after the arrests, first of all annexed the remnants of the combat squads that remained after the collapse of the Committee for Struggle (an inter-party organization that operated in Kharkov in the autumn of 1905), and won over a significant portion of the student youth to its side⁴². Overall, the Kharkov Committee of the SRP served as a central hub for district organizations and peasant unions. It also maintained a connection with St. Petersburg, and in regional affairs, it was most closely tied to Kiev.

⁴⁰ ГА РФ. Ф. 9503. Оп. 1. Д. 10. Л. 2–4.

⁴¹ Ibid. Оп. 234. Д. 7. Ч. 27. Л. 6.

⁴² Ibid. Л. 8.

Each committee member was responsible for a district and a specific area of work. The combat unit was led by a single person. There were up to two hundred Socialist Revolutionary combat unit members, including students, high school students, technical school students, and the unemployed, and it was difficult to keep track of them, as their composition was constantly changing. However, according to the police, “this force does not pose a great danger, as it is poorly organized”⁴³. It’s important to note that the police were most interested in the combat aspects of the committees’ work, and their conclusions about poor organization primarily concerned the combat units. The SRP Committee also oversaw the SPR high school student union, a group of students from the Technological Institute, Kharkov University, and the Veterinary Institute. The high school student union sought to unite specifically for the purpose of participating in the Party’s combat action⁴⁴. The Committee itself was reestablished according to the “old cell model”, which, through centralization and secrecy, allowed for the rapid coordination of the organization’s management and avoided its rapid collapse.

The police also noted new methods of organizational work: since the new year, the Socialist Revolutionaries have begun reorganizing many city committees on an elective basis, simultaneously bringing in workers’ trade unions as separate work units. This was primarily driven by a desire for mass participation⁴⁵. A full-fledged example of a provincial committee is the Odessa Socialist Revolutionary Organization, which played a significant role in the labor movement. Here, separate from citywide rallies, the SRs organized meetings specifically for workers wishing to organize into trade unions. Speakers called on workers to form trade unions and factory combat squads. Sometimes, deputies from factories, plants, and workshops were immediately elected, charged with organizing unions and squads. These deputies elected representatives from the organization nominated by the Committee as their leaders. Thus, by creating trade union organizations, the SRs immediately included them within their sphere of influence. Some unions had

⁴³ Ibid. А. 27.

⁴⁴ Ibid. А. 25–28.

⁴⁵ История политических партий Центрального Черноземья [Г.А. Чурилова, В.Ю. Байбаков, Н.Л. Авилова и др.] / Под ред. Л.С. Полнера. Курск: Курский государственный технический университет, 1995. С. 146.



I.A. Rubanovich.
From open sources

a corresponding standard name: “Union of Workers of ... Production under the Odessa Committee of the SRP”⁴⁶.

These trade unions, as part of the party organization, were immediately included in the electoral system, which consisted of three levels and was aligned with the requirements of the Central Committee. The first level was the workshop or factory meeting, which included active party workers. Next came the district workers’ committee, which was supposed to include one worker from each workshop or factory, with the total number not exceeding ten. Above it stood the city workers’ committee, which included members from the district committee, one person from each district. The highest party body in the city was the General City Committee: it included one representative from the city workers’ committee, one from the peasant organization, one from the military organization, and one from intellectuals (students, female students, etc.). In addition, the city-wide committee included members appointed by the Central Committee. Above the City Committee was the Regional Committee, which was supposed to consist of members appointed by the Central Committee of the SRP.

⁴⁶ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 234. Д. 20. Ч. 2. 1906 г. Л. 109.



M.A. Spiridonova in prison.
From open sources

The Regional Committee was to receive directives from the Central Committee and then transmit them to the local committees. At the same time, the regional organization was to carry out technical maintenance of work with peasants, distribution of literature, and communication with peasant organizations.

The city was divided into sections according to work type; a separate board of propagandists was organized, which was supposed to distribute activists among the districts; at the same time, all propagandists formed a “union of propagandists,” from which delegates were subsequently selected to the City Party Committee⁴⁷. At the same time, there could be several agitation and discussion groups in the area⁴⁸. Thus, the workers’ trade union and propagandists, forming separate “branches” of the party organization, could participate in party life up to the level of the City Committee, which included their representatives.

Gradually, by the spring of 1906, the Odessa Socialist Revolutionaries drafted and implemented a new plan for a democratic organization, significantly expanding the rights of lower party cells, primarily

⁴⁷ Ibid. Ч. 2 (I). 1906 г. А. 79.

⁴⁸ Ibid. А. 164.



Maria Shkolnik, Rebecca Fialka, and Maria Spiridonova
in Akatuy Prison with their escort, 1906.

From open sources

workers' cells. The organizational plan was developed by a temporary commission for convening a general meeting of active workers of the SRP of Odessa, which drafted a new charter for the Odessa organization, the first two clauses of which explained the organization's rationale: "to unite party forces and utilize them to the greatest possible extent"; membership criteria were also set, similar to those for the general party: "Every comrade who recognizes the program and tactics of the SRP and who is affiliated with the Odessa organization is considered a member of this organization". New members had to acknowledge and accept the program and tactics of the SRP and have at least two guarantors from the organization vouching for them.

The third clause divided the organization's activities into three areas of work, targeting social strata. Three technical groups, effectively independent organizations, were created to incorporate workers, peasants, and the military. It was stipulated that the highest legislative body for the urban workers' organization was the general meeting of urban party workers; for the peasant organization, it was the congress of party workers among the peasantry; and for the military, it was the general meeting of party workers in the troops of the given area. Committee members in charge of each organization's affairs were elected by secret ballot. Co-optation was strictly prohibited.

Urban workers were elected at a general meeting, peasant workers at a peasant congress, and troop workers at a general meeting of military workers. Thus, the organization was divided into three completely independent entities. In each of them, elected members drawn from the lowest cells played an important role. A separate clause noted that “the elected representatives of these three organizations together represent the Executive Odessa Committee, which itself distributes all functions among itself”. In addition to the institutions listed above, there were also: a council of propagandists, a council of speakers, a council of organizers, a council of combat units, and a joint council of heads of financial affairs of all committees.

The democratic nature of this charter was actively emphasized by clauses that indicated the committees’ dependence on general meetings of party workers, whose decisions were binding on the committee. A note to this clause noted that “for all actions not predetermined by the general meeting, the committee must answer and prove, if necessary, that such action corresponded to the needs of the moment”. General meetings of workers were to be held regularly, at least six times a year. If a meeting could not be convened, a referendum with “yes” or “no” answers was to be held. The authority of district meetings and meetings of shop organizations, which were given the status of lower legislative institutions, was emphasized. Yet they could exercise said authority only within the limits of their competence; they could set up printing presses and organize combat organizations, collect donations, and conduct approbations and trials of comrades. The size of such a meeting was stipulated: if it consisted of more than twenty people, an executive committee of five members was elected. General statutory provisions for all committees included the rotation and jurisdiction of committee members at all levels, who reported to their general meetings or meetings⁴⁹.

By the summer of 1906, the Moscow Committee of Socialist Revolutionaries had reorganized itself on similar lines of election and accountability. Its work was divided into branches, which formed the basis for the organization’s structure. The main branches were labor affairs, peasant work, combat, technical, and military work. Subsequently,

⁴⁹ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 234. Д. 20. Ч. 2. 1906 г. Л. 180–181.

a student faction of the SRP was also organized, which became an autonomous organization within the Moscow Committee⁵⁰.

One of the first clauses of the Charter stipulated the principle of decision-making, according to which the organization's decision was considered to be adopted by the majority of members of the Moscow organization, and the minority was obligated to comply. Every active Socialist Revolutionary had the right to vote on all matters. These provisions were likely intended to protect the majority's position and prevent splits, thus immediately establishing discipline within the organization. A group of at least twenty people became a basic yet fully-fledged cell, which received the right to submit issues related to the party program, tactics, and organization for discussion by the entire organization. The highest legislative body of the Moscow organization was a Conference of all members, which discussed all matters of the party program and tactics, as well as resolved issues of the general principles of the organization. The Conference was to be convened semiannually. However, it could also be convened urgently within two weeks of the announcement. If it was impossible to convene a General Conference, a Conference of Representatives was to be convened, whose decisions were also generally binding on the Moscow organization.

The Committee served as the organization's highest ideological and practical leader. Every three months, the Committee was required to submit a report on its activities to the entire organization's workforce, which then discussed its vote of confidence. Elections to the Committee were held by branches, based on proportional representation and universal voting. Some groups, such as the technical group, sent a representative. The structure of the organization operating in each branch was to mirror that of the Moscow organization, i.e., it was multi-tiered and elective, with committees accountable to general meetings of all members. The General Conference was the governing body, and in each branch organization, all members of the governing bodies were elected by general election. The organization itself consisted of local organizational units: fraternities, village committees, factory committees, followed by district or county committees, and propaganda groups. Above the district committee were the provincial and city committees. It was

⁵⁰ Ibid. Оп. 235. Д. 20. Ч. 48. 1906 г. Л. 14.

specifically stipulated that, if the functions of the city and provincial committees were divided, the primary functions would be transferred to the provincial committee. The regional committee was in charge of all work⁵¹.

We can see that the new organizational principles of the SRP were no secret to the Police Department, which not only promptly received documents outlining the principles of party building but also understood the routes of distribution and the most likely threats posed by the combat squads.

In summary, it can be argued that the organizational development of revolutionary parties was completely clear to law enforcement. Documents demonstrate a fairly high level of awareness, right down to the nuances of intra-party disputes. The police understood the conditions that facilitated organizational growth and monitored the most important areas for the revolutionaries, such as agitation and organizing military personnel and students. Significantly, the police unequivocally negatively assessed and documented the consequences of the October 17 Manifesto, which they clearly viewed as a mistake. At the same time, the new organizational principles adopted by the Socialist Revolutionaries after the First Party Congress were not seen by security agencies as a clear threat to public order.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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Original paper



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Political Police in the System of State Administration: The Case of A.A. Maksimov (1908)

Abstract

The political police of the Russian Empire comprised a conglomeration of institutions that differed not only in their functions and the sociocultural backgrounds of their personnel, but also in their views on the limits of public participation and in their political sympathies during the emergence of legal political parties. This article examines how these differences manifested themselves in the 1908 dismissal of A.A. Maksimov, Mayor of Sevastopol, entrepreneur, and philanthropist, initiated by the Acting Governor-General of Sevastopol and Commander-in-Chief of the Black Sea Fleet and Ports, Rear Admiral R.N. Viren. Particular attention is devoted to the relationships between local political police institutions (the Gendarme Administration) and the central authorities (the Police Department and the Corps of Gendarmes), as well as their interactions with other military and civilian government bodies and officials, including Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior P.A. Stolypin, Deputy Minister of the Interior and



Chief of Police A.A. Makarov, Head of the Main Administration for Local Economy of the Ministry of the Interior S.N. Gerbel, and Acting Governor-General of Sevastopol R.N. Viren. The article also advances the hypothesis that Maksimov's removal from office resulted not from concerns about his "political reliability" – the only explanation advanced in the existing scholarship – but rather from the economic interests of the Belgian Anonymous Company for Tramways and Electric Lighting, which, together with N.P. Ergopulo, Maksimov's deputy in the Sevastopol City Duma, promoted an electrification project that competed with Maksimov's own plans for the city. The controversy surrounding the electrification of Sevastopol is analyzed within the broader context of the activities of the Main Administration for Local Economy of the Ministry of the Interior and the Council of the Minister of the Interior.

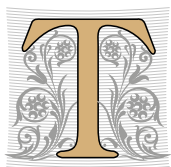
Keywords:

A.A. Maksimov; P.A. Stolypin; R.N. Viren; Sevastopol; Political police; Domestic policy; Corruption in the Russian Empire; Electrification; Belgian Anonymous Company for Electric Lighting and Tramways

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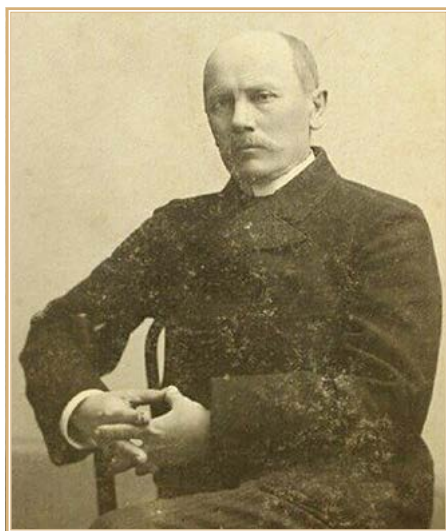




he story of A.A. Maksimov's dismissal from the position of Mayor of Sevastopol began in the spring of 1908. On 30 April, the official Sevastopol newspaper *Krymsky Vestnik* published a brief report article *A Prisoner's Escape Together with His Escort*¹. It described the escape, on the previous day (29 April), of sailor P. Konovalenko, who had been convicted for desertion, and K. Shulzhenko, a sailor of the 29th Naval Crew assigned to escort him during his transfer from the detention facilities of the naval barracks to the prison hulk. The incident was reported to the police by another sailor, P. Durasov, who had been escorting the prisoner together with Shulzhenko. According to his testimony, the fugitives struck him "in the chest with the butt of a rifle" and took from him "his rifle and cartridge belt with ammunition". The Chief of Police dispatched two detachments, including mounted policemen and constables, to capture the escapees, who were soon located near the English Cemetery. After a pursuit and an exchange of gunfire, the escaped convict Konovalenko was recaptured. However, "the escorting sailor Shulzhenko, having leapt over the wall of Maksimov's country estate, disappeared into the bushes and made his way towards Balaklava". The newspaper went on to report that the Chief of Police left a detachment of officers at Maksimov's estate and the English Cemetery while he himself drove towards the Simferopol Highway. On the way, however, the chauffeur took a wrong turn, the car plunged into a ravine, and both the Chief of Police and the driver barely managed to jump clear.

Krymsky Vestnik carried no further reports on the incident. However, on 12 May 1908 Colonel V.E. Seidlitz, Chief of the Sevastopol Gendarme Administration, informed his superiors in St Petersburg – the Separate Corps of Gendarmes (SCG) and the Police Department of the Ministry of the Interior: "On the 3rd of this month, the Governor-General of Sevastopol, Rear Admiral Viren, having received information that the sailor Shulzhenko, who had been sentenced by a court for a second desertion from service, had escaped once again and was hiding on the estate of the Mayor of Sevastopol, Maksimov, and knowing the latter to be politically unreliable, having demonstrated his anti-government activities in 1905 and having escaped punishment only because of the

¹ КРЫМСКИЙ ВЕСТНИК. 1908. 30 апреля. С. 2.



Alexei Andreevich Maksimov (1853–1908), Mayor of Sevastopol.
From open sources

inexplicable inaction of the officials who held authority in Sevastopol at that time, ordered that the said estate and Maksimov's residence be subjected to a thorough search under the regulations of martial law"².

According to Seidlitz's report, therefore, the search of Maksimov's property was conducted in order to locate Shulzhenko, whom Maksimov was allegedly concealing because of his political sympathies. Yet immediately after the search, on 4 May, Seidlitz sent the following telegrams to the SCG and the Police Department: "By the personal order of the Governor-General of Sevastopol, a search was conducted at the residence of the Mayor of Sevastopol, Maksimov. Illegal literature and correspondence indicating his political unreliability were discovered"³. Notably, these telegrams made no mention whatsoever of the search for Shulzhenko as the reason for the operation. It is equally striking that in his report of 12 May, contrary to *Krymsky Vestnik*, Seidlitz referred to Shulzhenko not as an escort but as "a sailor sentenced by a court for a second desertion from service". One might suppose that the newspaper had simply made an error and that the man who disappeared through Maksimov's estate had indeed not been an escort. However, the Police Department – the empire's principal political police authority – also

² ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 1. Общ. Д. 48. Л. 23.

³ Ibid. Л. 22.



Robert Nikolaevich von Viren (1856–1917), Commander of the Black Sea Fleet.
The photograph, taken in 1901–1903, shows him still wearing the uniform
of a Captain First Rank.

From open sources

regarded Shulzhenko as an escort, as demonstrated by its enquiry of 17 May requesting information about “the escort Shulzhenko”, an enquiry to which Seidlitz never replied⁴. The distinction between an escaped sailor serving as an escort and a sailor twice convicted by a court was hardly insignificant. It is also worth noting that in the case file opened by the Sevastopol gendarmes on 12 May – the very day Seidlitz submitted his report to St Petersburg – Shulzhenko’s name does not appear at all; the documents merely refer in vague terms to “information received by the Governor-General that a fugitive sailor had found refuge at Maksimov’s estate”⁵.

It is therefore reasonable to suppose that Seidlitz invoked Shulzhenko retrospectively as a justification for the search of Maksimov’s property, solely in order to explain his actions to his superiors in the capital. Maksimov himself, in a memorandum addressed to Minister of the Interior P.A. Stolypin on 15 May, stated that the gendarmes who conducted the search had presented neither written nor oral grounds for their actions.

⁴ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. 4 ДЕЛОПРОИЗВОДСТВО. 1908. Оп. 117. Д. 71. Ч. 12. Л. 66.

⁵ Ibid. 7 ДЕЛОПРОИЗВОДСТВО. 1908. Оп. 205. Д. 3193.

This raises an obvious question. Why did Seidlitz, nine days after the search, feel it necessary to specify its justification – namely the search for Shulzhenko, now described specifically as “a sailor sentenced by a court for a second desertion from service” – if, as he had informed St Petersburg on 4 May, the materials seized during the search already demonstrated the Mayor’s political unreliability? Indeed, on the basis of those materials Rear Admiral Viren had already “temporarily suspended” Maksimov from office on 5 May; the City Duma had merely “taken note” that his Deputy, N.F. Ergopulo, was now acting as Mayor; and on 7 May *Krymsky Vestnik* published this information.

Two explanations may be suggested. First, by 12 May Maksimov had already travelled to St Petersburg to appeal directly to the leadership of the Ministry of the Interior, and it was by no means certain that the Police Department would approve the actions of the Sevastopol gendarmes⁶. Secondly, Seidlitz apparently assumed from the outset that Maksimov could be prosecuted on grounds of political unreliability. However, the Sevastopol Prosecutor’s office refused to initiate a formal investigation on the basis of the materials seized during the search⁷. This meant that, if the political police intended to continue pursuing the Mayor of Sevastopol, they would have to rely exclusively on the administrative powers at their disposal, without recourse to the courts.

The “powers” employed for this purpose was a security proceeding (*okhrannoe proizvodstvo*), initiated by the Sevastopol gendarmes on 12 May – the very day Seidlitz reported to St Petersburg. The case, entitled *Correspondence Concerning the Investigation of the Political Unreliability of the Mayor of Sevastopol, Alexei Andreevich Maksimov*⁸, was, for reasons that remain unclear, assigned to the Sevastopol Fortress Gendarme Detachment. The title itself is remarkable. Cases concerning political unreliability were normally designated simply as “Case Concerning the Political Unreliability of...” a particular individual. Here, however, the file was opened as “correspondence

⁶ For a detailed discussion of the differing approaches to “political unreliability” adopted by the Police Department and by the provincial gendarmerie administrations, see: Ульянова Л.В. Политическая полиция и либеральное движение в Российской империи, 1880–1905. СПб.: Алетейя, 2020.

⁷ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 1. Общ. Д. 48. Л. 24.

⁸ Ibid. Ф. 102. 7 делопроизводство. Оп. 205. 1908. Д. 3193.



Nikolai Fyodorovich Ergopulo, Mayor of Sevastopol, presents the traditional bread and salt to Nicholas II. 17 March 1912.

Photograph by K.E. von Hahn Studio. From open sources

concerning the investigation of political unreliability”. This wording suggests that even the gendarmes themselves regarded the question of Maksimov’s political unreliability as unresolved and requiring investigation. Yet no such investigation was ever carried out. The file was opened on 12 May and closed one month later, on 11 June, containing exactly the same set of documents throughout: the materials seized during the search conducted on the night of 2–3 May. The file mentions the “first interrogation of Maksimov” and of his daughter on 4 May, but the interrogation records themselves are absent. Moreover, since these interrogations allegedly took place on 4 May – before the case itself was opened on 12 May – they could not have formed part of the subsequent investigation.

Thus, on 12 May Seidlitz informed the Police Department that Maksimov was politically unreliable, while the case opened in Sevastopol treated that very question as one still requiring investigation. The gendarmes never conducted such an investigation, yet one month later, on 11 June, they closed the case. The following day, 12 June, Viren sent a dispatch to the Ministry of the Interior insisting upon the “final removal of Maksimov from office”.

What prevented Viren from sending this dispatch immediately after the search? Why was it considered necessary, in early May 1908,

first to search Maksimov's property, then immediately to suspend him temporarily from office, subsequently to provide an ex post facto justification for the search in the form of a search for either "a fugitive sailor" or "a sailor twice convicted by a court", and only in mid-June to inform the Ministry of the Interior that Maksimov should be removed from office permanently?

Let us return to these questions later. For the moment, it is necessary to examine what was actually discovered during the search of the Mayor of Sevastopol's residence. We should begin with the text of the telegram that Seidlitz sent on 4 May simultaneously to both the Police Department and the Corps of Gendarmes: "By the personal order of the Governor-General of Sevastopol, a search was conducted at the residence of the Mayor of Sevastopol, Maksimov. Illegal literature and correspondence indicating his political unreliability were discovered"⁹.

Thus, Seidlitz initially maintained that Maksimov's political unreliability was demonstrated by "illegal literature and correspondence". However, the *Inspection Report*, which Seidlitz forwarded to St Petersburg on 12 May, makes it clear that the "illegal literature" – nineteen pamphlets, including one entitled *Georgy Valeryevich Plekhanov* – was found not in Maksimov's possession but in that of his adult daughter, Nadezhda Maksimova. Moreover, Nadezhda Maksimova appears in the case file *Correspondence Concerning the Investigation of the Political Unreliability of Alexei Maksimov* only insofar as a separate personal information sheet was opened for her. Nothing further followed. This suggests that, from the gendarmes' perspective, the "illegal literature" itself carried little evidentiary significance.

The second basis for Seidlitz's assertion of Maksimov's "political unreliability" in his telegram of 4 May was the "correspondence". It was precisely this claim that reached the press. Thus, on 10 May the St Petersburg newspaper *Novoe Vremya* reported: "Among the papers discovered during the search of Mayor Maksimov's residence, together with revolutionary literature, was compromising correspondence with exiled revolutionaries"¹⁰.

⁹ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 1. Общ. Д. 48. Л. 22.

¹⁰ Новое время. 1908. 5 мая.



Country estate of A.A. Maksimov.

Notes of a Boring Man: <https://humus.livejournal.com>

In reality, only a single letter from a single “exiled revolutionary” was found in Maksimov’s possession. The author was S.A. Nikonov, a physician in Sevastopol and a well-known member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Besides serving as a doctor at the Sevastopol Municipal Hospital – a position to which he had been appointed by the City Duma under Maksimov’s leadership – Nikonov was also the personal physician of the Maksimov family¹¹. He was well known to the political police, including the leadership of the Police Department, and his revolutionary activities had resulted in repressive measures against him on two occasions, in 1903 and 1907. Significantly, however, Maksimov’s name had never been associated with those cases¹².

In May 1908 the authorities found only a single letter from Nikonov, who had been exiled from Sevastopol in 1907 by the same Rear Admiral Viren to Arkhangelsk Governorate for “membership in the Socialist Revolutionary Party”. Even this letter can only with some difficulty be regarded as evidence of Maksimov’s “political unreliability”, since its principal subject was the repayment of a debt. Nikonov also speculated – incorrectly – that the recipient would serve as

¹¹ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 1. Общ. д. 48. л. 24.

¹² Ibid. Ф. 102. 1903. Оп. 231. д. 2156; Ф. 102. ОО. 1907. Оп. 237. д. 9. ч. 57. л. 255–259.

an elector from Sevastopol in the elections to the State Duma, but this, too, could scarcely be considered proof of political unreliability, even by gendarme standards. It is therefore unsurprising that, when forwarding the *Report* to the Police Department on 12 May, Seidlitz merely observed that the letter “indicates a close acquaintance between Maksimov and Nikonov”.

The *report* also lists two letters sent to Maksimov in late October 1905 by A. Küri, a barrister and legal adviser to the City Administration. In these letters Küri welcomed the dismissal of D.F. Trepov, the St Petersburg Chief of Police – remarking that “how much bloodshed and how many lives have been spared” – and criticized the proposal to establish a people’s militia, which was then under discussion in Sevastopol. The report further mentions a letter from the architect V.A. Feldman, written from Kharkiv in November 1906, in which he described his work at the Technological Institute. Feldman also explained that he did not intend to return to Sevastopol: “I learned about the events in our dear Sevastopol, apart from the newspapers, from the late Mina, Miloshevich, and Aktsman. At the time we were rather glad that we had left when we did. Now they are gradually putting people on trial and executing them...”¹³

In the copy of the *Report* sent by Seidlitz to the Police Department – one of three surviving versions, the others being retained by the Sevastopol Fortress Gendarme Detachment and the Commander of the Corps of Gendarmes – this final sentence is underlined in red pencil. This indicates that the official reading the report in the Police Department paid particular attention to this passage, and to no other, since no additional red markings appear elsewhere in the document. It is reasonable to suppose that this interest reflected not an assessment of Maksimov’s political reliability but rather the Police Department’s concern with the situation in Sevastopol under martial law, where both the civilian police (Ministry of the Interior) and the judicial authorities (Ministry of Justice) were subordinated to the military. According to *Krymsky Vestnik*¹⁴ “military courts in the city were indeed passing death sentences on an almost daily basis, while the Minister of the Interior

¹³ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 1. Общ. 1908. Д. 48. Л. 25.

¹⁴ КРЫМСКИЙ ВЕСТНИК. 1908. Январь, февраль, март, апрель, май.



Pyotr Arkadyevich Stolypin (1862–1911), Minister of the Interior and Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Russian Empire.

Photograph, 1908. Library of the Bank of Russia

and Prime Minister, P.A. Stolypin, sought to restore civilian administration in Sevastopol¹⁵. Moreover, intercepted correspondence of members of the educated classes constituted an important source of information for the Police Department, particularly regarding the conduct of representatives of various state institutions¹⁶.

Finally, the search uncovered two documents in which Black Hundred activists, acting through the Taurida Branch of the Union of the Russian People, evaluated Maksimov's performance as Mayor. One of these documents, sent to Maksimov by his brother Nikolai, criticized him for failing to attend the funeral of Sukhomlinov, Assistant Bailiff of the First District, who had been killed in what the document described as "revolutionary banditry": "The fathers of the city found it impossible to honor these funeral rites with their presence and thereby express even a silent protest against revolutionary banditry. One may therefore ask the fathers of the city: what, then, does their absence signify?"

¹⁵ See: ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 105. 3 делопроизводство. 1907 год. Д. 133. Л. 1–21.

¹⁶ For a detailed discussion of this practice of the Police Department, see: Ульянова Л.В. Политическая полиция и либеральное движение. Гл. 4.

The second document, dating from November 1906, went even further, hinting at the possibility of physical violence by the Black Hundreds against Maksimov: “The Taurida Branch of the Union of the Russian People, observing the present state of affairs in the Russian Empire and recognizing that the peaceful citizens and the loyal armed forces of the neighboring city of Sevastopol cannot continue to exist under the weakness of will displayed by the authorities in suppressing criminal organizations that obstruct the peaceful life of the Russian people, considers it necessary to proclaim publicly that the life of the Union of the Russian People must be expressed not only in good intentions and speeches but also in deeds requiring the full exertion of the Union’s strength, the determination to carry matters through to the end, and to extinguish at their source the bloody crimes now being prepared. The blows will be directed not against the unconscious instrument of the cunning enemy, but against the instigator who sows disorder, circumvents the law, and hides in the darkness of deception. The lives of the Union’s members are of no value when directed along the path prescribed by the evil will of these vile organizations. Therefore, any attempt to seize power or to undermine order by spreading unrest among the Russian armed forces in Sevastopol will be mercilessly suppressed, while those leaders who are now preparing these evil deeds will be punished for their criminal activities. The names of those sowing discord are known, and, regrettably, the list now includes even municipally elected persons who occupy positions of honor”¹⁷.

It is important to note that Seidlitz himself sympathized with the Union of the Russian People. Thus, in March 1908, he informed the Commander of the Corps of Gendarmes, F.F. Taube, of a ceremony organized by the Yalta branch of this Black Hundred organization in honor of the Governor-General of Yalta, Major General I.A. Dumbadze. Dumbadze had become notorious after surviving an assassination attempt in February 1907, when he ordered the complete destruction by fire of the dacha from whose grounds a bomb had been thrown at his carriage, while forbidding the residents to remove any of their belongings. Seidlitz reported: “General Dumbadze, in warm and heartfelt words, sincerely thanked those assembled for the honor shown

¹⁷ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 1. Общ. Д. 48. Л. 25–26.

to him and declared that he would continue firmly and tirelessly to preserve order in the region and ensure the safety of the population... The celebration concluded with a prayer service at the Yalta Branch of the Union of the Russian People and speeches by orators calling upon those present to swear loyalty, to the last drop of their blood, to their autocratic monarch and to protect the life of the valiant General. Every person present took this oath as one man, and sobbing could be heard throughout the crowd”¹⁸.

It may therefore be suggested that when Seidlitz hastily informed his superiors in the capital on 4 May that correspondence had been discovered proving Maksimov’s political unreliability, his assessment largely reflected the Black Hundred view of the Mayor of Sevastopol. At the same time, Seidlitz apparently understood that such an interpretation was unlikely to carry much weight with the Police Department. Indeed, in his report of 12 May, when forwarding the materials seized during the search, he no longer referred to “correspondence proving Maksimov’s political unreliability”. Instead, he based his argument almost entirely upon documents relating to the events of October 1905 – namely, a newspaper article describing the extraordinary session of the City Duma on 18 October 1905 and an “extract from the minutes of the City Duma meeting of 19 October” of that year¹⁹.

These public documents were now described by Seidlitz as “vividly” demonstrating “the revolutionary activities of Mayor Maksimov” and revealing his “complete political unreliability”. What did they actually contain? In October 1905, Maksimov had permitted the so-called “people’s deputies” to attend an extraordinary meeting of the Sevastopol City Duma. Among them was Lieutenant Schmidt, who would soon become the leader of the Sevastopol Uprising. These “people’s deputies” had been elected informally by popular assemblies following the promulgation of the Manifesto of 17 October 1905, which promised civil liberties and a representative legislature. Maksimov allowed these representatives to address the Duma and granted them consultative voting rights. Their admission to the City Duma, however, was directly connected with events that had occurred the previous day. After learning of

¹⁸ Ibid. Л. 7–8 об.

¹⁹ ГАРФ. Ф. 102. 7 делопроизводство. Оп. 205. 1908. Д. 3193. Л. 16–20 об.

the Manifesto, a demonstration marched to the city prison demanding the release of political prisoners, whereupon troops opened fire on the crowd. As is evident from Maksimov's speech at the Duma, he strongly condemned those officials who had ordered the shooting, arguing that after 17 October political demonstrations had become lawful expressions of public opinion. Maksimov himself had not participated in the demonstration, but he visited the wounded in the municipal hospital and persuaded the City Governor to release the bodies of those killed to their relatives. During the Duma session, although the "people's deputies" demanded the creation of a people's militia, Maksimov instead proposed establishing a temporary people's guard. He agreed with their demand for a general amnesty, but refused to support the proposal to amnesty the sailors who had taken part in the uprising – apparently a reference to the mutiny aboard the battleship *Potemkin* in July 1905. Following the meeting, Maksimov and one of the "people's deputies", Emelyanov, visited the City Governor, where arrangements were made for the forthcoming funeral procession. It was agreed that order during the funeral would be maintained by the temporary people's guard, while the City Duma prohibited the sale of alcoholic beverages on that day. During the funeral itself, Maksimov addressed those assembled – the predominantly revolutionary-minded crowd – urging them to value the freedoms granted by the October Manifesto and to understand that liberty did not imply license.

These documents constituted the entirety of the material submitted by Seidlitz to the Police Department concerning Maksimov's role in the events of October 1905. The *Report* also lists a *Draft Plan for the Establishment of an Unlawful Municipal Militia and the Report of the Sevastopol City Administration Thereon and a Draft Telegram from Maksimov to Count Witte* (1905). It is impossible, however, to determine the contents of either document, since Seidlitz did not forward their texts to the Police Department.

Naturally, Maksimov himself had no knowledge of the documents concerning the search that the gendarmes had submitted to the Police Department. Nevertheless, on 6 May he travelled to St Petersburg to present a memorandum to Minister of the Interior P.A. Stolypin in his capacity as the "temporarily suspended Mayor of Sevastopol". Although mayors were elected officials within the system of municipal



Alexander Alexandrovich Makarov (1857–1919), Deputy Minister of the Interior from 1906 and Minister in 1911–1912.

Photograph by K. Bulla Studio. From open sources

self-government, their appointments nevertheless required confirmation by the Ministry of the Interior. In this sense, Maksimov was appealing to his own highest administrative authority²⁰. His memorandum, dated 15 May 1908, makes no mention whatsoever of the sailor Shulzhenko, whom, according to Seidlitz, the gendarmes had come to search for at his residence. Instead, Maksimov twice emphasized that neither the gendarmes during the search nor Rear Admiral Viren afterwards had provided him with any intelligible explanation for their actions beyond references to the events of October 1905. As Maksimov pointed out, it was entirely unclear why events that had occurred two and a half years earlier, were well known throughout Sevastopol, and had already been reported at the time to the Commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Vice Admiral G.P. Chukhnin, should suddenly have acquired such pressing significance for the gendarmes and the Acting Governor-General of Sevastopol, R.N. Viren, in early May 1908.

Maksimov's memorandum is of particular interest not so much for its contents as for the impression it made upon its recipient, Minister of the Interior P.A. Stolypin. In it Maksimov wrote: "I venture to believe that

²⁰ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. 4 делопроизводство. 1908. Оп. 117. Д. 71. Ч. 12. Л. 57–58.

my selfless public service” (Maksimov had refused to accept the mayor’s salary, leaving it to the city. – *L.U.*) “and my many years of service entitle me to hope that, by virtue of the sense of justice which characterizes Your Excellency’s conduct of state affairs, I shall find in you a lawful and impartial judge should I prove guilty of the accusations brought against me” (clearly referring to the allegation that he had encouraged the “revolution” in October 1905. – *L.U.*), “but likewise a powerful defender against the unjust violation of my rights as a loyal subject of my Sovereign and as a public servant. In view of all this, I most respectfully request that Your Excellency be pleased to order that the entire proceedings concerning my case be submitted for your personal consideration and investigated here in St Petersburg, and that I be afforded the opportunity to refute the accusations made against me and thereby restore my good name”.

Stolypin’s resolution read: “This must, of course, be reported to me in full detail. Has an enquiry been sent to Vice Admiral Viren?”

It may be assumed that Stolypin addressed this instruction to A.A. Makarov, Deputy Minister of the Interior and Chief of Police through whom Maksimov most likely submitted his memorandum. Makarov, in turn, had already been approached by General E.V. Bogdanovich, who, on 12 May, sent him a lengthy letter requesting that he receive the Mayor of Sevastopol, whom Bogdanovich described as “an absolutely reliable man”²¹. It is evident that Maksimov was indeed received. Whether by Makarov personally or by officials of the Police Department remains uncertain, but Bogdanovich’s letter was preserved in the archives of the Police Department, as was Maksimov’s memorandum of 15 May, suggesting that the latter resulted directly from this meeting.

Stolypin’s resolution therefore may have been written somewhat later, though evidently without delay. Beginning on 17 May, an intensive exchange of correspondence – marked *urgent* – developed within the Police Department and between the Department and the Minister of the Interior concerning the legality of Viren’s actions against Maksimov. This correspondence culminated in a handwritten note dated 19 May, probably made by the Director of the Police Department, although another notation – “reported to the Minister” – indicates that Stolypin himself remained fully informed: “Viren has not exceeded

²¹ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. 4 делопроизводство. 1908. Оп. 117. Д. 71. Ч. 12. Л. 54.

the powers granted to him under martial law. Summon Maksimov to see me at the earliest opportunity, if he is still here”²².

It would therefore appear that both the Police Department and Stolypin were inclined to support Maksimov, whereas Viren’s actions gave rise to doubts regarding both their legal basis and their factual justification. Nevertheless, Stolypin was unable to resolve the matter by his own authority, and Maksimov remained “temporarily suspended from office” for the duration of martial law in Sevastopol.

On 12 June 1908, Acting Governor-General of Sevastopol Rear Admiral R.N. Viren received from Seidlitz a report declaring Maksimov to be extremely politically unreliable, and on the very same day drafted a dispatch to the Ministry of the Interior calling for Maksimov’s “final removal from office”²³. This report can hardly have come as a surprise to Viren. According to *Krymsky Vestnik*, he and Seidlitz were in frequent official contact, regularly appearing together to receive members of the imperial family and senior government officials arriving by train, as well as attending numerous ceremonial occasions, including the opening of the Yacht Club and the accompanying formal banquets. At the same time, during the first half of 1908 *Krymsky Vestnik* reported almost daily on the expulsion from Sevastopol, by order of the Acting Military Governor-General, of individuals deemed “politically unreliable”. The number of such expulsions, incidentally, declined sharply after Rear Admiral I.F. Boström assumed the same office in July 1908. Given the sheer volume of these deportations, it is difficult to imagine that each case of alleged political unreliability received careful investigation. It is equally obvious that the information identifying politically unreliable individuals was supplied to Viren by Seidlitz, whose office was responsible precisely for matters relating to political reliability.

Against this background, it is striking that Seidlitz required more than a month to inform the Acting Military Governor-General of Maksimov’s “complete political unreliability” – especially considering that, although the gendarmes opened a special case on 12 May, they conducted no further investigation after the search of 3 May. By contrast,

²² Ibid. A. 64.

²³ Quoted in: Чикин А.М. Две жизни прожить не дано... Год 1908-й: 225-летию города-героя Севастополя и 100-летию со дня кончины городского головы А.А. Максимова посвящается. Севастополь: Дельта, 2008. С. 57.

Viren needed less than twenty-four hours to prepare his request to the Ministry of the Interior. The impression is that Viren – and perhaps Seidlitz as well – was waiting for a particular moment in mid-June before advancing the case for Maksimov's dismissal, even though the decision to remove him from the mayoralty had effectively been made before the search itself, in the first days of May.

The date that Viren appears to have been awaiting may have been connected with the forthcoming municipal elections. From mid-June 1908, exactly one year remained before the expiration of the term of the City Duma elected in June 1905. Under the legislation then in force, no by-election was held during the final year of the Duma's term in the event of changes in its composition, including the office of mayor.

Consequently, from mid-June 1908 until June 1909, the duties of mayor would continue to be performed by the individual who had assumed them immediately after Maksimov's suspension on 5 May 1908 – namely his deputy, N.F. Ergopulo, officially described in the terminology of the period as the person “acting in place of the mayor”. As *Krymsky Vestnik* shows, Ergopulo, in his capacity as Acting Mayor, regularly appeared at the same official ceremonies and banquets as Viren, delivering lengthy ceremonial speeches. His role in these events will be examined later.

For the moment, it should be noted that Viren's proposal to the Ministry of the Interior calling for Maksimov's final removal from office received remarkably swift support in St Petersburg. Yet this support came not from the Police Department, where Viren's submission was received but elicited no discernible response, but from another branch of the Ministry of the Interior – the Main Administration for Local Economy – and specifically from its director, S.N. Gerbel.

The Main Administration for Local Economy was responsible for matters within the jurisdiction of municipal self-government. This institution remains poorly studied in Russian historiography. An important exception is K.I. Mogilevsky's monograph on the Council for Local Economy, which functioned within the Main Administration and played a central role in developing Stolypin's municipal and zemstvo reforms²⁴. Examination of the archives of the Main

²⁴ *Могилевский К.И. Столыпинские реформы и местная элита: Совет по делам местного хозяйства (1908–1910). М.: РОССПЭН, 2008.*

Administration reveals that they preserve a substantial number of files concerning municipal officials throughout the Russian Empire, including approximately thirty cases from 1906–1908 entitled, for example, “On Bringing Mayor X to Responsibility” or “On Imposing a Disciplinary Sanction upon Mayor X”.

This demonstrates that disciplinary proceedings against municipal officials for misconduct in office were by no means unusual and ordinarily presented no procedural or terminological difficulties. Maksimov’s case, however, once again stands out. In the archives of the Main Administration it is entitled *On the Removal from Office of the Honorary Citizen A.A. Maksimov (Mayor of Sevastopol)*. Under normal practice, one would expect a title along the lines of *On Bringing the Mayor of Sevastopol, A.A. Maksimov, to Responsibility*. The file itself was destroyed during the Soviet period. Its contents must therefore be reconstructed from documents preserved in the archives of the Police Department and from related files within the records of the Main Administration for Local Economy.

Until the third week of June 1908, the Main Administration for Local Economy showed little interest in the Maksimov affair. The Police Department forwarded to it both Viren’s dispatch of 5 May concerning the temporary “removal from office of the Mayor of Sevastopol” and Colonel Seidlitz’s report of 12 May, together with its attachments, including the *Report* and the documents relating to the events of October 1905. Only on 23 June, however, did the Main Administration request – marked *urgent* – that the Police Department transmit “the report of the Acting Governor-General of the City of Sevastopol of the 14th of the current month, No. 33, concerning the final removal from office of the Mayor of Sevastopol, Maksimov, together with all correspondence in the Department relating to this case, which, once no longer required, will be returned”²⁵.

Four days later, on 27 June 1908, the Main Administration sent the Police Department “a copy of the memorandum concerning the Mayor of Sevastopol, Maksimov, together with a copy of the resolution entered upon it by the Head of the Main Administration recording the instruction of the Minister of the Interior that a submission be prepared

²⁵ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. 4 ДЕЛОПРОИЗВОДСТВО. 1908. Оп. 117. Д. 71. Ч. 12. Л. 74.

for the Ministerial Council regarding the dismissal of the said official, while informing the Department that the original memorandum has been retained in the files of the Main Administration”²⁶.

At this point, further inconsistencies emerge. Subsequent documents in the Police Department file *Taurida Governorate. Information on Sevastopol. 1908* make it clear that the “original memorandum” which S.N. Gerbel, Head of the Main Administration, took to Stolypin was in fact a memorandum prepared by the Police Department itself.

Thus, on 23 June the Main Administration urgently requested the Department’s entire file on Maksimov, received the requested documents the same day, and formally undertook to return them. It did indeed return all of the documents – with one exception: the memorandum prepared by the Police Department. Moreover, the Main Administration made no attempt to explain why this document had not been returned. Only after the Police Department sent a formal reminder requesting its return did it receive instead “a copy of the memorandum together with a copy of the resolution entered upon it” by Gerbel concerning Stolypin’s “instruction”.

This strongly suggests that, for the Main Administration, the memorandum possessed value only in its original form – not because of its contents, for a copy would have sufficed for that purpose, but because the original bore Gerbel’s handwritten note recording Stolypin’s alleged instruction.

The Main Administration therefore appears to have intended to use this documentary record of Stolypin’s position for subsequent proceedings: first, in preparing a submission to the Ministerial Council recommending Maksimov’s dismissal, and second, as part of the justification for the dismissal itself.

In the event, however, neither purpose was fulfilled.

Stolypin’s position, as recorded by Gerbel on the original memorandum and known to us only through the typed text reproduced in the copy, never appears again in the surviving documentation. The *Memorandum on the Removal of Maksimov from Office* submitted by the Main Administration to the Council of the Minister of the Interior instead consists of a collection of opinions expressed over several

²⁶ Ibid. A. 76.

years by various state officials concerning Maksimov. These included P.V. Neklyudov, a member of the Ministerial Council; the Director of the Police Department (unnamed in the document, but clearly M.I. Trusevich); and several naval officers: former Governor of Sevastopol Rear Admiral A.M. Spitsky, former Acting Governor-General Vice Admiral N.I. Skrydlov, and the current Acting Governor-General Rear Admiral R.N. Viren²⁷.

At first sight, this is puzzling. Since the case for removing Maksimov from office was based in part upon the opinions of various officials, one would expect the documented position of the Minister of the Interior himself to constitute particularly weighty evidence before the body responsible for deciding the matter – the Council of the Minister of the Interior. Yet Stolypin is not mentioned at all in the *Memorandum*.

This strongly suggests that the Main Administration deliberately avoided revealing to the Police Department what Gerbel had actually written concerning Stolypin's alleged instruction on the original memorandum. Significantly, the "copy of the memorandum" bearing the "copy of Gerbel's resolution" carries only a single signature – that of a clerk – whereas every other document originating from the Main Administration bears two signatures: first that of the responsible official (in this case A. Nemirowsky, Head of the Municipal Affairs Section), followed by that of the clerk.

Moreover, Gerbel's resolution, known to the Police Department only through this copy and ostensibly recording Stolypin's decision, in fact reproduces Viren's own terminology – namely, "removal from office", meaning dismissal. By contrast, from the perspective of the Ministry of the Interior, one would expect the Minister's instructions to employ the Ministry's standard administrative terminology, such as "bringing to disciplinary responsibility" or "imposing a disciplinary sanction".

At the same time, submitting the matter to the Council of the Minister of the Interior fully complied with the provisions of the Municipal Statute of 1892, which assigned questions of disciplinary sanctions – including the removal of municipal officials from office – to that advisory body within the Ministry. Had Gerbel actually secured Stolypin's approval for Maksimov's dismissal, one would naturally expect the

²⁷ For the text, see.: РГИА. Ф. 1281. Оп. 10. 1908. Д. 3. Л. 56–60.



Sergei Nikolaevich Gerbel (1856–1939), Head of the Main Directorate for Local Government Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior (1904–1912), Court Chamberlain.

Photograph from M.L. Levenson, The State Council. Petrograd, 1915, p. 15

Minister also to have approved the legal grounds upon which such a dismissal should rest.

Instead, the memorandum submitted by the Main Administration to the Ministerial Council one week later, on 4 July 1908²⁸, effectively reset the entire case, since its evidentiary basis for asserting Maksimov's political unreliability was entirely new. First, for reasons that remain unexplained, the *Memorandum on the Removal* contains none of the documentary evidence that Stolypin had evidently reviewed following Maksimov's own memorandum in mid-May 1908. It makes no use whatsoever of the search materials forwarded to the Police Department by Seidlitz, nor of the memoranda prepared within the Department itself concerning Maksimov. Indeed, the memorandum does not even mention that a search had been conducted at the Mayor's residence and that its results had formed the basis for his suspension from office. Instead, it merely states that on 5 May Viren "considered it necessary" to suspend Maksimov temporarily, and on 20 June to remove him permanently.

²⁸ Ibid.

Thus, the memorandum offers no explanation whatsoever for Viren's actions. Nevertheless, its concluding argument explicitly echoes his position: "All the more necessary, therefore, would be the final removal of Maksimov from the office he presently occupies, now that the Acting Governor-General of Sevastopol has found himself compelled to remove him from the office of Mayor for the entire duration of martial law in Sevastopol".

Secondly, the memorandum unmistakably reflects the right-wing political outlook of its authors, including an anti-Semitic remark characteristic of Black Hundred rhetoric. It asserts that Maksimov conducted "all his affairs" through "his agent Usov (the unofficial editor of the Jewish newspaper *Krymsky Vestnik*)".

According to the memorandum, however, the principal reason why Maksimov could not remain Mayor of Sevastopol was his alleged Constitutional Democratic (Kadet) political views. Information concerning Maksimov's sympathies for the Constitutional Democratic Party had been supplied to the Main Administration by the Police Department as early as March 1907: "...according to information received by the Police Department, Maksimov, in his political convictions, belongs to the Constitutional Democratic Party, although no instances are known in which he has openly declared his affiliation with any political party. By virtue of his position as Mayor, he moves among members of various parties and, in order to retain his office, sometimes inclines towards the views of the Right and at other times towards those of the Left, while maintaining contacts – though in no case close ones – with local socialist intellectuals. At the same time, actual state councillor Trusevich expressed the opinion that Maksimov's removal from the office of mayor would hardly be desirable, since it might reasonably be expected that his successor would prove to hold even more left-wing views".

The Main Administration immediately challenged the opinion expressed by the Director of the Police Department. In the concluding section of the memorandum it declared: "The Main Administration considers that the information available to the Ministry of the Interior sufficiently establishes that the Mayor of Sevastopol, Maksimov, in his political convictions belongs to the Constitutional Democratic Party and, as certified by the Director of the Police Department, maintains

contacts, albeit not close ones, with local socialist intellectuals. Since the Constitutional Democratic Party belongs to the category of prohibited organizations, this circumstance alone, within the meaning of the ruling of the Governing Senate of 30 March 1908, would be sufficient to justify Maksimov's removal from the office of Mayor of Sevastopol, where, owing to the particular political conditions prevailing there, it is especially necessary that the head of the municipal administration should be a person of unquestionable political reliability".

Thus, instead of accusing Maksimov of misconduct during the events of October 1905, as Seidlitz and Viren had done, the Main Administration argued that the Mayor's political beliefs themselves rendered him unfit for office. This formulation is of fundamental importance for understanding how the governing authorities of the Russian Empire conceived the limits of political acceptability. It raises, above all, the question whether an individual's political convictions – essentially a private matter in a state governed by law – could legitimately serve as grounds for excluding that individual not only from the civil service but also from elected offices of municipal self-government.

The resolution adopted by the Council of the Minister of the Interior on 28 July 1908 in response to the Main Administration's *Memorandum* is particularly revealing: "The information supplied by the Police Department concerning the unreliability of the Mayor of Sevastopol, Maksimov, is entirely insufficient to justify his removal from office; moreover, the Department itself has expressed the opinion that such an outcome would be undesirable. Furthermore, there is no indication that any explanation was ever requested from Maksimov or that the question of his responsibility was considered by the local Municipal Affairs Board"²⁹.

It follows that the Council of the Minister of the Interior was unimpressed by the allegations concerning Maksimov's Kadet sympathies and regarded the evidence of his alleged political unreliability as "entirely insufficient". More than that, the Main Administration was criticized for violating the established procedure governing the imposition of disciplinary sanctions. The resolution ordering that the "case be returned to the Main Administration for Local Economy

²⁹ Ibid. A. 246 o6.

for the submission of additional information” bears the signature of S.E. Kryzhanovsky, Stolypin’s closest associate and the principal author of many of the legislative reforms of the Stolypin era.

Three weeks later, on 21 August 1908, Stolypin endorsed this decision with the notation “Approved”³⁰. As a result, Maksimov remained temporarily suspended from the office of Mayor for as long as the city remained under martial law.

It is impossible to know how the case might have developed thereafter. Yet Stolypin approved the Council’s decision the day after Maksimov’s sudden death, which occurred on 20 August 1908. This coincidence of dates was purely accidental, since the Ministry of the Interior received news of Maksimov’s death only on 23 August³¹. *Krymsky Vestnik* reported that his death came as a complete surprise. Only the previous day he had been walking along the Primorsky Boulevard, and acquaintances knew that he was preparing to travel to St Petersburg “on personal business”³².

Reporting Maksimov’s death to St Petersburg, Colonel Seidlitz informed both the Corps of Gendarmes and the Police Department that the “former Mayor of Sevastopol” had died. Particularly revealing is a pencilled annotation on the telegram received by the Corps of Gendarmes, apparently written by its commander, Baron F.F. Taube, another sympathizer of the Union of the Russian People, like Seidlitz himself: “One revolutionary fewer”³³. The Police Department did not respond to Seidlitz’s telegram.

Yet whereas Seidlitz described Maksimov as a “former Mayor” — a characterization that did not correspond to his formal legal status — the Governor of Sevastopol, Morenschildt, employed considerably more precise language when reporting the death to the Main Administration for Local Economy: “On 20 August at 8 o’clock in the morning there died the hereditary honorary citizen A.A. Maksimov, Mayor of Sevastopol, who had been suspended from office by order of the Governor-General for the duration of martial law”.

³⁰ Ibid. А. 296.

³¹ РГИА. Ф. 1288. Оп. 5. 1907 год. Д. 80. Л. 5.

³² Крымский вестник. 1908. 24 августа.

³³ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 1. Общ. Д. 48. Л. 48.

It was in precisely this capacity – that of Mayor of Sevastopol – that Maksimov was buried. Throughout the obituary notices published in *Krymsky Vestnik*, he is consistently described by that title. Significantly, it was only after Maksimov's death that the newspaper ceased referring to N.F. Ergopulo as the "Acting Mayor" and began calling him simply Mayor of Sevastopol. Ergopulo retained that status until June 1909, when he was elected Mayor for the following four-year term.

The achievement for which Ergopulo is best remembered as Mayor – the conclusion of a highly favorable contract granting the City Duma a 30 per cent discount on the standard tariff under an agreement with the Belgian Anonymous Company for Tramways and Electric Lighting for the electrification of the whole of Sevastopol – did not originate in the summer of 1909, however, but in the spring of 1908.

At precisely that time, Maksimov submitted to the City Duma his own proposal for the electrification of Sevastopol through the establishment of a municipally owned, profit-making electricity enterprise. At the end of April 1908, he urged the Duma to reject the proposed agreement with the Belgian company for the city's electrical lighting. Only a few days later, the gendarmes searched his residence in search of evidence of his alleged political unreliability. On 7 May 1908, Maksimov's project for constructing a municipal power station was published in *Krymsky Vestnik* – the very same day that the newspaper announced his suspension from office by order of Viren³⁴.

The history of the Belgian Anonymous Company for Tramways and Electric Lighting in Sevastopol is well known. It was through this company that the city acquired both electric street lighting and its first tramway lines at the end of the nineteenth century, developments that contributed substantially to urban improvement and economic growth³⁵.

The Belgian Anonymous Company was one of the major enterprises in the Russian electrical industry at the beginning of the twentieth

³⁴ Крымский вестник. 1908. 7 мая. С. 1.

³⁵ Крушинин М.С. Экономическое развитие Севастополя // История Севастополя. В 3 т. Т. II. Севастополь в эпоху Российской империи. Конец XVIII века – 1917 г. М.: ИстЛит, 2021. С. 628–631.

century. According to P.V. Ol's statistical handbook published in 1915 (using data for 1911), its capital amounted to three million rubles. The company supplied electric lighting and operated tramways in Sevastopol, Yekaterinodar, Kremenchug, and Yaroslavl, ranking second in this industrial sector only to the Society for Electric Lighting of 1886, which served St Petersburg, Moscow, and Łódź and possessed capital of approximately thirty million rubles³⁶.

There is no direct evidence that Maksimov's removal from office in May 1908, ostensibly on grounds of political unreliability, was in reality motivated by the conflict surrounding the interests of the Belgian company. One can speak only of circumstantial evidence.

The principal sources for this episode are the reports published in Krymsky Vestnik during the spring and summer of 1908, together with the archival file entitled *On the Installation of Electric Lighting in the City of Sevastopol (Belgian Anonymous Company)*³⁷ preserved in the records of the Main Administration for Local Economy – the very institution that, beginning in the latter half of June 1908, insisted upon Maksimov's final removal from office.

The inventory records of the Main Administration's archive testify to its sustained interest in the issue of urban electric lighting. These include files on the "installation of electric lighting" in various cities of the Russian Empire – between 1906 and 1908 alone there were approximately fifty such cases – as well as files concerning technical matters (for example, a 1908 case entitled *On the Drafting of New Regulations for Low-Voltage Electrical Installations*), and files relating to private electric lighting and tramway companies (for example, a 1908 case entitled *On Granting Permission to the Belgian Anonymous Company Kursk Tramway to Increase Its Reserve Capital by Two Million Francs*). This file contains correspondence between representatives of the Belgian company, the Governor of Kursk, and the Main Administration for Local Economy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs concerning the terms under which the company was to operate. The Belgian representatives complained to the Main Administration about

³⁶ Оль П.В. Статистика акционерных обществ и паевых товариществ, обязанных публичной отчетностью, за 1911/12 год. Пг., 1915.

³⁷ РГИА. Ф. 1288. Оп. 9. 1909. Д. 16.



Tram on Nakhimov Avenue, Sevastopol. *Early twentieth-century photograph.*
Notes of a Boring Man: <https://humus.livejournal.com>

the conditions imposed by the Governor of Kursk in agreement with the Municipal Duma and requested that the Administration “press” the Governor to accept their own position. The correspondence also makes it clear that the principal representative of the central government in these tripartite negotiations was A. Nemirovsky, Head of the Urban Economy Department of the Main Administration, who met repeatedly with representatives of the Belgian company.

It was Nemirovsky who corresponded with the Police Department regarding Maksimov in June 1908, and his signature appears immediately below that of the Head of the Administration, S.N. Gerbel, on the *Memorandum on the Removal of A.A. Maksimov*, dated 4 July 1908.

A picture that emerges from the Main Administration’s file *On the Installation of Electric Lighting in the City of Sevastopol (Belgian Anonymous Company)*, opened in February 1909, was different from the case in Kursk. By early 1909, not only were there no disagreements between the Belgian company and the Sevastopol municipal duma over electric lighting, but both parties were urging the Ministry of Internal Affairs to approve as quickly as possible the mutually agreed text of the *Agreement for the Installation and Operation of Electric Lighting and the Supply of Power in Sevastopol, Revised in Accordance with the Minutes of the Municipal Finance and Construction Commission*.

Since 1905, the Finance and Construction Commission of the Sevastopol Municipal Duma had been chaired by N.F. Ergopulo, who until May 1908 also served as *Deputy Mayor*, and who, following Viren's removal of Maksimov from office on 5 May, became *Acting Mayor*. The file includes Ergopulo's report to the Municipal Duma of 17 December 1908³⁸, outlining the history of drafting the agreement with the Belgian company. At that meeting, the Duma approved the agreement by a vote of twenty-one in favor and four against.

Without dwelling on the details of the Duma's relations with the Belgians since 1896 – changes of ownership, changes of corporate names, and revisions of contractual terms, all described in Ergopulo's report – I shall focus on three points.

First, the question of constructing a municipal power station had interested Maksimov since 1903, and he kept the work of the Finance and Construction Commission (that is, Ergopulo's commission) under constant supervision. Thus, in 1905, when the Commission submitted another draft agreement with the Belgian company to the Duma, the Mayor devoted a *special report* to the proposal, as a result of which the Duma rejected the agreement.

Second, Maksimov opposed concluding a long-term contract with the Belgian company for Sevastopol's electric lighting. The company proposed either a twelve-year term or a thirty-year term to coincide with the tramway concession. This appears to have been one of the principal causes of his disagreement with Ergopulo, although the latter expressed it only in very cautious terms in his report to the Duma in December 1908, after Maksimov's death: "As early as 1905, the Commission considering the draft of a new agreement with the Belgian Anonymous Company for the electric lighting of the city regarded it as possible to align the term of the lighting agreement with that of the tramway concession. However, the Municipal Duma did not then consider it possible to approve the draft agreement proposed by the Belgian Anonymous Company".

Third, Maksimov believed that Sevastopol should possess its own municipal power station, which, in his view, would generate substantial revenue for the city, thereby making it independent of subsidies from

³⁸ Ibid. A. 14–17.

the central government. From his perspective, an agreement with the Belgian company was acceptable only because it imposed no restrictions on the construction of a municipal power station or on the conclusion of agreements with other private entrepreneurs.

By March 1908, the city administration had prepared a draft agreement, approved by the Finance and Construction Commission, and forwarded it to the Belgian company. It appears that this draft became, in broad outline, the basis of the agreement on Sevastopol's electric lighting that was presented to the Duma after Maksimov's removal, in December 1908. The proposed contract was to last thirty years and introduced an indirect but nevertheless significant restriction on the entry of other participants – whether private or municipal – into the city's electricity market:

“Should the municipal administration wish to exercise the right granted under paragraph (b) of Article 5 of the present agreement, namely to grant another entrepreneur the right to establish a central power station for the supply of electric power for lighting and other industrial purposes, excluding tramways, the terms offered to the new entrepreneur must, before permission is granted, be communicated to the Company. Within three months of receiving notice of those terms, the Company shall have the right to declare that it itself will undertake the enterprise on the conditions proposed by the new entrepreneur, in which case the municipal administration shall grant the Company priority in carrying out the project. If the municipal administration itself undertakes the enterprise, or if it is entrusted to another entrepreneur... the Company shall have the right, within the same three-month period, to declare that it will terminate, two years after such declaration, its lighting and power-supply operations. In such a case, if the permission is granted more than five years before the expiration of the present agreement, all machinery and equipment necessary for the proper functioning of the tramway shall become the property of the Company”³⁹.

By March 1908, the differing attitudes toward the Belgian company within the Municipal Duma had become quite pronounced. While Ergopulo's commission was drafting a new agreement with the

³⁹ Ibid. A. 10.

Belgian company, Maksimov published a pamphlet entitled *Memorandum on the Question of Electric Lighting in Sevastopol*. In his December 1908 report to the Duma, Ergopulo described the pamphlet as follows: “The principal aim of this pamphlet is to demonstrate the complete unprofitability for the city of concluding a long-term agreement with the Belgian Anonymous Company and the exceptional advantages of constructing a municipal power station according to the estimates prepared by its author”.

Ergopulo went on to report that the city administration instructed the municipal engineer to recalculate Maksimov’s proposal. Numerous errors were allegedly discovered, prompting the Finance and Construction Commission to establish yet another commission composed of engineers and electrical specialists. Rather than conducting an independent assessment, however, this commission turned to the Belgian company itself for assistance in calculating the profitability of constructing a municipal power station. The outcome of this joint work was the conclusion that such a project would be highly unprofitable, yielding an annual income of only about 1,000 rubles, whereas Maksimov’s calculations had, according to Ergopulo, mistakenly estimated an annual profit of 4,000 rubles. At the same time, the Belgian company agreed to pay the city precisely 4,000 rubles per year out of its own profits from operating Sevastopol’s electric lighting system.

Another highly advantageous concession for the city, agreed to by the Belgians sometime between March and December 1908, was a 30 percent discount on electricity supplied to municipal institutions compared with the standard tariff.

What is noteworthy, however, is not only that the Belgian company immediately made certain concessions following the appearance of Maksimov’s proposal – and concessions directed specifically at the municipal administration rather than at Sevastopol as a whole – but also that, beginning in March 1908, the city administration, including Ergopulo, undertook a detailed critical analysis of Maksimov’s pamphlet. At any rate, this is precisely what Ergopulo’s December report to the Municipal Duma suggests.

Yet only six months earlier, in May 1908, when already serving as Acting Mayor, Ergopulo told the newspaper *Krymsky Vestnik* quite the opposite: namely, that the city’s municipal officials had no idea what



Tomb of A.A. Maksimov in Sevastopol.
Photograph by inkerman777, 2019. From open sources

Maksimov's proposal for constructing a municipal power station actually entailed.

On 7 May 1908, *Krymsky Vestnik* published a brief notice announcing Maksimov's removal from the office of mayor by order of the temporary Governor-General of Sevastopol, R.N. Viren. In the same issue, on another page, the newspaper carried a lengthy article entitled *A New Sevastopol Project*. It dealt with the proposal for constructing a municipal power station that had been commissioned by Maksimov. Of interest were not only the projected financial figures – which estimated an annual return of approximately 16 percent – but also the newspaper's report that, by the end of April, the agreement with the Belgian company had already been approved by the commission chaired by Ergopulo and was expected to be submitted to the Duma for ratification.

Instead of presenting the agreement for consideration by the Duma, however, Maksimov apparently proposed – most likely in late April, only a few days before the search of his premises – to postpone discussion of the matter for three months in order to use that time to identify sources of financing for the construction of the municipal power station.

On 21 May, *Krymsky Vestnik* published an extensive interview with N.F. Ergopulo in his capacity as Acting Mayor. The interview was devoted

to criticizing Maksimov's proposal as fundamentally flawed because of numerous errors, the absence of any indication of who had prepared the calculations, and the secretive manner in which the project had been developed⁴⁰. In Ergopulo's opinion, Maksimov should instead have discussed the issue of constructing a municipal power station within the appropriate commission of the municipal дума, which was likewise concerned with the matter but regarded such a project as economically disadvantageous. The interview concluded with an editorial note stating that other "competent persons" would subsequently express their views on Maksimov's proposal in the newspaper, but no such articles ever appeared in *Krymsky Vestnik*.

Toward the end of May, however, the newspaper reported the arrival in Sevastopol of the Director of the Belgian company, Cesare Del Proposto⁴¹, and on 8 June it covered Viren's visit to the central power station, accompanied by Del Proposto and Bernar-Bormann⁴², the engineer in charge of the Sevastopol branch of the company. A few days later, on 12 June, Viren sent a telegram to the Ministry of Internal Affairs requesting Maksimov's permanent removal from office.

These chronological coincidences may, of course, be nothing more than coincidences. Equally, it may simply be coincidental that the Main Administration for Local Economy, which sought Maksimov's dismissal, was simultaneously engaged in overseeing urban electrification projects and supervising the contractual relationship in Sevastopol with the very Belgian company with which Mayor Maksimov steadfastly refused to conclude an agreement.

It is by no means obvious that Viren, a career military officer through and through, had any knowledge of the disagreements between Maksimov and Ergopulo over the agreement with the Belgian company, or that he himself had any connection with that company.

Viren and Seidlitz in Sevastopol, as well as Gerbel in St Petersburg, were all men of right-wing political convictions, and to them Maksimov genuinely appeared to be "politically unreliable". Nevertheless, in his lengthy letter to Viren of 6 May 1908, in which he explained why he did

⁴⁰ КРЫМСКИЙ ВЕСТНИК. 1908. 21 мая. С. 1.

⁴¹ КРЫМСКИЙ ВЕСТНИК. 1908. 28 мая. С. 1.

⁴² КРЫМСКИЙ ВЕСТНИК. 1908. 8 июня. С. 1.

not consider his actions during the October 1905 events to constitute political unreliability, Maksimov hinted that the real reasons for his dismissal were economic rather than political. He concluded the letter with the following observation: “I sincerely regret having to part with a cause so dear to me and to relinquish the highly flattering confidence placed in me by my electors, precisely at the moment when the most important issues of the city’s economy – the city’s financial position, the question of electric lighting, the question of the port, and the allocation of land to the city – are approaching their desired resolution... Though perhaps such a resolution is not desirable to everyone”⁴³.

In July 1908, Viren ceased serving as temporary Governor-General of Sevastopol following the abolition of the office that he held in conjunction with his position in the Naval Ministry as Commander-in-Chief of the Black Sea Fleet and Ports. The newly established post of Commander of the Naval Forces of the Black Sea was filled by Rear Admiral I.F. Boström, who had previously served as Assistant Minister of the Navy. At that very time, the Naval Ministry was already discussing the large-scale naval construction programmes that would be launched a year and a half later, in 1910. Another year later, Boström resigned from command of the Black Sea Fleet and joined the boards of two companies that received government shipbuilding contracts and were closely associated with major banks: the Nikolaev Shipyards and Dockyards Company and the Russian Shipbuilding Company. Alongside Boström on the boards of both companies sat a representative of the General Electric Company, a major electrical enterprise linked during the 1900s to German and American capital and, from 1909 onward, increasingly brought under the control of the St Petersburg International Bank. These developments have received virtually no scholarly attention to date⁴⁴. One may cautiously hypothesize that, just as Boström was connected with the General Electric, Viren may likewise have had connections with the Belgian company, and that, more broadly, in 1907–1908 Sevastopol and the Black Sea Fleet were becoming the focus of major state-financed projects

⁴³ Quoted in: Чикин А.М. Две жизни прожить не дано. С. 32.

⁴⁴ This issue is mentioned in passing in: Бовыкин В.И. Финансовый капитал в России накануне Первой мировой войны. М.: РОССПЭН, 2001. С. 250–253.

benefiting large business interests. Maksimov's plans to establish an independent municipal power station could well have obstructed this "larger game", the investigation of which still awaits historians.

It cannot be claimed that the author has succeeded in establishing with certainty the motives of all those involved in Maksimov's removal from office. This is due not only to the destruction of part of the documentary record during the Soviet period. Most importantly, it concerns the file *On the Removal from Office of the Honorary Citizen Maksimov*, formerly held in the Russian State Historical Archive in St Petersburg, which, according to the Archive's response to my inquiry, was destroyed in 1950 because Soviet archivists considered its contents to be of insufficient historical significance. Equally problematic are the numerous contradictions and inconsistencies that remain in the surviving documents.

To conclude this analysis of the "Maksimov case" within the broader context of the political police system in the Russian Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century, it should be noted that this local episode demonstrates the existence within that system of officials holding fundamentally different views regarding the boundaries of legitimate public political activity. While at the local level right-wing, Black Hundred conceptions could predominate, the Police Department – the central institution of the political police system – as well as the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs generally proceeded, first, from a considerably narrower definition of "political unreliability" (for example, members of the Constitutional Democratic Party, or Kadets, were not regarded as politically unreliable), and, second, considered any restrictions imposed on individuals solely because of their political views to be unacceptable.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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A Memorandum by A.P. Maslov, the first Chief of the Siberian Gendarme District, on the Need to Establish an Institution of Higher Education in the Region (1834)

Abstract

This article presents a memorandum written by Colonel Alexander Petrovich Maslov, the first Chief of the Siberian Gendarme District, arguing for the urgent establishment of an institution of higher education in Siberia. The memorandum was composed during the second year of the District's existence, when gendarmerie officers were only beginning to familiarize themselves with the region and its population and to identify local needs that might contribute to its overall development. The question of founding an institution of higher education east of the Ural Mountains had repeatedly been raised among government officials and in public discourse during the first third of the nineteenth century. Maslov, although serving in the gendarmerie – a body that formally stood outside the regular administrative apparatus of the state – also sought to draw attention to the importance of establishing a university in Siberia. In his



view, such an institution would help address several pressing problems: raising the educational level of the region, training qualified personnel for the local administration, and reducing the outflow of government officials from Siberia. Nevertheless, Maslov's memorandum did not become a turning point in the development of higher education in the region, since the imperial government at that time showed little interest in pursuing such an initiative. At the same time, the Memorandum is an important historical source because it broadens our understanding of the activities of the gendarmerie and the range of issues it addressed beyond its traditional responsibilities, such as supervising the bureaucracy and society and conducting political surveillance. The full text of the Memorandum is published here for the first time in its original form.

Keywords:

Gendarmerie; Gendarmerie surveillance; Siberian Gendarme District; Local administration; Staff officers; Siberia; Higher education; University

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permanent gendarmerie presence in the Siberian region began in 1833 with the formation of a gendarmerie district, which received number 7 in the gendarmerie-district structure (from 1837 on it was district 8). This district included both the original Siberian territories and neighboring regions: Tobolsk, Tomsk, Yenisei, and Irkutsk governorates, Omsk Oblast, as well

as Orenburg and Perm governorates. Each of these entities had the following structure of gendarmerie personnel: a staff officer (ranking from major to colonel), his aide-de-camp with an officer rank (from ensign to captain), and a provincial gendarmerie detachment of 34 ranks, headed by a chief with the rank of subaltern officer.

The establishment of a gendarmerie district in Siberia was motivated by several factors. Perhaps the most important was the need to oversee political exiles in the region, primarily the Decembrists. In the early 1830s, Poles, participants in the national liberation uprising of 1830–1831, also began to be exiled en masse beyond the Urals. An audit conducted by M.M. Speransky between 1819 and 1821 uncovered numerous violations related to embezzlement, bribery, abuse of office, and so on. The audit resulted in a large-scale administrative-territorial reform, which necessitated oversight of the functioning of the local government apparatus. Gendarme officers were well suited to both supervise political exiles and control the activities of officials, as they were distanced from the administrative system, subordinated only to their superiors, and defended state interests in their activities.

Colonel Alexander Petrovich Maslov was appointed the first Chief of the Siberian Gendarmerie District. His appointment was based on the following factors: he was one of the first recruits to the Gendarme Corps, and he had experience leading a gendarmerie district. Perhaps most importantly, Maslov was the first gendarmerie officer sent to Siberia in 1829 on a secret mission to investigate the status and activities of the exiled Decembrists¹. Thus, Maslov was familiar with the region and was able to quickly and effectively organize the work of the gendarmes to implement the above-mentioned tasks.

From the very beginning of the establishment of a gendarmerie district in Siberia, its officers paid attention not only to political exiles and the activities of local officials. They also monitored, in one way or another, virtually all issues related to the Siberian region, reporting on these to the district and corps authorities. Such gendarmerie reports are

¹ Дамешек Л.М., Кодан С.В., Шавров А.В. Материалы жандармских ревизий 1828–1832 гг. как источник изучения деятельности сибирского аппарата управления // Источники по истории общественной мысли и культуры эпохи позднего феодализма: Сборник статей / Отв. ред. Н.Н. Покровский. Новосибирск, 1988. С. 118–126.



Mikhail Mikhailovich Speransky.
Artist: A.G. Varnek, after the original by George Dawe.
From open sources

an important historical source: due to their independent status, the gendarmes represented their opinions, which often differed from those of the local administration. This information, however, was all the more valuable to the government, which used these reports to make decisions, including on personnel matters.

Educational institutions, teaching staff, students, and the overall state of education also came under the scrutiny of gendarmerie officials. In his 1835 district report, Colonel Maslov, the District's Chief of Gendarmes, noted that educational institutions throughout Siberia were in a state of "infancy", one of the main reasons for this being a lack of funds. Another problem highlighted by the Chief was the shortage of trained teachers, who, according to him, were "mostly people who had received a primary education". This latter circumstance, again according to Maslov, forced Siberians to turn to educated political exiles to act as mentors².

In 1834, during his second year in office, Colonel A.P. Maslov, having already become well acquainted with the situation in the region, submitted a draft memo to Chief of Gendarmes A.Kh. Benckendorff, entitled *Memorandum on the Need to Establish a Higher Educational Institution or Corps for the Education of Youth in Siberia*. The uniqueness and importance of this document lay in the fact that a gendarmerie officer, having

² Государственный архив Российской Федерации. Ф. 109. Оп. 11. Д. 17. Л. 14 об., 15.



Alexander Khristoforovich Benckendorff. Artist: E. Botman.

From open sources

recently assumed his duties, proposed the opening of a higher educational institution in Siberia, thereby demonstrating his interest in the development of regional education.

The impetus for the development of school and higher education in the Russian Empire was given at the very beginning of the reign of Alexander I, when the new Rules of Public Education (1803) and the first University Charter in Russian history (1804) were issued. In accordance with these legislative acts, six educational districts were established, each of which was to house a university. The opening of universities soon followed. The territories of the Perm, Orenburg, Tobolsk, and Irkutsk governorates were assigned to Kazan educational district³. In 1804, Imperial University was opened in Kazan. According to the legislative act *On the Organization of Schools* adopted in 1803, a university was planned to be opened in Tobolsk, the administrative center of the Tobolsk governorate, which would encompass all of Western Siberia and part of Eastern Siberia, beyond the Urals⁴. However, the university was never opened.

Various public and government figures repeatedly raised the need to quickly establish a university in Siberia. For example, in 1823, West Siberian Governor-General P.M. Kaptsevich, petitioning the Siberian

³ «Об учреждении учебных округов, с назначением для каждого особых губерний» [№ 20598] (24 января 1803 г.) // Полное собрание законов Российской империи (ПСЗРИ). Собр. 1-е. СПб., 1830. Т. 27 (1802–1803 гг.). С. 442.

⁴ «Об устройстве училищ» [№ 20597] (24 января 1803 г.) // ПСЗРИ. Собр. 1-е. СПб., 1830. Т. 27 (1802–1803 гг.). С. 439.



Pyotr Mikhailovich Kaptsevich. Artist: George Dawe.
From open sources

Committee, argued that opening a higher educational institution could facilitate the training of personnel for the local bureaucracy, thereby eliminating the need to send Siberians to study at universities located in the European part of the country. Kaptsevich, however, did not propose a specific city for the university, only stating that it should be convenient for both Western and Eastern Siberia. Discussion of this proposal began within government circles, but the issue of establishing a university in Siberia remained unresolved, in part due to a lack of the necessary funding⁵.

B.A. Kurakin and V.K. Bezrodny, who conducted a senatorial inspection in Western Siberia in 1827, did not support the idea of opening a higher education institution in the region not only because of the financial costs but also because of the lack of the necessary number of current and potential students. At that time, Western Siberia had only one boys' gymnasium, located in Tobolsk. Central government officials also pointed to the issue of teaching staff in the region, which was clearly insufficient to work at the proposed university⁶.

Thus, the imperial authorities did not support the idea of opening a higher educational institution beyond the Urals, considering it premature and costly. They advocated the need to prioritize the development of school education, including gymnasiums, before returning to the

⁵ Ремнев А. Университетский вопрос в Сибири XIX столетия // *Ab Imperio*. 2012. № 1. С. 122–125.

⁶ Ibid. С. 125–127.



Boris Alekseevich Kurakin. Unknown artist.
From open sources

university issue. This makes the aforementioned memorandum by Gendarme Colonel Maslov all the more interesting. Its contents can be classified as visionary: many gendarme officers, having become accustomed to the area where they served, proposed reform plans to their superiors. This position and the actions of the gendarme officers demonstrate that they were not mere bystanders, as their job description required, but were interested in the results of their service, striving to improve the situation by submitting various proposals to their superiors.

Maslov's memorandum is reproduced at the end of the article. It should be noted that in this document, he directly linked the dire state of the entire Siberian education system to the shortage of personnel in local government positions, as many officials were forced to leave the region after completing their minimum term of service due to the lack of qualified educational institutions for their offspring. To remedy this situation, Maslov believed it was necessary to open a higher education institution in the region. Thus, the Colonel's ideas overlapped with those of West Siberian Governor-General Kaptsevich, as mentioned above.

In December 1834, Chief of Gendarmes Count A.Kh. Benckendorff forwarded Maslov's memorandum to the Minister of Public Education, Count S.S. Uvarov, but he received no response other than the resolution left on the first page: "M[ister] Minister has taken note". Thus, Maslov's proposals were not pursued further, further evidence of the imperial government's lack of commitment to opening a higher educational institution in Siberia. Almost half a century would pass from the date of Maslov's



memorandum before the first university opened in Siberia: in 1878, Alexander II issued a decree establishing a university in Tomsk, and 10 years later, it opened with only one faculty—medical—where 72 students were admitted to the first year⁷.

Russian State Historical Archive.

Ф. 733. Он. 83. Д. 83. Л. 1–6

Memorandum on the establishment of a higher educational institution or Corps for the education of youth in Siberia⁸

The vastness of Siberia, its physical location, the nature of its population, and its terrifying remoteness from the Motherland constitute a barrier, hitherto insurmountable to a true understanding of this country. This has resulted in a shortage of personnel for the developing Siberia, which local authorities encounter in many essential areas, including state employees; and therefore, they are forced to employ people who are not suited to their responsibilities.

These necessities have only allowed for excessive expansion of jurisdiction without correction and have even produced disrespect for the severity of the laws.

The children of officials who serve, or who served in Siberia, and who are unable, due to remoteness, lack of resources and means, to receive a moral education, are assigned to be clerical and office servants, acquiring only the skill of uniformity of clerical ritual, and along with this, all the vices of a bad community, premature for them, poisoning the very principles of morality, with destructive impressions of debauchery and immorality for life, taking this disastrous path to raise their rank, which, with the very receipt of it, they are unworthy of.

This degeneration, so sad for humanity, of many generations, combined with the inveteracy and the multiplication of harmful examples, has turned the damage to morality and the degradation of the way of thinking into the very nature of people and with this has deprived

⁷ Некрылов С.А. Томский университет — первый научный центр в азиатской части России (середина 1870-х гг. — 1919 г.). В 2 т. Т. 1. Томск: Изд-во Томского университета, 2010. С. 73–127.

⁸ The spelling and punctuation have been preserved as in the original document.

Siberia of such people who, having received an education befitting their birth and purpose, could in many ways be useful to this region and replace the shortage of officials in it.

The severity of laws loses its effect where all moral and civil virtues are abandoned.

The consequences of this have created a barrier to the development of Siberia, so rich in natural resources. Necessary institutions, essential arts, even the very economy and rich branches of trade remain in their infancy and fail to correspond to the good intentions and efforts of the government, and even the beginning of the most useful projects remains blocked. How much time has been wasted in searching for what should have been stopped or implemented from time immemorial?

Finally, to alleviate the inconvenience caused by the shortage of people in the service, it was decided to give ranks to those sent to Siberia, increase their salaries, and provide travel allowances.

Time, experience, and a gradual transformation of thought revealed the need to change this measure; the results of the present day prove the truth of this. An increase in wages, based on the cost of all the necessities imported to Siberia, merely equalized them with those received in the interior governorates.

Those who have decided to sacrifice themselves for service in Siberia, upon arriving at their destination, encounter, due to the vastness of this region, a widely varied climate and health effects; numerous difficulties in fulfilling their duties; a disproportionate sacrifice made for the preliminary attainment of a single rank; and each of these, the father of a family or having become one here, is struck by parental grief, seeing their children reach an age requiring the formation of mind and morality and deprived of the means and opportunity to satisfy this most important and sacred parental duty!

Even if the relatives of many of them, residing in the inner governorates, could alleviate this difficulty by taking upon themselves the fulfillment of paternal duties, then the extreme remoteness and the necessary expenses associated with sending children to their homeland do not allow the grieving fathers to even think about this, and to whom, in this case, could their parental hearts entrust their children?

To alleviate these inconveniences, the gymnasiums and public schools established in Siberia do not provide sufficient resources. Siberia, as noted



above, lacks its own moral foundation and resources for this purpose; gymnasiums and schools are limited, and they can only provide knowledge.

The European governorates are not subject to this inconvenience; they have a long-established nobility and citizens of varying ranks, who, according to their abilities, have many means and methods for educating their children on firm moral principles; to this must be added Cadet Corps, Institutes, and similar educational institutions.

Siberia is deprived of all these precious conveniences; and the delivery of children even from remote governorates to places determined for their education, according to distance and climate, has less inconvenience than many Siberian uyezd towns, compared to bringing these children to provincial capitals.

Such remoteness, and the fact that everyone here is engaged in service, create an obstacle for fathers to personally supervise their children, as often as paternal care would require it; to whom then can they entrust such a task here?

All officials in the Governorate, due to a shortage of staff and even scribes, are overbooked at all times, and therefore distracted by their domestic lifestyle. They rely on settlers and even the exiled, or, better yet, those stripped of their ranks and noble titles, to perform essential services.

And it is to such people that fathers, during their long absences and even when they are present, necessarily entrust the teaching, as well as the education and supervision of their children's behavior. What moral consequences should we expect from this?

Gymnasium teachers, running through lessons with their students, spend only a few hours a day with them; the rest of the time, students are given over to their own whims, to the persistence of passions, kindled with the ardor of age by bad example, to habits and discussions on subjects whose very name should be foreign to their understanding at their age. And from this arise the pernicious qualities of secrecy, hypocrisy, perfidy, and the need to just appear to be what they should be, for their own good and the benefit of society.

If this does lead to some success in learning, unfortunately, many examples prove that early depravity often renders it insignificant and even harmful. How many who received the most worthy enlightenment in this way, revealing the most flattering gifts and abilities, were sadly left useless! This is sad proof that enlightenment of the mind, while losing and

even weakening morality, which shapes the soul and heart, is more harmful than beneficial. Morality shapes national character, and this character shapes the power of kingdoms and love for the Fatherland.

Such were the local hardships of Siberia that many fathers, in fulfillment of their parental duty, were compelled, when the appointed time came, to leave service in that region. Others did so out of a natural attachment to their native land or because of family circumstances. Yet, instead of receiving every assistance for the return journey of many thousands of versts, the greater number found only one source of support—in their own fortitude and in the compassion of others.

Such were the consequences of the local hardships attendant upon entering service in Siberia after receiving one's official rank, together with the difficulties of returning, that useful, and indeed indispensable, men could not be retained for the benefit of the region.

If, in compensation for what has been irretrievably lost in the past, one seeks a remedy for the future and the present, experience itself demonstrates how ineffective, and even harmful, all coercive measures directed toward this end have proved.

Plain evidence shows that even the least grateful part of the fatherland, where a man's labors are doubled, cannot be replaced by the most fertile and abundant (foreign) land; nor can wealth prevent a man from returning beneath the roof of a humble abode in order to regain his native home. Might it not be possible to build upon the strength of this natural attachment a nursery of men useful both to Siberia and to the state as a whole? Would it not be more fitting, and at the same time more beneficial, to attain this goal by measures adopted for that very purpose, while simultaneously securing the future and education of the children of those fathers who devote themselves to the service of this region? Would not such provision constitute the most precious reward for the sacrifice they have made of themselves in the service of the state?

If this proposal were carried into effect, would not these pupils remain free from the vices that have arisen here among others of their condition, and would they not themselves eradicate those vices? Would not Siberia, having reared and educated them, become forever the homeland to which they are devoted? In time, would she not raise up sons of her own—upright fathers of families, virtuous mothers, useful members of civilized society, and men of native genius? And would the Government not recognize, in



the establishment of this educational institution for the benefit of the Siberian region, an enduring advantage for future generations?

By the establishment of this institution there would be erected in the hearts of the loyal and grateful people of Siberia an imperishable monument to Our Most August Monarch, to endure throughout the ages to come.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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**“Here It Is Not the Authorities
Who Rule over Individuals,
but Individuals Who Rule over
the Authorities”: Two Memoranda
by Lieutenant Colonel F.I. Bek
of the Corps of Gendarmes on Officials
of Volhynia Governorate in the 1830s**

Abstract

This article publishes two reports by Lieutenant Colonel Fyodor I. Bek, the gendarmerie staff officer assigned to Volhynia Governorate. The first memorandum, *On Persons Whose Personal Qualities Exert Either a Harmful or a Beneficial Influence on Society*, is dated 11 July 1836 and was addressed to the Chief of Gendarmes, Alexander Kh. Benckendorff. The second memorandum, *On Volhynia Governorate*, addressed to the Inspector of the Settled Cavalry, Ivan O. Witt, may be dated tentatively to early 1838. The introductory study reconstructs the principal stages of Bek's official career and examines the semiannual reports as the principal form of reporting employed by gendarmerie officers in carrying



out their supervisory duties. Written in vivid and expressive language, the documents present a gallery of the leading figures of the provincial administration, including three governors – Alexander P. Rimsky-Korsakov, Nikolai V. Zhukovsky, and Alexander I. Zvegintsov – as well as the presidents of the provincial chambers, the provincial prosecutor, the marshal of the nobility, and the chief of police. Of particular interest are Bek's observations on the family and personal connections among officials and on the informal conflicts within the provincial administration. The documents vividly illustrate the distinctive regional character of Volhynia Governorate and the Western Krai more generally. Whereas gendarmerie officers serving in the interior governorates rarely commented on the political views or reliability of officials, Bek considered it necessary to evaluate their loyalty to the government, distinguishing in particular between supporters of the Russian and Polish “principles”. In the second memorandum, he also offered his assessment of the overall condition of the Governorate under his supervision and proposed a series of immediate measures aimed at strengthening its administrative and legal integration into the empire. These documents constitute an important source for the study of provincial administration and broaden our understanding of the activities of gendarmerie officers during the 1830s. At the same time, the article emphasizes the need to take into account the inherently subjective character of these reports, which inevitably reflect the author's personal sympathies as well as the lingering effects of his official conflicts with the provincial authorities.

Keywords:

Russian Empire; Corps of Gendarmes; Provincial administration; High/higher/secret/political police; Volhynia Governorate; Officialdom; Bureaucracy; Fyodor Ivanovich Bek.

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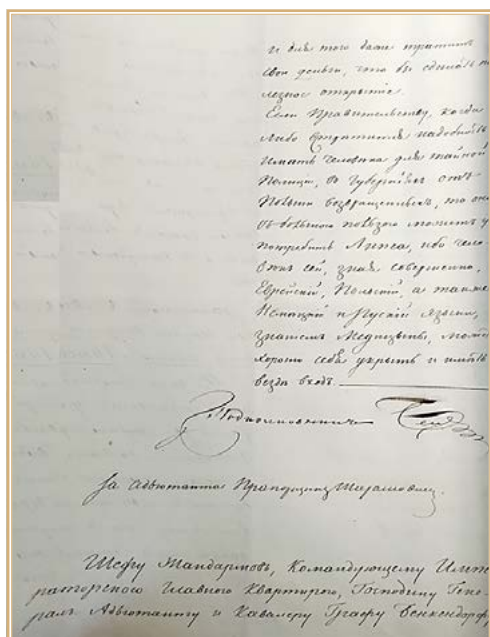


With the establishment of the Third Section of His Imperial Majesty's Chancellery, monitoring the state of affairs in local administration became one of the Section's primary activities. By the early 1830s, when gendarmerie staff officer offices were established in all governorates within the districts of the Gendarme Corps, oversight of provincial officials became systematic. A reflection of this process was contained in the secret circular of the Chief of Gendarmes, A.Kh. Benckendorff, dated February 8, 1832, which ordered staff officers to submit reports to St. Petersburg twice a year with characteristics on "those of the officials, landowners, merchants and other classes who, by virtue of their rank, wealth, connections, intelligence, education, or other virtues, have a good or bad influence on those around them and even on high-ranking officials"¹.

In the 1830s, semi-annual reports were the primary form of reporting for gendarme officers on surveillance matters. These documents focused exclusively on the composition of the provincial administration, emphasizing the professional qualities, moral character, lifestyle, property status, and public reputation of employees. They serve as an important source for studying the composition of the provincial administration during the Nicholas era and have recently attracted the attention of researchers more and more frequently².

¹ Государственный архив Российской Федерации (ГА РФ). Ф. 109. Оп. 7. Д. 434. Л. 3.

² This source was first used extensively for the study of the highest provincial administration by P.A. Zaionchkovsky: *Зайончковский П.А. Губернская администрация накануне Крымской войны // Вопросы истории. 1975. № 9. С. 33–51.* See also: *Бикташева А.Н. Кадровый контроль политической полиции над региональным чиновничеством: практики Казанской губернии 1826–1861 гг. // Известия Саратовского университета. Серия «История. Международные отношения». 2014. № 4. С. 110–114; Румянцев П.П.*



Notes by F.I. Bek "On Persons Who, by Their Qualities, Have a Bad or Good Influence in Society," July 11, 1836. The last sheet with the author's signature.

State Archive of the Russian Federation. Fund 109. Inventory 11.

File 320, letter E. Sheet 76 verso

In St. Petersburg, the reports were read by A.N. Mordvinov, Director of the Third Section. More substantial texts were reported to the Chief of Gendarmes, and some were placed on the Emperor's desk. While reviewing the reports, Director made notes next to individual characteristics, after which the corresponding extracts, in the form of a note signed by the Chief of Gendarmes, were transmitted to the minister under whose jurisdiction the official served. The source of the information was usually concealed (“obtained privately”). As Benckendorff wrote, “I pass on these descriptions to the ministers in charge, who, and especially the Minister of Finance, always accept them with gratitude”³. Subsequently, the reports for one year were filed into a single

Взгляд жандармских штаб-офицеров на аппарат управления в Сибири в дореформенный период // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: История России. 2024. Т. 23. № 2. С. 167–178. See also: Биби́ков Г.Н. Полугодовые донесения губернских жандармских штаб-офицеров как источник по истории местного управления Российской империи 1830-х гг. // Новое прошлое / The new past. 2021. № 1. С. 34–57.

³ Оржеховский И.В. Самодержавие против революционной России (1826–1880 гг.). М.: Мысль, 1982. С. 52.



Count Ivan Osipovich Witt. Artist: George Dawe.
From open sources

file, and an alphabetical list of the persons mentioned was compiled, which served as a card index for reference.

The 1832 circular contained no form or other requirements for reports, which varied significantly not only in content and length but also in formatting and headings. Some included brief memos of one or two pages, while some were lengthy reports containing evaluative assessments of dozens of provincial employees – such papers attracted the primary attention of superiors. The gendarmes' opinions directly or indirectly reflected their personal preferences, and at times they hinted at conflicts with governors and other officials. Furthermore, the reports were not required to present evidence, much less documentary evidence. Unconstrained by strict formal requirements, some officers, like Lieutenant Colonel F.I. Bek, wrote semi-annual reports in a style far removed from official norms.

According to his professional file, Fyodor Ivanovich was born in 1793, baptized into the Orthodox faith, and registered with the noble society of Olonetsk Governorate, but owned no estates. Having entered service as a sub-ensign in the Uglich Infantry Regiment in 1809, Bek served as a staff captain in the 6th Carabineer Regiment from 1819. In 1824, after being promoted to major, he was assigned to the Astrakhan Grenadier Regiment, where he was soon appointed brigade commander. In October 1830, Bek was promoted to lieutenant colonel, and



Andrei Petrovich Rimsky-Korsakov. Unknown artist, 1821.
From open sources

soon his regiment marched to suppress the Polish Uprising. At Ostrołęka, the officer was wounded by a bullet in the shoulder and was later awarded the Order of St. Anne, 2nd degree, for this battle⁴.

In April 1833, Bek addressed a request to Benckendorff for a transfer to the gendarmes, which gives a certain idea of the author's professional and personal ups and downs, as well as his skills with the pen: “Upon the return of the Grenadier Corps from the Kingdom of Poland to the right bank of the Western Dvina, being no longer able to carry out front-line training service, last year 1832, in the month of July, I submitted a request to be released to the Caucasian mineral waters to heal my wound. Meanwhile, as my request passed from one authority to another, Providence saw fit to deprive me of my wife, who, having died an orphan in the city of Narva, left me with two young children, a son and a daughter – the eldest of whom is 5 years old... As a loyal subject of my Sovereign – feeling without the temptation of partiality the full importance of the duty of a father responsible for his children – to God, the Sovereign and the Fatherland – I must confess... that, having absolutely no one to whom I could entrust my children, I will not be able to continue my 24 years of service in the

⁴ For F.I. Bek's service record for 1841, see.: ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 2. Д. 914. Л. 2–13.

field any longer: but at 39 years of age, to refuse to serve the Sovereign, from whose generosity I have been blessed — is painful — grievous to my heart”⁵!

The attached service record contained a note that in the first half of 1814 the officer “was not certified because of carelessness and failure to perform duties”, and in the conduct section for the same time: “In the column: *how he behaves at work*, it is noted: careless with negligence in performance”. Typically, such omissions would have been an insurmountable obstacle to joining the gendarmes, but Benckendorff considered it possible to petition for Bek to be assigned to the Corps Headquarters for a preliminary examination. In his report of July 17, 1833, Chief of Gendarmes emphasized that “the mentioned disapproving assessment was made by the former commander of the 1st Brigade of the 23rd Infantry Division, Major General [P.B.] Nilus I, who was expelled from service in 1818 for actions inappropriate to his rank”⁶. Nicholas I took a pause, but after two months finally consented.

While in St. Petersburg, Bek married a second time — to the daughter of Major General D.P. Primo, with whom he subsequently had three children. In January 1834, Chief of Gendarmes assured the Emperor that Fyodor Ivanovich had turned out to be “truly of good moral character and, according to his abilities, can be useful in the Corps of Gendarmes”, offering to send him as a provincial staff officer to Vyatka. Nicholas I agreed, but with one caveat: “From now on, no officers will be taken from the Grenadier Corps”⁷.

In April 1835, Bek was transferred to Volhynia Governorate, which was part of the fifth (Vilna) district of the Gendarme Corps, uniting the western edge of the empire. On July 11, 1836, Fyodor Ivanovich sent to St. Petersburg the report for the first half of the year, published below, entitled *On Persons Whose Personal Qualities Exert Either a Harmful or a Beneficial Influence on Society*⁸. In this memo, Bek presented a gallery of officials in the highest provincial administration, including two civil

⁵ Ibid. A. 397. A. 1–2.

⁶ Ibid. A. 15.

⁷ Ibid. A. 23.

⁸ Apparently, this was Bek's first semiannual report from Volhynia Governorate.



Zhytomyr. 19th-century engraving.

From open sources

governors – A.P. Rimsky-Korsakov, dismissed in 1835, and his successor, N.V. Zhukovsky, as well as vice governor, chairmen of the court chambers, marshal of the nobility, chief of police, and others. Without hiding his personal biases, Bek gave a number of officials negative or downright derogatory characterizations, which, as a rule, were more detailed and vivid than positive ones. Of particular interest are the details of the officials' family and friendship ties and unspoken conflicts within the administration. The note reflected the specificity of Volhynia Governorate as part of the Western Territory: the officers serving in the internal governorates hardly touched upon the social views and political “reliability” of officials, whereas Bek considered it necessary to evaluate their loyalty to the government, including by highlighting the adherents of the Russian and Polish “principle”: thus, Governor Rimsky-Korsakov was distinguished by “his extraordinary partiality and connections with the Polish landowners,” and the principal of the Zhitomir (also *Zhytomir*. – Ed.) gymnasium, on the contrary, was presented as “a most useful intermediary between the government and the new generation of citizens”⁹.

Bek's report attracted the attention of A.N. Mordvinov, who ordered that a number of extracts be sent for the information of the Ministers of Internal Affairs, Justice, and Public Education, as well as the Chief Prosecutor of the Holy Synod and the Kyiv Governor-General¹⁰. The accompanying report bears a pencil note from the Chief of Gendarmes indicating that the report was also conveyed to Nicholas I.

⁹ ГА РФ. Ф. 109. Оп. 11. Д. 320, лит. Е. Л. 63 об., 71 об.

¹⁰ In total, on 1 August 1836, the Third Section issued seven outgoing documents on this matter.

Meanwhile, in 1836, a number of the empire's southern governorates were placed under the police supervision of the Inspector of the Reserve Cavalry, General of Cavalry Count I.O. Witt, who was entrusted with the secret command of the provincial staff officers. This decision does not seem accidental, given that after the suppression of the Polish Uprising in 1831, Witt, as the military Governor-General of Warsaw, supervised the organization of the secret police in the Kingdom of Poland on behalf of Field Marshal I.F. Paskevich, and subsequently maintained close contact with Benckendorff, sending a large volume of diverse information to the Third Section¹¹ The idea of the transformation, as the Chief of Gendarmes confidentially informed Witt, was to, “without destroying the staff of the Corps of Gendarmes in its present form, but maintaining strict confidentiality between you and me, with the permission of the Sovereign Emperor, accept under your immediate and direct command staff officers <...> possessing perfect knowledge of the localities of the region entrusted to your supervision; you also have every opportunity to give direct direction to their actions”¹². In his instructions to the gendarme officers, Benckendorff specifically stipulated that “semi-annual reports on officials and prominent persons in the governorates, who have been submitted to me up to now by Third Section”¹³, were now to be sent to Witt's discretion. In accordance with this instruction, Bek sent the report for the second half of 1836 to Odessa¹⁴.

¹¹ See: ГА РФ. Ф. 109. Оп. 2а. Д. 165, and others.

¹² In the same letter from Benckendorff to Witt of 18 November 1835, it was specified which provincial officers were to come under Witt's authority: “I would propose placing under the immediate supervision of Your Excellency the governorates of Kherson, Yekaterinoslav, and Sloboda Ukraine, where the military-settlement cavalry entrusted to Your command is stationed; the city of Odessa, as the permanent place of Your Excellency's residence; and the governorates of Kiev, Podolia, and Volhynia, returned from Poland, where military settlements may in time be established” (ГА РФ. Ф. 109. Оп. 13. Д. 62. Л. 3–3 об.). Witt later insisted that “Taurida Governorate also be attached, where reserve battalions of the 5th Infantry Corps, forming part of the troops entrusted to me, are frequently stationed” (ГА РФ. Ф. 109. Оп. 13. Д. 62. Л. 11).

¹³ ГА РФ. Ф. 109. Оп. 13. Д. 62. Л. 15.

¹⁴ This document could not be located among the records of the Third Section.



On October 18, 1837, Witt ordered the gendarme staff officers under his command to submit, instead of the next six-month report, “by the 15th of next December, in the form of an annual report for the current year 1837, a memorandum”, in which to pay “particular attention to three main subjects, namely:

- a) the actions of officials, whose power to a greater or lesser extent relates to their person according to the positions they hold;
- b) what kind of (political) attitude there is among the landowners and other classes of residents;
- c) what influence landowners have on peasants in relation to their rights and morality.”

In addition, any comments could be included in the report ‘regarding the governorate and those other matters of improvement which, according to your observations, would require a change, improvement or some new institution, with a detailed explanation of both the reasons that require all this, and the benefits that may arise from it’¹⁵. As can be seen, the intended subject matter of these papers was broader than the content of the semi-annual reports.

However, already at the beginning of 1838 in St. Petersburg, it was decided to refuse Witt’s services in the command of the gendarmes. On February 15, 1838, Benckendorff notified the Count: “Two years of experience has shown me that with the present division of activities between us, it is impossible to hope that the benefit I had in mind could occur”¹⁶. Having collected the annual reports of the staff officers, on March 7, 1838, Witt sent the originals to the Third Section with a summary note *Subjects of the jurisdiction of the higher military police, consisting of the duties of gendarme staff officers*. Among the attached texts, under the letter “E”, was Bek’s memo, *On Volhynia Governorate*¹⁷, published below. Following Witt’s instructions, he briefly characterizes the general situation in the governorate under his supervision and mentions certain local circumstances that, in his opinion, deserved the government’s attention – the construction of Orthodox

¹⁵ ГА РФ. Ф. 109. Оп. 13. Л. 62. Л. 46–46 об.

¹⁶ Ibid. Л. 35.

¹⁷ Tentatively dated to early 1838.



Volhynia Governorate.

A card from a set of geographical cards of the Russian Empire.

From open sources

churches, the arrangement of the daily life of the Jewish population of the governorate, etc.¹⁸ The focus is on the changes that occurred in the provincial administration over the past eighteen months, with particular criticism of the civil governor, A.I. Zvegintzov. However, this official had been dismissed back in September 1837, and Bek's position was hardly a revelation to the leadership of the high police, who were well aware of the personal and professional clashes between the two officials, which began almost from the moment Zvegintzov arrived in Zhitomir¹⁹. As a result, all three governors described by Bek, although dissimilar in personal and professional qualities, seemed to him unsuitable for Volhynia Governorate.

¹⁸ Bek had previously devoted a separate memorandum to these issues, which, together with the observations and comments of the Minister of Internal Affairs DN. Bludov, was submitted in November 1837, by order of Nicholas I, to the Committee for the Western Governorates. (For Bek's memorandum, see: Российский государственный исторический архив (РГИА). Ф. 1266. Оп. 1. Д. 23. Л. 27–35 об.; Bludov's thoughts on the matter published in: Журналы Комитета Западных губерний. Изд. подгот. Т.В. Андреева, И.Н. Вибе, Б.П. Миловилов, Д.Н. Шилов. Т. 2: 1836–1840 гг. СПб.: Дмитрий Буланин, 2021. С. 240–247).

¹⁹ See: ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 2. Д. 706.



In April 1839, with the promotion to colonel, Bek was transferred to Kyiv Governorate, and in September 1840 to Podolsk Governorate, where he died on March 31, 1841.

The notes published below paint a vivid portrait of the Volhynia Governorate's high administration in the mid-1830s, while expanding existing understanding of the activities of gendarme officers of that era. Both papers were deposited in the files of the 1st Records Division of the Third Section of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery of the State Archives of the Russian Federation. The documents are original, written in a clerical handwriting and certified by the author's signature. They are reproduced in accordance with modern spelling rules, preserving certain stylistic features of the original²⁰. The document titles are the author's own; abbreviations are given in square brackets; author underlinings are given in italics. Information about some individuals could not be established.

**Memorandum from the gendarme staff officer
in Volhynia Governorate, Lieutenant Colonel F.I. Bek,
“On Persons Whose Personal Qualities Exert Either a Harmful
or a Beneficial Influence on Society”**

ГА РФ. Ф. 109. Оп. 11. Д. 320, лит. Е. Л. 63–76 об.

July 11, 1836

Zhitomyr

№ 156²¹

Centuries have proven how contagious the illegal actions of elders are for their subordinates, and therefore I considered it necessary, first

²⁰ В In accordance with *Методические рекомендации по публикации архивных документов в печатном виде*, 2022.

²¹ At the top of the folio appears the notation “Secret”. In the text of the memorandum, the surnames of all officials mentioned are additionally underlined in ink and numbered in the margins (apparently by a clerk of the Third Section). A.N. Mordvinov, Director of the Third Section, left several pencil annotations in the margins (see the notes below).

of all, to turn to the person of the *former civil governor*, actual state councillor *Rimsky-Korsakov*²².

The general opinions of the best and most worthy officials about His Excellency's relations with the Polish landowners and everything Russian are so terrible that I do not dare to convey them in detail to my superiors, since these opinions more or less always arise from the egoism and personal gain of each; but the consequences of the governance by Governor Korsakov, the affairs completed and begun under him, have mathematically proven to me that His Excellency did much harm to the government with his extraordinary partiality and connections with the Polish landowners; under such governance, the Russian and loyal government officials were left either to act in a general spirit of cold hostility towards the government or to abandon service in Volhynia Governorate. His Excellency's spouse²³ also behaved reprehensibly and to the detriment of the government. She not only imitated in many ways the local ladies, the so-called patriotic dames, but also allowed rich youngsters to treat her freely and friendly. Instead of uniting the Russians with the Poles and elevating everything Russian²⁴, Mr. Korsakov and his wife settled between the former a long-lasting antipathy, and sowed disdain toward the latter.

Honor and glory to the wise government that did not tolerate such harmful management in all respects in this region! I am happy that I do not serve with Mr. Korsakov!!

The current Volhynia civilian *governor*, actual state councillor *Zhukovsky*²⁵. The spiritual and intellectual qualities of this governor fully

²² *Andrei Petrovich Rimsky-Korsakov* (1784–1862), the illegitimate son of Lieutenant General P.V. Rimsky-Korsakov, served in the 1820s as an Official for Special Assignments under the Minister of Internal Affairs; from 1827, he was Vice Governor of Novgorod; from 1829, Director of the State Commercial Bank; and from 1831 Civil Governor of Volhynia. He was dismissed in April 1835 and did not return to government service thereafter. He was the father of the composer N.A. Rimsky-Korsakov.

²³ *Sofya Vasilyevna Rimskaya-Korsakova* (née Skaryatina, 1802–1890), wife of A.P. Rimsky-Korsakov since 1821.

²⁴ So in the original text (here and throughout).

²⁵ *Nikolai Vasilyevich Zhukovsky* (1793–1852) served in the 1820s as Chairman of the Tobolsk Provincial Administration. In December 1832, with the rank of actual state councillor, he was appointed Civil Governor of Orenburg. He served as Civil Governor of Volhynia from April 1835. In March 1837, he was



correspond to the importance of the position he occupies. Governor Zhukovsky's selflessness has eluded even a trace of suspicion in the eyes of honest people; and his clerical work has earned universal recognition. One cannot help but regret that this man is not cut out for the practical work of a Governor.

He is unable to command fear and respect, and his kind and gentle nature is so trusting that an experienced and inquisitive rogue can gain his favor at the expense of his service; and therefore, in Governor Zhukovsky, our government may have an excellent department director, but not a Governor for Volhynia Governorate.

Here it is necessary, so to speak, to regenerate things and give them a new direction, in accordance with the wishes of the government, for which such a governor is needed who is not only well-intentioned, selfless and active, but a person with a strong, decisive character who, not limiting himself to actions in his office, would be able to make the places and persons under his jurisdiction fear and respect him.

His Excellency, being a prudent man, feels his own inadequacy and expects, as the first favor from the government, a transfer to one of the interior governorates; therefore, while excelling at paperwork, he leaves everything else to its former course. Perhaps he would act more forcefully and urgently on these latter matters, but, on the one hand, he fears objections and comments from the military governor-general's office²⁶, and on the other hand, the machinations of local wealthy magnates who have strong connections in our capitals.

Our venerable governor is also remarkable for his domestic life. He supports a mother-in-law, a sister-in-law, a niece, and another poor girl; this blessed family, exuding domestic happiness, has earned the special respect of all the prudent people of this region. The virtues of the

appointed Governor of Kaluga; from 1843 to 1851, he was Civil Governor of St. Petersburg. He was promoted to the rank of privy councillor in 1843.

²⁶ *Alexander Dmitrievich Guryev* (1785–1865), Count, son of the Minister of Finance D.A. Guryev. Promoted to Lieutenant General in 1827 and appointed senator in 1828. In January 1835, he became Military Governor of Poltava and Chernigov, and in June of the same year Military Governor of Kiev, Civil Administrator and Governor-General of Podolia and Volhynia Governorates. In November 1837, he was dismissed from office and promoted to the rank of actual privy councillor. From 1839, he was a member of the State Council, and from 1848 Chairman of its Department of State Economy.

governor's wife²⁷, having called the local public out of its dangerous seclusion, have befriended them with Russian officials and introduced our language into the drawing rooms.

Officials on Special Assignments of the civil governor:

Collegiate Counselor *Romanovsky*²⁸. With ordinary mental abilities, selfish and lazy.

Titular Counselor *Manikovsky*.²⁹ The mental abilities are the most ordinary; he knows the business from long-term practice; his spiritual qualities are black and he is self-serving by virtue of his position.

The titular councillor acting as Zhitomyr Chief of Police *Chulkov*³⁰. This man was an auditor in the army, and then became an Official on Special Assignments for Governor Rimsky-Korsakov. He was especially favored by His Excellency, appointed officials, rectified rebellious affairs, and amassed considerable wealth. This scoundrel first managed to establish a special friendship with a relative of the current governor and the head of his chancery, Mr. *Tobias*³¹, and then, with his help, managed to charm the governor himself. His Excellency, although warned about Mr. Chulkov, nevertheless secured him a position as Chief of Police and even nominated him as Councillor to the Provincial Government.

Aide-de-Camp to His Imperial Majesty, Count Vasilchikov³², having spent some time in Volhynia Governorate, received much information about Mr. Chulkov's extortion, and out of goodwill towards the governor, asked me to report this to His Excellency, which I did with the utmost delicacy. But the governor, seemingly agreeing with Count Vasilchikov's opinion, after some time petitioned for Mr. Chulkov to

²⁷ *Elizaveta Nikolaevna Zhukovskaya* (1803–1856), wife of N.V. Zhukovsky.

²⁸ *Matvei Osipovich Romanovsky*.

²⁹ *Ivan Ivanovich Manikovsky*.

³⁰ *Konstantin Sergeevich Chulkov*.

³¹ *Karl Solomonovich Tobias*, Provincial Secretary.

³² *Count Illarion Illarionovich Vasilchikov* (1805–1862), son of General of Cavalry Count I.V. Vasilchikov, was promoted to captain of cavalry in 1831 and appointed aide-de-camp in 1833. In February 1836, he was sent to the town of Slavuta in Zaslav Uyezd, Volhynia Governorate, to conduct an official investigation (Шулов Д.Н., Кузьмин Ю.А. Члены Государственного совета Российской империи. 1801–1906: биобиблиографический справочник. СПб.: Дмитрий Буланин, 2007. С. 113–114). He later became a lieutenant general and Governor-General of Kiev.



be decorated. This is not all! Mr. Chulkov struck up a friendship with the nobleman Zhiromsky in the governor's antechamber after a soiree, and Mr. Chulkov got away with all this without losing His Excellency's favor; in a word, I do not know a man as dark-hearted as Mr. Chulkov and who, like him, could insinuate himself into the heart of the governor. Anyone who loves Governor Zhukovsky and respects the common good wishes that Mr. Chulkov were no longer in Volhynia Governorate. Recently he managed to secure the position of Police Inspector of Lutsk for his brother-in-law Astafyev³³, who, for dishonest acts in the service, had been ousted by Vice Governor Afendik³⁴ from the position of Official on Special Assignments of the local Treasury Chamber.

Volhynia *Vice Governor* State Councillor *Afendik*. This man is in his right place and is useful to the Fatherland in every way. He is intelligent, selfless, and active, knows his duty, and knows how to conduct himself in such a way that his subordinates fear and respect him.

Of all the government offices in Volhynia Governorate, the local Treasury Chamber is in the best position in terms of the purity and flow of affairs, despite the fact that Vice Governor Afendik does not have excellent officials in all of his subordinates.

Provincial marshal of the nobility, Chamberlain of the Court of His Imperial Majesty *Lenkevich* (*Lenkiewicz*)³⁵. This civil and most kind man, unfortunately, does not fulfill his duties at all and resides but little in the provincial capital. His gentle nature is such that he always sides with the majority.

Chairman of the Criminal Chamber, state councillor Schastny³⁶. This man, with his ordinary intelligence and 35 years of experience,

³³ *Pyotr Nikolaevich Astafyev*, titular councillor.

³⁴ *Ivan Kornilovich Afendik* (1776–1851) was appointed Vice Governor of Volhynia (Chairman of the Treasury Chamber) in February 1832 and promoted to actual state councillor in 1836. In February 1837, he was transferred as Vice Governor of Pskov, where he served until his death.

³⁵ *Gratsian Stanislavovich Inogorsky-Lenkevich*, marshal of the nobility of Volhynia Governorate from 1829 to 1838; Chamberlain from 1832.

³⁶ *Nikolai Lukyanovich Schastny* (*Shchastny*), collegiate councillor. In the margin A.N. Mordvinov noted: “NB”, “To the Min[ister] of Justice”; in another hand: “Executed”. In October 1837 Bek reported to Witt: “Head of Provincial Justice, Chairman of the Criminal Chamber, state councillor Shchastny, who rose in Zhitomyr from the rank of copyist, is the greatest bribe-taker and protector of

knows his business quite well; but he is not renowned for his selflessness, even though, in addition to his usual salary, he receives a pension of two thousand rubles a year for his service under the late Grand Duke Konstantin Pavlovich; and, having been born and raised in Zhitomir, he has connections that he respects more than justice itself, and therefore, for the good of the Fatherland, it would be very useful to transfer him to another governorate.

Provincial *prosecutor*, collegiate councillor *Kamensky*³⁷. This man is now considered a kind old man. But there was a time when he acquired up to 600 male souls through civil service, but now he only serves to achieve the rank of state councillor. But the Volhynia provincial prosecutor must be a man of ardent zeal for service, with a solid knowledge of his profession and a tenacious character. His example should awaken the district attorneys and force them to take up their work, and thanks to their activity and honesty, the district courts and the Civil Chamber would inevitably adopt a course of action consistent with the will of the government and be cleansed of the grave abuses that are currently plaguing them³⁸.

Of *Zhitomir* and other uyezds of this governorate *landowner*, actual state councillor, Knight of the Order of Stanislav 1st degree *Korzhenevsky*. This elder has already bent under the weight of years and lost his independence of character, but despite all this, he is remarkable in this region for his devotion to the throne and the wealth of his property, which is why many gentlemen landowners do not favor him for the former.

all the corrupt district courts and magistracies. He sells even the most sacred truth for money and, for his own security, has placed his nephew Gordeenko as Councillor of the Provincial Administration, his son as Assessor of the Civil Chamber, and another son as chief clerk in the office of the provincial marshal of the nobility" (РГИА. Ф. 1266. Оп. 1. Д. 23. Л. 30).

³⁷ *Vasily Afanasyevich Kamensky*, collegiate councillor, served as Provincial Prosecutor of Volhynia from 1832; previously he had held the same office in Kiev.

³⁸ In October 1837, Bek wrote to Witt that "according to the unanimous testimony of long-standing local residents, not a single provincial prosecutor could be described as possessing the intellectual and moral qualities required by his important office. As for the district solicitors, they are, without exception, old, infirm, ignorant, and notorious extortionists" (РГИА. Ф. 1266. Оп. 1. Д. 23. Л. 30).



A *judge of the Court of Conscience*, former marshal of the nobility of Starokonstantinovsky Uyezd, *Knol*³⁹. This man has recently been mentioned in the story of Miss Oyzhinskaya (Ożyńska), known for her outrageous correspondence and insulting song about the sacred person of the Emperor. He is distinguished by his hostility toward the government and his hatred of everything Russian. This truth will be confirmed by anyone who knows Mr. Knol and dares to be sincere.

*Principal of Zhitomir Gymnasium Bokshanin*⁴⁰. Honor and glory to the government, which entrusted this man with the education of the local youth, infected from childhood with a spirit of hostility toward the government! But whatever parental advice there might be, Mr. Bokshanin is in any case a most useful intermediary between the government and the new generation of citizens. He possesses all the qualities necessary for a person, a leader, and a mentor. The heart of a Russian rejoices at Mr. Bokshanin's service to the Fatherland. His appointment as Principal of the local gymnasium was as well-considered given local circumstances, which were important to the government, as the appointments of many other officials in Volhynia Governorate were made without regard for local circumstances.

*Provincial Postmaster Ventsevich (Wienciewicz)*⁴¹. This official is kind and has excellent behavior, but due to his stinginess and the poor maintenance of the correspondent section and its officials, he is dangerous in Volhynia Governorate.

*Head of the local Medical Department, State Councillor von Schildknecht*⁴². Not through medicine, but through contracts and his trade as a leading money lender, did he acquire a considerable fortune. It's a shame to see this official's hands tremble so much that he can't reach into his snuffbox; this man is distinguished throughout the entire governorate for his stinginess.

³⁹ *Kazimir Gavrilovich Knol (Knoll)* had previously been elected Marshal of the Nobility of Starokonstantinov Uyezd.

⁴⁰ *Osip Mikhailovich Rab-Bokshchanin*, court councillor, graduated from the St. Petersburg Pedagogical Institute in 1815. From 1824, he served as Prefect of the Volhynian Lyceum, and in 1833 was confirmed as Director of Schools of Volhynia Governorate. He was dismissed in 1839. In the margin A.N. Mordvinov noted: “To the Min[ister] of Public Education”; in another hand: “Executed”.

⁴¹ *Pyotr Petrovich Ventsevich*.

⁴² *Fyodor Ivanovich Schildknecht*, Doctor of Medicine.

Provincial Government *Councillor Gordeenko*⁴³. This man is a great extortionist and extremely limited in mind; however, having risen from clerk to his current rank in the Provincial Government, he has acquired a knack for business. Being of a sycophantic nature, he has friends in the military governor-general's office and therefore maintains his position. The governor is also burdened by him, but dares not take any action against him.

Councillor of the Criminal Chamber *Gubarev*⁴⁴. Mr. Councillor Gubarev proves how essential it is for a superior to know his subordinates. It's hard to believe how stupid, suspicious, and ignorant this man is of even the basics of his duties. They say his closest relative, Mr. Kartsov⁴⁵, Head Clerk of the Military Governor, interceded for him for this position. However, Mr. Gubarev is of high integrity.

Criminal *lawyer Danilchenko*⁴⁶. This official is one of the best among all the Ministry of Justice officials serving in Volhynia Governorate. Despite all this, he is poor and burdened with a large family. It would be desirable for the government, having distinguished this worthy official as an example to others, to reward him for his continued service.

Marshal of the nobility of Kovelsky Uyezd, Knight of the Order of St. Vladimir, 4th degree, *Yanishevsky*⁴⁷ (*Janiszewski*). This man, despite the fact that his only son is serving a prison term in Vyatka Governorate, is remarkable among all the uyezd leaders for his devotion to the throne and his hospitality to the Russians.

⁴³ *Nikita Vasilyevich Gordeenko*, collegiate assessor, later served as Provincial Prosecutor of Voronezh (1840–1847), Deputy Chairman of the Kovno Criminal Chamber (1847–1850), and the first Provincial Prosecutor of Samara (1850–1854). In the margin A.N. Mordvinov noted: “To Count Guryev”; in another hand: “Executed”.

⁴⁴ *Fyodor Kuzmich Gubarev*, collegiate assessor.

⁴⁵ *Nikolai Stepanovich Kartsov*, collegiate councillor and Chief of the Chancellery of the Kiev Governor-General, later actual state councillor and Legal Adviser at the Ministry of Justice.

⁴⁶ *Osip Mikhailovich Danilchenko*, titular councillor. Opposite his name, A.N. Mordvinov noted in the margin: “To the Min.[ister] of Justice”; in another hand: “Executed”.

⁴⁷ *Konstantin Frantsevich Yanishevsky*. In the margin A.N. Mordvinov noted: “What is his son in Vyatka for?”



Archpriest of Cathedral Church of Zhitomir *Solsky*⁴⁸. This servant of the Altar of God rightly, with his zeal for the faith, brings great honor to the uneducated and humbled clergy here. The outward appearance of this priest is majestic and comely. The qualities of his heart are noble and modest, and his enlightened mind is visible both in the Church of God and in the drawing room; but it is painful for every loyal subject of the Russian Tsar that Canon Golovinsky⁴⁹ of the local Roman Catholic Church, a young man, received the Order of St. Stanislav, 4th degree, while *Solsky*, revered not only by Russians but also by Catholics, remained undecorated.

Zhitomir zemstvo police official, lieutenant colonel *Volyansky* (*Woliański*)⁵⁰. This official is remarkable for his ardent dedication to his duties and his selflessness in service. However, he has not yet received any decoration for his excellent service in the civilian field.

Starokonstantinov police inspector collegiate assessor *Kilchevsky* (*Kielczewski*)⁵¹. This official attracts attention with his educated mind, zeal for his duties, and selflessness in service; but meanwhile he is poor and finds it difficult to support his pious family.

Executor Popov. This official distinguishes himself by exemplary moral behavior, diligence, and selflessness in his service; but, having a large family of relatives, he lives in great poverty.

Secretary of Temporary Liquidation Commission *Opotsky*⁵². This man is remarkable both in his position and in his personal life; one can confidently say that he is the most honest of all the secretaries of

⁴⁸ *Pyotr Dmitrievich Solsky*. In the margin A.N. Mordvinov noted: “To Count Protasov”; in another hand: “Executed”. Count Nikolai Alexandrovich Protasov (1798–1855) was confirmed as Ober-Procurator of the Most Holy Synod in June 1836.

⁴⁹ *Ignatii Petrovich Golovinsky* (1807–1855), Catholic bishop and religious writer. From 1835, he was cathedral canon in Zhitomyr; from 1837 professor of theology and chaplain of Kiev University; from 1842 until his death Rector of the Imperial Roman Catholic Theological Academy in St. Petersburg; from 1851 also Archbishop of Mogilev.

⁵⁰ *Grigorii Vasilyevich Volyansky*.

⁵¹ According to the *The Menologion and General Register of the Russian Empire for the Year 1836*, the official's name was *Andrei Karlovich Kolchevsky*. In the margin A.N. Mordvinov noted: “To the Min.[ister] of Internal Affairs”; in another hand: “Executed”.

⁵² *Terentii Yakovlevich Opotsky*, titular councillor.

Volhynia Governorate. His heart is as filled with feelings of kindness as his mind is familiar with government regulations; Volhynia Governorate would be fortunate if Mr. Opotsky were appointed to replace Dobelevsky as Secretary of the Civil Chamber.

Provincial architect Provincial Secretary *Mlodzyanovsky* (Młodzianowski)⁵³. Judging by the fact that sooner or later the government will need to build state-owned buildings in the decrepit Volhynia Governorate, this lazy official, ignorant of his duties, cannot be tolerated here.

Civil Chamber *Secretary Dobelevsky* ⁵⁴(without rank). This man is remarkable for his attachment to all things Polish; and secondly, for his use of force and illegal manipulation of the Chamber's affairs, as a result of which he has amassed a considerable fortune. Despite all this, he is quite secure in his position, for the local magnates highly value his national sentiments.

In April of this year, when the Governor-General Count Guryev was inspecting the chamber, Dobelevsky, not wanting to part with his kuntush, sash and saber, claimed to be ill and was not present in the Chamber.

Medical specialist, *a certain Lips*⁵⁵, *a converted Jew*. In this man, as his mind developed, two strong feelings were born: antipathy toward all Jews and a desire to become known to the government through his zeal, in order to receive some degree of honor, and he even spends his own money to make a useful discovery some day. If the government ever needs a man for the secret police in the provinces reclaimed from Poland, it can make great use of Lips, for this man, with a perfect knowledge of Hebrew, Polish, German, and Russian, and a knowledge of medicine, can conceal himself well and have access everywhere⁵⁶.

⁵³ *Foma Ivanovich Mlodzyanovsky*.

⁵⁴ *Ignatii Mikhailovich Dobelevsky*. In the margin A.N. Mordvinov noted: "To Count Guryev"; in another hand: "Executed".

⁵⁵ In the margin A.N. Mordvinov noted: "Copy this section separately for me".

⁵⁶ In the accompanying report addressed to the Chief of Gendarmes, Bek additionally requested that "gracious attention be paid to the exceptionally zealous service and honorable conduct of the officials listed in memorandum no. 156: the gymnasium Director Bokshanin, solicitor for criminal cases Danilchenko, Chief of Police of Starokonstantinov Kilchevsky, the Executor of the Provincial Administration Popov, and the Archpriest of Zhitomyr Cathedral Church, Solsky"



Lieutenant Colonel Bek
 for the aide-de-camp, countersigned by ensign Sharamovich⁵⁷

**Memorandum by the gendarme staff officer
 in Volhynia Governorate, Lieutenant Colonel F.I. Bek,
 “On Volhynia Governorate.”**

GA RF. F. 109. Op. 13. D. 245, lit. D. L. 67–71 rev.

Beginning 1838⁵⁸

Zhitomyr

Following the report I submitted to Your Excellency in my report of January 28, 1837, No. 33⁵⁹, there have been major changes in the provincial leadership.

Instead of the Chairman of the Criminal Chamber *Schastny*, known for his extortion, state councillor *Karpilovich*⁶⁰ was transferred to his place from Grodno from the same position; a very selfless person, but unfortunately of such a soft and weak character that with connections and requests you can coax from him the same thing that could be bought for money from Mr. Shchastny⁶¹.

(ГА РФ. Ф. 109. Оп. 11. Д. 320, л. 62 об.). On this covering letter Benckendorff wrote: “His Majesty has ordered that this be communicated to M.M. Speransky, so that he may send it immediately to the governorate, and that Guryev be informed to keep him under strict supervision and select another reliable person as his replacement” (Ibid. л. 62). From the context of the memorandum, it is unclear to which official the Chief of Gendarmes was referring.

⁵⁷ The document is counter-signed by Bek's aide-de-camp (*Konstantin Ivanovich Sharamovich*), a nobleman of Kiev Governorate and a Roman Catholic by confession. He was educated in the Noble Regiment, entered the Corps of Gendarmes in 1835 with the rank of ensign, and was assigned as aide-de-camp to the staff officer in Volhynia Governorate. He later served as aide-de-camp to provincial gendarme staff officers in Stavropol, Voronezh, and Kaluga. In 1840 he left the Corps of Gendarmes with the rank of collegiate secretary.

⁵⁸ Dated on the basis of its contents. At the top of the folio, in ink: “Letter E” and “Secret”.

⁵⁹ This document could not be located among the records of the Third Section.

⁶⁰ *Porfirii Ivanovich Karpilovich*.

⁶¹ In March 1838, state councillor *N.L. Schastny* was appointed Vice Governor of Chernigov, serving in that position until 1841.

Instead of the weak and incompetent prosecutor who retired (*Kamensky*), prosecutor *Alferov*⁶² came from Podolsk Governorate, who knows his business and acts in his official capacity honestly and persistently: but with the decrepit and self-serving district attorneys, his noble actions do not bring any benefit to the Governorate.

Instead of the Vice Governor *Afendik*, transferred to Pskov after his unfriendly treatment of two foreign travelers⁶³, for whom the English Ambassador Lord Durham⁶⁴ stood up – an actual state councillor *Smirnov*⁶⁵ was appointed from Novgorod as Vice Governor, a man with

⁶² *Nikifor Ivanovich Alferov* (1798–1880) later served as Chairman of the Criminal Court Chamber of Voronezh Governorate (1851–1859) and Chairman of the Civil Court Chamber of Volhynia Governorate (1860–1865).

⁶³ In mid-October 1836, the British subject George Ferguson submitted a written complaint to the British Envoy in St. Petersburg, Count Durham, alleging that on 25 September, while crossing the border into the Kingdom of Poland, he had been detained at the customs post in the town of Ustilug, Volhynia Governorate, and escorted with his companions to Zhitomyr. The Acting Governor, Vice Governor *Afendik*, together with police officials, examined the papers confiscated from the foreigners, after which they were granted permission to cross the border. Ferguson complained that the customs officials had disregarded an open letter signed by the Kiev Military Governor A.D. Guryev, that he had not been reimbursed for his travel expenses, and that the Vice Governor had refused to receive him personally. Nicholas I forwarded the complaint to Benckendorff with instructions to clarify the circumstances. On 23 October, Colonel N.M. Panov, attached for special assignments to the Chief of Gendarmes, was dispatched to Volhynia Governorate. He established that the foreigners had been detained pursuant to a secret directive of the Third Section dated 20 May 1833, which listed a Pole named Narciss(us) Ferguson. In his final report Panov concluded that he had found no criminal intent on the part of the customs officials but believed that “their coarse and extremely imprudent conduct in this affair could not be overlooked”. According to Panov, the Vice Governor “refused to show them any courtesy whatsoever and ignored all of their requests, which may have irritated them even more than the conduct of the customs officials”. Following the Chief of Gendarmes’ report to the Emperor, Nicholas I ordered “that Vice Governor *Afendik* receive the strictest reprimand and be transferred to another post, and that the customs office at Ustilug receive a severe reprimand for disregarding the open order of the Governor-General” ((ГА РФ. Ф. 109. Оп. 11. Д. 243. Л. 57, 63).

⁶⁴ *John George Lambton, Earl of Durham* (1792–1840), British politician and diplomat. He served as British Ambassador to Russia from 1835 to 1837 and later as High Commissioner and Governor General of British North America.

⁶⁵ *Vladimir Savvich Smirnov* (1784–1865) was appointed Vice Governor of Volhynia in February 1837 and served until February 1838. He had previously been Vice Governor of Astrakhan (1824–1828), Vladimir (1828–1835), and



information and great experience, but prone to senseless shouting at his subordinates and claims to other people's property, which is why he does not enjoy respect and the affairs of the Chamber are going worse than before.

Instead of the weak, but noble and knowledgeable governor *Zhukovsky*, transferred with his rank to Kaluga Governorate, at the request of the Governor General Count Guryev, Mr. *Zvegintsev*⁶⁶ was appointed (from the rank of colonel but re-ranked as an actual state councillor), a man with a considerable fortune and good information, but at the same time a great egoist, a shallow soul without understanding of his business, which is why things in the governorate have become worse than before.

Mr. *Zvegintsev*, however, knew from hearsay that the Provincial Government, ruling in the name of the Sovereign, if it commands quickly, correctly and persistently, then all places and persons subordinate to it will sooner or later fulfill their duties at least with legal justice, and for this reason he shook up the Provincial Government with ardor, which (the Government) perhaps he would have managed to improve – but unfortunately for him and the entire governorate, Councillor *Gordeenko* enjoys a special favor with him through the most base slavery, a man of the blackest principles, and this preference, offensive to the other two most honest councillors, forced them to leave the service, and therefore Mr. *Zvegintsev*, without in the least improving the Provincial Government, left it to his predecessor, General Maslov⁶⁷,

Novgorod (1835–1837). He later headed the Main Treasury (1839–1861) and was promoted to the rank of privy councillor in 1853.

⁶⁶ *Alexander Ilyich Zvegintsov* (spelled *Zvegintsev* by Bek) graduated from the Corps of Pages and served in the Life Guards Preobrazhensky Regiment. He was Vice Governor of Kazan from 1835 to 1837 and, in March 1837, with the rank of actual state councillor, was appointed Governor of Volhynia. He was dismissed in September of the same year and thereafter lived in retirement on his estate of Petrovskoye in Borisoglebsk Uyezd, Voronezh Governorate. From 1847 to 1850 he served as Marshal of the Nobility of Shatsk Uyezd.

⁶⁷ *Alexander Petrovich Maslov* entered government service in 1806. He participated in the Patriotic War of 1812 and the campaigns abroad of 1813–1814 as an officer of the Life Guards Grenadier Regiment. From 1827 he served as a staff officer in the Corps of Gendarmes. Between 1830 and 1833, he acted as Commander of the Fifth (Simbirsk; from 1832, Kazan) District of the Corps of Gendarmes; from 1833 to 1836, he was the first Commander of the Seventh (Siberian) District of the Corps of Gendarmes; and from 1837 to 1839, he served as Governor of Volhynia with the rank of major general.

if not in a worse, then in the same unfortunate situation in which it had been for a long time⁶⁸.

One cannot, however, disagree that the affairs of the Volhynia Government are so extensive and so badly neglected that any knowledgeable and well-intentioned governor, even with good councillors, will find it completely impossible to put it in a proper position, unless the High Government, following the examples already present in other governorates, establishes an extraordinary office to the Provincial Government to examine and complete its old affairs.

Speaking about the current situation in Volhynia Governorate, it can be said without a doubt that *here it is not the authorities who rule over individuals, but individuals who rule over the authorities*.

Volhynia Governorate is inhabited by three peoples: Poles, Jews and the *so-called Russians*. The first, influencing the government through connections and hating it, have not yet abandoned hope for the unification of the Polish Kingdom; the second, through gold, manage to exert influence in the highest governmental positions over the affairs of the Israeli people; and the third, through immorality, ignorance, and harsh slavery, constitute a people only in numbers, but lack the spirit and character that we notice in the farmers of the Great Russian provinces.

In a region where government authority is weak and not held in high esteem, the rights of landowners in relation to their peasants are usually either too unlimited or too limited, depending on circumstances; but for the most part, due to differences in faith and language, landowners and possessors of state-owned estates, considering their peasants to be some kind of work animals and not caring in the least about their morality or the benefits of home life, burden them with heavy labor.

The peasants of the Lutsk Uyezd landowner *Zakashevskaya* (Zakaszewska) had been disobeying their landowners for several years, seeking freedom. The Senate and State Council ruled that they were condemned to serfdom. However, for three years, local authorities have

⁶⁸ At the bottom of the folio, another hand added the following note to this paragraph: "A cursory inspection of the records of the Provincial Administration by the Acting Governor, Smirnov, chairman of the Treasury Chamber, revealed more than 20,000 unresolved cases and over 10,000 documents awaiting consideration dating back to 1830".



been unable to compel them to obey their landowner's authority. These hesitant measures were the reason they refused to fulfill their state service in 1837, requiring their community to provide recruits.

From my report for the 1836 past year, Your Excellency is already aware of the state of other parts of Volhynia Governorate and my opinion on improving and strengthening them for the benefit of the people and the government. But, guided by the conclusion of Your Excellency's order No. 90⁶⁹ I have the honor to most respectfully report:

1. Since the integrity of religion is the basis of everything the government cares about, then if the state no longer has the means to place the diocesan administration together with the provincial one and to give a better appearance to church things in the entire province, at least in 10 district towns it is needed to build beautiful and warm churches, supplying them with decent sacristies and utensils; then both soldiers and citizens will go to pray in their Church, but now both of them, on the very Imperial days, go to the Catholic Church and imperceptibly fall away from everything that is national;

2. It's incomprehensible why the Ministry of Internal Affairs is so careless – that for 40 years it hasn't bothered to determine where the provincial capital of Volhynia Governorate should be. This results in thousands of inconveniences, harmful both to the government and its subjects⁷⁰;

3. The confiscated estates of the Kyiv and Kamenets-Podolsk governorates have already come under the control of Your Excellency: but in Volhynia Governorate they are under the jurisdiction of the Treasury Chamber and are becoming more and more ruined every day. Last

⁶⁹ This refers to Witt's directive of 18 October 1837, discussed in greater detail in the introductory article.

⁷⁰ Zhitomyr was granted the status of a provincial capital in 1804, but during the 1830s the government considered transferring the provincial center to Novograd-Volynsky, Lutsk, or Dubno (Карлина О. Организация городского самоуправления в Волынской губернии в первой половине XIX в. // *Studia z historii społeczno-gospodarczej XIX i XX wieku*. 2011. № 9. С. 140). In October 1837, Bek proposed that “the provincial capital be transferred from the remote edge of the governorate (where it is now situated), to the town of Dubno, from which the provincial authorities could, so to speak, embrace all parts of their administration” (РГИА. Ф. 1266. Оп. 1. Д. 23. Л. 33 об.). In 1840 Nicholas I confirmed Zhitomyr's status as the provincial capital.

summer, a Jew *Filkenstein*, having made a denunciation directly to the Sovereign Emperor, undertook to prove abuses in the confiscated estates of Volhynia Governorate in the amount of up to a million rubles;

4) The Jewish people, on the one hand, due to their large numbers, religious fanaticism, roguery and the annual impoverishment of many families, and on the other hand, due to the incompleteness and incorrectness of the measures outlined in the charter and regulations specifically concerning the Jews⁷¹, – demand urgently that the government change their internal and immediate management as quickly as possible. *Their kabals are the beginning and end of all evil!*

Experienced friends of our Fatherland quite rightly conclude that if the Jews are given control of our uyezd peasants, with some changes, then they will be more useful to themselves and to the state: but if they are left under the present control, then, besides the non-payment of taxes in those places where there is no tax collection or there is but an insignificant one, the government will not receive from them even recruits.

Lieutenant Colonel Bek

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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⁷¹ This refers to the *Statute on the Jews*, approved by Nicholas I on 13 April 1835.



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Service and Personnel of the Vladivostok Security Section, 1913–1914

Abstract

This article examines the regional characteristics of political surveillance in the Russian Empire through the example of the Vladivostok Security Section, which escaped abolition during the 1913–1914 reform of the political police initiated by Vladimir F. Dzhunkovsky. The Vladivostok Security Section represents what may be termed an “exceptional normal case”, illustrating both the empire-wide features and the distinctive regional characteristics of the imperial political police. The study combines an analysis of the organizational structure and operations of the Vladivostok Security Section as a state institution with a prosopographical examination of the officers of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes who served there. This combined approach makes it possible to reconstruct the day-to-day functioning of the political police and to assess the effectiveness of its operations. Throughout 1913–1914, officers and personnel of the Vladivostok Security Section maintained a high standard of political policing within the Primor Governor-Generalship, contributing to the relatively low level of revolutionary activity in the region. This effectiveness was achieved

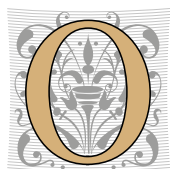
through an extensive network of informants operating not only in Vladivostok and other cities of the governor-generalship but also in nearby foreign cities with substantial Russian émigré communities, including Nagasaki and Shanghai. The professionalism of the Section's personnel played a decisive role in this success. Its staff included experienced officers with prior service in political investigations as well as younger gendarmes eager to pursue careers in investigative work. Despite bureaucratic tensions and personnel shortages, the Vladivostok Security Section operated effectively, exemplifying the principal features of political surveillance throughout the Russian Empire.

Keywords:

Vladivostok Security Section; Separate Corps of Gendarmes; Police Department; Priamur Governor-Generalship; Primorsk Oblast/Primorye; Political surveillance; V.F. Dzhunkovsky

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On 23 January 1913, Major General Vladimir Fyodorovich Dzhunkovsky was appointed Assistant Minister of the Interior in charge of the police and Commander of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes. His name is associated with one of the most extensive reforms in the history of the pre-revolutionary political police. Between 15 May 1913 and 19 July 1914, all Security Departments and Regional Security Sections¹ were abolished, and

¹ Also, “*the Okbrana*”.

their officers and personnel were incorporated into the staffs of the provincial Gendarme Directorates². Only the three metropolitan security sections – those of Warsaw, Moscow, and St. Petersburg – were exempted from liquidation because their existence had been established in the *Complete Collection (Digest) of Laws of the Russian Empire*³. Among the provincial sections, only the Turkestan Regional Security Section and the Vladivostok Security Section survived the reform. Both were retained for essentially the same administrative reason: neither the Turkestan nor the Priamur Governor-Generalship possessed provincial Gendarme Directorates capable of assuming their functions. In the case of Turkestan, the section's preservation was additionally justified by the presence of a well-developed Pan-Islamist movement, which constituted a tangible and measurable security threat. The Vladivostok Section, by contrast, was maintained in a region where no organized revolutionary movement or anti-government nationalist movement existed. This circumstance makes its continued existence particularly worthy of investigation.

Although the first Russian settlements appeared on the Pacific coast during the seventeenth century, the active colonization and development of the region began only after the incorporation into the Russian Empire, in 1858–1860, of the southern territories of the Far East most suitable for settlement: the lower Amur Valley (Priamurye) and the coastal region lying between the Amur, Ussuri, and Tumen Rivers and the Pacific Ocean (Primorye). Because these territories became part of the empire *de facto* only after the Great Reforms, their administrative institutions developed during a new phase of Russian modernization. Many government bodies were created virtually from scratch, without the long process of local institutional evolution characteristic of the older governorates of the empire. For this reason, examining the system of political surveillance in the Priamur region during 1913–1914 makes it possible to observe not only its local peculiarities but also the broader empire-wide patterns reflected within it – just as a single drop of water from the world's oceans contains the same chemical elements characteristic of the entire body of water.

² Хутарев-Гарнишевский В.В. Противостояние. Спецслужбы, армия и власть накануне падения Российской империи, 1913–1917 гг. М.: Изд-во Института Гайдара, 2020. С. 156–158.

³ Ibid. С. 152.

Concentrating on the period of Dzhunkovsky's reform, which sought to abolish the Security Sections, also helps avoid the misleading tendency to explain the development of political policing primarily through the prism of Russia's preparation for the First World War. Such an approach risks imposing a predetermined causal relationship between these phenomena and forcing the empirical evidence to conform to a known historical outcome. Rejecting this teleological perspective instead allows the phenomenon to be examined in all its historical particularity, taking into account the unexpected and sometimes contingent events, as well as the influence of individual actors, that characterize the historical process.

The search for the “unexpected” and the “exceptional” naturally shifts attention toward subjective factors – namely, the personalities of the gendarme officers engaged in political investigations, together with their habits, professional experience, and even illnesses, all of which affected their work. At this level of analysis, the method of detailed description offers the most fruitful strategy for reconstructing historical reality.

The present study therefore combines two complementary approaches. The Vladivostok Security Section is examined both as a component of the empire-wide system of political control and as a community of individuals whose biographies shaped its everyday functioning. This dual perspective makes it possible to evaluate the institution both from the standpoint of what imperial bureaucrats in St. Petersburg expected it to accomplish and from the standpoint of what it actually was in the daily practice of the Vladivostok gendarmerie.

Turning to the institutional organization of political surveillance in the Priamur Governor-Generalship during 1913–1914, it is appropriate first to examine the records of the Headquarters of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes. Among these, the most significant is a memorandum entitled *Gendarme Supervision within the Priamur Governor-Generalship*, submitted to the Chief of Staff of the Corps on 27 May 1914⁴. The memorandum was prepared as part of discussions initiated in January 1914 concerning a proposal to establish a

⁴ Государственный архив Российской Федерации (ГА РФ). Ф. 110. Оп. 3. Д. 3607. Л. 36–38 об.

Priamur Regional Gendarme Directorate. The project was proposed by Colonel Aleksei Vasilyevich Vasilyev, Chief of the Irkutsk Gendarme Directorate and, concurrently, Head of the East Siberian Regional Security Section. Consequently, the memorandum closely parallels Vasilyev's report of 29 December 1913 on the organization of political surveillance in the Russian Far East. The Vladivostok Security Section was subordinate to the East Siberian Regional Security Department, and Vasilyev was therefore responsible for inspecting its activities.

According to the memorandum prepared by the Headquarters of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes, gendarme supervision in the Priamur Governor-Generalship rested upon two principal institutions: the Gendarme Police Directorate of the Ussuri Railway and the Vladivostok Security Section. The Railway Gendarme Directorate had been established in 1892–1893 and maintained branches in Vladivostok, Nikolsk-Ussuriysky, Khabarovsk, and Muravyov-Amursky Station. Owing to the absence of a fully constituted Provincial Gendarme Directorate in Primorskaya Oblast, the railway gendarmes were entrusted from 1905 onward with conducting preliminary investigations into political offenses. The remaining functions ordinarily assigned to provincial gendarme administrations, including political surveillance, however, did not fall within their jurisdiction⁵. It was also noted that, beginning in 1908, one officer of the Railway Gendarme Directorate, acting in coordination with the Commandant of the Vladivostok Fortress (usually the Directorate's aid-de-camp), assisted the regular police in inspecting the passports and baggage of passengers arriving from or departing abroad through the port. Lacking the personnel and resources necessary to perform these duties effectively, the gendarme officer was, in practice, reduced to observing the actions of the ordinary police⁶.

The memorandum identified the Vladivostok Security Section, together with its detective posts in Blagoveshchensk, Nikolsk-Ussuriysky, and Khabarovsk, as the region's specialized political investigation service. Formally, the Section's jurisdiction extended across the entire territory of Amur and Primorskaya Oblasts. In reality, however, the Vladivostok Security Section exercised direct surveillance only within the

⁵ Ibid. A. 36.

⁶ Ibid. A. 36 о6.



Lieutenant Colonel Prince Alexander Platonovich Mikeladze,
Commander of the Port Arthur Fortress Gendarme Detachment, in Port Arthur.
*Photograph, 1905. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division,
LC-DIG-ppmsca-08055*

city and fortress of Vladivostok. The Nikolsk-Ussuriysky detective post generally relied upon officers of the regular police to obtain intelligence and carry out operational measures in Nikolsk-Ussuriysky, Iman, and Olginsk uyezds, while the activities of the Khabarovsk detective post were effectively confined to the city of Khabarovsk and its surrounding district. The precise territorial jurisdiction of the Blagoveshchensk detective post outside the city itself remains impossible to determine from the available sources⁷.

The title of the memorandum's next section – *The Unsatisfactory Nature of the Existing Organization* – accurately reflected its content. Staff officers of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes observed that political surveillance was, in practice, confined to the major urban centers and the exclusion zone of the Ussuri Railway. It was virtually absent from important settlements and military garrisons such as Razdolnoye, Posyet, Shmakovka, Iman, Vladimiro-Aleksandrovskoye, and others. Particular attention was drawn to the numerous small mining camps, coal mines, logging settlements, goldfields, and fishing stations scattered across the taiga and the Pacific coast. These, the report observed,

⁷ Ibid. A. 37.

“remain not merely beyond the supervision of the specialized organs responsible for political investigations, but frequently even beyond the reach of ordinary police surveillance, since officers of the regular police, owing to their insufficient numbers, the enormous distances involved, the absence of roads, and primitive means of communication – often interrupted altogether – are simply incapable of exercising such supervision”⁸.

The report further emphasized that “by virtue of the geographical and political position of the Far East”, particularly close supervision of the numerous military units stationed throughout the Priamur Governor-Generalship was essential. Because of the harsh conditions under which these troops were quartered, soldiers often harbored grievances and therefore required constant monitoring. Another difficulty identified in the memorandum was the uncertainty surrounding the respective responsibilities of gendarme officers. Preliminary investigations into state crimes were frequently shifted by the Railway Gendarme Directorate onto officers of the Security Section, while the heavy workload borne by both organizations meant that even routine requests became mired in bureaucratic delay⁹.

The deliberately alarmist picture presented in the memorandum was clearly intended to persuade the authorities in St. Petersburg of the necessity of establishing a fully-fledged Priamur Regional Gendarme Directorate. Indeed, the report concluded by presenting this measure as the only effective solution to the shortcomings of political supervision in the region. As early as December 1912, Colonel Aleksei Vasilyevich Vasilyev, Chief of the Irkutsk Provincial Gendarme Directorate, had argued for increasing the number of detective posts within the Priamur Governor-Generalship. One year later, in December 1913, the Director of the Police Department informed the Headquarters of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes that, in Vasilyev’s opinion, “owing to the various local conditions and circumstances that have, in recent years, contributed to the exceptionally rapid growth of revolutionary and other criminal activity among the population of the Empire’s eastern frontier, overcrowded with criminal exiles, it has become extremely difficult

⁸ Ibid. A. 37–37 o6.

⁹ Ibid. A. 38.

to maintain accurate and systematic surveillance with the number of branch detective posts currently existing within the section under his command”¹⁰. This demonstrates that, in official terminology, gendarme supervision referred to the institutional system of political policing responsible for monitoring the political reliability of the population, as well as of particular social groups and individuals.

Colonel Vasilyev’s efforts to expand the network of detective posts and strengthen political surveillance in the Priamur Governor-Generalship received active support from the regional authorities, including the Priamur Governor-General and the Prosecutor of the Irkutsk Judicial Chamber. Like Vasilyev, they viewed the region as a remote imperial frontier saturated with potentially dangerous revolutionary elements¹¹. Ironically, representatives of the revolutionary underground perceived the situation quite differently. In October 1913, the prominent Socialist Revolutionary activist Nikolai Arefyev, secretary of the Nikolsk-Ussuriysky newspaper *Ussuriyskaya Okraina*, complained privately among his associates that “at the present time the vast region of Eastern Siberia is completely cut off from the revolutionary centers of the West”¹². Here, “Eastern Siberia” referred to the entire Russian territory stretching from Lake Baikal to the Pacific Ocean. The same intelligence report quoted Arefyev as stating that Harbin was the only city in the region where party activity remained vigorous. Even there, revolutionary literature was insufficient for the needs of the wider region, and organizational work had to be conducted with extreme caution. Writing in 1940, the Soviet historian and former revolutionary Vasily Golionko similarly argued that, beginning in 1908, the revolutionary movement in the region had been systematically destroyed through the suppression of existing organizations and the arrest of isolated activists¹³. Although the Governor-Generalship contained a considerable population of former and current political exiles, this concentration of “revolutionary elements” did not translate into widespread revolutionary sentiment. As Golionko summarized the situation, “the upsurge of the mass workers’ movement

¹⁰ Ibid. А. 3.

¹¹ Ibid. А. 5.

¹² ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 243. Д. 9. Ч. 64. Лит. Б. А. 141.

¹³ Ibid. Ф. Р-9147. Оп. 1. Д. 60. А. 63.

in the central provinces of Russia between 1911 and 1914 was not reflected in Primorye for entirely objective reasons”¹⁴.

The contrast between the perceptions of the gendarmerie and those of the revolutionaries themselves makes it necessary to examine the actual operations of the political police.

In January 1913, the Vladivostok Security Section, which formed the core of political surveillance and political investigations in the Primur Governor-Generalship, employed only eighteen confidential informants. Of these, seven were regular secret agents, while eight served as auxiliary informants. Among the principal agents, two monitored the activities of the local Socialist Revolutionaries, two observed the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, two handled “strictly confidential matters” – primarily the interception and examination of correspondence – and one was assigned to monitor students of the Imperial Oriental Institute¹⁵. The overlap of operational assignments was encouraged rather than discouraged. Thus, one of the agents responsible for monitoring the Socialist Revolutionaries also reported on the students of the IOI, while an informant who had infiltrated the Social Democrats simultaneously supplied intelligence concerning the political attitudes of sailors in the Siberian Flotilla¹⁶. Among the auxiliary agents, five monitored morale and political sentiment within the garrison of the Vladivostok Fortress. Two assisted in gathering intelligence on the Socialist Revolutionary organizations, two performed similar duties with respect to the Social Democrats, while one informant each was assigned to the sailors of the Siberian Flotilla and the workers of the military port¹⁷.

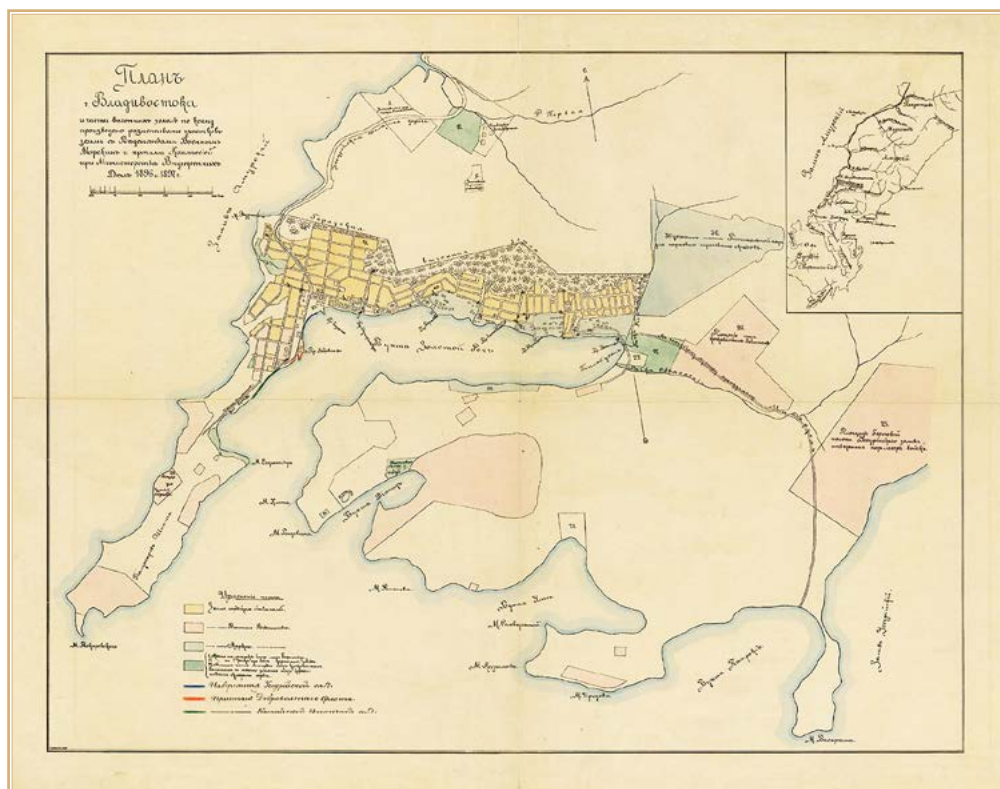
In January 1914, the Vladivostok *Okhrana* employed a total of eleven confidential informants, consisting of five regular agents and six auxiliary agents. Two of the regular agents continued to be responsible for the interception and examination of correspondence, two monitored the Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs), and one was assigned to the Social Democrats. Among the auxiliary agents, two observed the Social Democrats, one monitored the Socialist Revolutionaries, another reported

¹⁴ Ibid. Л. 62.

¹⁵ Hereafter – IOI.

¹⁶ Государственный архив Иркутской области (ГАИО). Ф. 600. Оп. 1. Д. 766. Л. 4.

¹⁷ Ibid.



Plan of Vladivostok, 1897.
From open sources

on the mood within the military, while two were tasked with gathering intelligence on major criminal gangs¹⁸.

Although fluctuations in the size of the agent network and shifts in its operational priorities are not particularly informative in themselves, the surviving intelligence reports provide a much clearer picture of the Security Department's day-to-day work. As these reports demonstrate, the Vladivostok Security Section encountered no well-developed revolutionary movement during 1913–1914. The once-powerful Socialist Revolutionary organization that had instigated three successive mutinies among the Vladivostok Fortress garrison and the sailors of the Siberian Flotilla during the Revolution of 1905–1907 was reduced to little more than a memory carefully preserved by a handful of surviving activists. In March 1913, Stefan Stelmakher, a peasant from Lublin Governorate, together with Alexander Gantimurov, a descendant of

¹⁸ ГАИО. Ф. 600. Оп. 1. Д. 824. Л. 3.

the Daur princely family, attempted to establish an agricultural society known as *Druzhestvo* (Fellowship) as a cover for the clandestine dissemination of socialist ideas among the peasants of Primorskaya Oblast¹⁹. The society, however, failed to obtain official registration, and the plan for political agitation consequently collapsed. In May, a small circle of local Socialist Revolutionaries and sympathizers – including Ayupov, a bookseller, Slobodchikov, a clerk in the 36th Siberian Rifle Regiment, and Vysotsky, a demolition worker employed in the construction of the Vladivostok Fortress – planned to distribute leaflets calling for renewed revolutionary activity and commemorating the events of 1905. To reduce the risk of detection, the leaflets were to be passed discreetly from hand to hand rather than distributed publicly. The head of the Security Section, Captain Yevgeny Lalevich, even received authorization from his superiors in Irkutsk to suppress the group. In the event, however, no operation proved necessary. According to the conspirators' plan, the leaflets were to be duplicated on the hectograph belonging to the 36th Regiment, which Slobodchikov intended to transport from the regiment's quarters on Russky Island to Vladivostok. Because the May Day holiday was approaching, however, military authorities restricted leave for conscript soldiers. Slobodchikov was therefore unable either to retrieve the hectograph or to travel to the city. Shortly afterward, members of the group became aware that they were under surveillance and ceased all active operations, thereby depriving the Section of sufficient grounds for arrest²⁰.

Thereafter, only isolated individuals attracted the attention of the political police. During the summer of 1913, one such figure was Władysław Tręmbiński, a native of Warsaw, employed as a salesman in the Sinkevich (*Sinkiewicz*) brothers' bookshop. He frequently promised customers that he could procure prohibited literature and openly expressed his belief that Polish independence would be highly desirable²¹. In the course of these conversations he repeatedly voiced sympathy for the Polish Socialist Party. In July, Tręmbiński departed Vladivostok for an unknown destination. At the end of September, another individual,

¹⁹ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 243. Д. 9ч. 64 л. Б. А. 23.

²⁰ Ibid. А. 36.

²¹ Ibid. А. 55, 72.

Blazhievsky (Błażewski), came under surveillance on suspicion of receiving revolutionary literature from Nagasaki and Shanghai for subsequent distribution²².

Despite the weakness of the local Socialist Revolutionary movement, the Vladivostok gendarmes did not regard it as harmless. In December 1913, the Security Section placed the head of Vladivostok Prison under surveillance after receiving intelligence that Socialist Revolutionaries intended to assassinate him in retaliation for his previous service at the Akatuy penal colony²³. The assassination was never carried out, however, because the designated Socialist Revolutionary militant was arrested before he could act. During the winter of 1914, the Police Department requested that the Vladivostok Security Section investigate the political reliability of Pavel Sosulin, a former student of the IOI who had participated in a Socialist Revolutionary study circle in 1912. In his reply by telegram, Captain Lalevich explained that the circle had disbanded after its very first meeting because an outbreak of scarlet fever had forced the Institute to close for quarantine. The organization had never resumed its activities, and neither Sosulin nor any of its former participants had subsequently displayed signs of political disloyalty²⁴.

By the spring of 1914, there was no longer even the semblance of an organized Socialist Revolutionary organization in Vladivostok. Only scattered individuals remained, united by common memories and convictions but lacking any organizational structure²⁵. Interest in the remaining Socialist Revolutionaries briefly revived at the end of April, when leaflets describing workers' strikes in St. Petersburg and European Russia²⁶ were discovered scattered about after an amateur theatrical performance given by sailors of the Siberian Naval Crew. Investigation revealed that the leaflets had been printed by Socialist Revolutionary émigrés in Australia and transported to Vladivostok aboard the Volunteer Fleet steamship *Simferopol* by a Polish waiter known only

²² Ibid. Л. 105.

²³ Российский государственный исторический архив Дальнего Востока (РГИА ДВ). Ф. 536. Оп. 2. Д. 14. Л. 3.

²⁴ Ibid. Л. 15.

²⁵ ГАРФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 244. Д. 9ч. 64 л. Б. Л. 7.

²⁶ РГИА ДВ. Ф. 536. Оп. 1. Д. 34. Л. 51.

as “Kazimirschik (Kazimirczyk)”²⁷. Since no comparable incidents followed, the matter, as on previous occasions, never progressed beyond routine surveillance.

The Section’s work against the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) differed somewhat. Unlike the Socialist Revolutionaries, the Social Democrats potentially enjoyed a stable social base among the workers of the military port. In April 1913, port workers launched a strike in protest against violations of overtime payment regulations. One official report noted: “A major evil in the Port is the workers’ dining hall. Before its establishment, craftsmen had only a half-hour lunch break; after the dining hall opened, the allotted lunch period was increased to one hour, during which more than 300 workers gathered together and had ample opportunity to exchange ideas”²⁸. The dining hall also provided uncontrolled access to the port for outsiders.

Nevertheless, the Security Section received explicit instructions not to intervene so long as the strike remained exclusively economic in character. Ultimately, the strike leaders, Pyotr Radayev and Semyon Kostyrev, left Vladivostok for St. Petersburg, where they subsequently collaborated with the Social Democratic press on labor issues. It later became clear that both men were indeed Social Democrats but had deliberately refrained from openly declaring their political views or attempting to politicize the strike in Vladivostok, fearing immediate dismissal and arrest²⁹.

Another focal point of surveillance was the Pushkin People’s Reading House, which regularly hosted literary evenings and theatrical performances for the city’s residents while also operating literacy classes for adults and a school for workers’ children. By May 1913, the institution’s governing board consisted entirely of Social Democrats: Aleksander Tamm, Nikolai Chernenko, and Pavel Mavropulo³⁰. Tamm had been known to the Security Section as one of the city’s leading Social Democrats and had remained under surveillance since 1908. Chernenko had likewise been monitored since November 1908³¹ as the recipi-

²⁷ Ibid. Л. 93.

²⁸ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 243. Д. 5ч. 64 л. Б. Л. 24.

²⁹ Ibid. Л. 44.

³⁰ Ibid. Л. 35.

³¹ Государственный архив Хабаровского края (ГАХК). Ф. И-30. Оп. 1. Д. 1. Л. 217.

ent of Social Democratic newspapers sent from Paris. Mavropulo came under police observation in 1911 after attempting, while still a student at the IOI, to organize student disturbances³². Consequently, even the relatively legal public activities of Vladivostok's Social Democrats remained under close supervision.

The same was true of their clandestine activities. In 1913, the bank employee Grigory Mumzi and several associates attempted to re-establish the Regional Committee of the RSDLP, which had been destroyed by the authorities in 1908³³. The Section was informed of these plans from the outset, making direct intervention unnecessary. Fearing exposure and arrest, Mumzi and his associates ultimately abandoned the project. Vladivostok's position as a frontier city also shaped the Section's work. In January 1914, the East Siberian Regional Security Section instructed its Vladivostok counterpart to monitor possible contacts between local Social Democrats and Chinese revolutionary organizations, since comparable connections between the RSDLP and Chinese revolutionaries had previously been uncovered in Tomsk³⁴.

At the beginning of February 1914, the leadership of the Vladivostok Criminal Investigation Department informed the Security Section that a certain Ambrosimov was residing in the city, "engaging somewhat in politics while selling revolvers of various types to various individuals"³⁵. A search of his premises proved fruitless, as Ambrosimov had fled before the police arrived. The episode nevertheless demonstrates that the Security Section worked closely with other law-enforcement agencies, particularly the Criminal Investigation Department. There were also successful operations. Following the interception of private correspondence, the Section placed Alexander Shanandin under surveillance after discovering that he had exchanged letters with Savva Koleiko³⁶, a Social Democratic activist and trade-union organizer in Blagoveshchensk. Surveillance continued from 9 to 23 February and culminated in Shanandin's successful arrest. He was subsequently

³² Ibid. А. 111.

³³ Ibid. А. 119.

³⁴ РГИА ДВ. Ф. 536. Оп. 2. Д. 17. А. 26.

³⁵ Ibid. Оп. 1. Д. 33. А. 38.

³⁶ Ibid. А. 64.



Panorama of Vladivostok. Photograph, 1918.
Photographic Collection of the Vladivostok Fortress Museum-Reserve.
Accession No. МЗБК ОФ 804 Фкр 313

identified as Pyotr Poryadin³⁷, a peasant from Tobolsk Governorate who had deserted from the 1st Siberian Rifle Regiment.

In addition to monitoring specific individuals, the Section also kept watch over events considered significant for the Social Democratic movement. In February 1914, the head of the Vladivostok Security Section instructed the city chief of police to reinforce police patrols throughout the city in order to prevent public gatherings, demonstrations, and the distribution of revolutionary leaflets on 23 February, the date designated for the celebration of International Women's Day³⁸.

The extent to which the Primorye Social Democrats had become subject to police surveillance is illustrated by a revealing episode. In the summer of 1914, after the outbreak of the First World War, Vladimir Lenin, then residing in Kraków, was briefly detained by the Austrian authorities. During the search, the police confiscated a notebook belonging to his wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, containing the contact addresses used by the Central Committee of the RSDLP throughout Russia since 1912. The notebook was published in 1959 in the journal *Historical Archive* by scholars from the Central Party Archive of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism. The notebook listed two contact

³⁷ Государственный архив Приморского края (ГАПК). Ф. 16. Оп. 1. Д. 10. Л. 24–24 об.

³⁸ РГИА ДВ. Ф. 536. Оп. 2. Д. 17. Л. 11.

addresses in Vladivostok: Aleksander G. Antonov, care of the Siberian Commercial Bank, and Post Office Box No. 76 at the city post office³⁹.

Aleksander Gavrilovich Antonov, an employee of the Siberian Commercial Bank and the son of a collegiate secretary from Nizhnedevitsk District of Voronezh Governorate, had been under surveillance by the Vladivostok Security Section since August 1912. The reason was his correspondence with Maxim Gorky and the Russian émigré colony on Capri, maintained through Antonov's brother⁴⁰. The story of Post Office Box No. 76 proved even more remarkable. In February 1913, postal officials informed the Security Department that the box had received from Kraków the brochure *The All-Russian Conference of the RSDLP* together with issues nos. 28–29 of the journal *Sotsial-Demokrat*, as well as hectographed revolutionary leaflets. Two additional pamphlets – *Notice and Resolutions of the Conference of the Central Committee of the RSDLP with Party Workers*⁴¹ – arrived from Germany. In reality, however, Post Office Box No. 76 had itself been secretly rented by the Vladivostok Security Section. As the subsequent investigation revealed, shortly before his transfer to another post in late February 1913, Captain Konstantin Nagrodsky, Lalevich's predecessor as Head of the Section, had deliberately ordered several RSDLP pamphlets and journals to be delivered there in order to expand the Section's collection of illegal literature for operational purposes⁴². Thus, of the two Vladivostok contact addresses known to the Central Committee of the RSDLP, one was already under surveillance, while the other had in fact been created by the political police themselves.

It should also be noted that, apart from maintaining contact with the Party's Central Committee, the local Social Democrats faced persistent organizational difficulties. An intelligence report from September 1913 identified a certain Poluektov as one of the leaders of the local organization, describing him as an excellent orator and a convinced Marxist⁴³. In December of the same year, Nikifor Semyonovich Poluek-

³⁹ Адресная книга ЦК РСДРП (1912–1914 гг.) // Исторический архив. 1959. № 1. С. 24.

⁴⁰ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 242. Д. 20ч. 64 л. Б. А. 141.

⁴¹ Ibid. Оп. 243. Д. 5ч. 64 л. А. А. 1–2.

⁴² Ibid. Л. 4.

⁴³ Ibid. Д. 5ч. 64 л. Б. А. 63.

tov, a fitter employed at the Vladivostok Military Port, was recruited as an agent of the Security Department under the codename “Severov”. His superiors characterized him as “an intelligent man with an excellent understanding of the labor movement and a highly valuable operative”⁴⁴. His responsibilities included reporting on the activities of the Pushkin People’s Reading House and monitoring the political attitudes of the military port workers.

The Vladivostok *Okhrana* did not confine its attention solely to revolutionary organizations. It also monitored a range of phenomena that were not overtly political. Because Vladivostok was both a fortress city and the base of a military garrison numbering approximately 60,000 men, military and naval personnel naturally attracted the attention of the political police. In 1913, Captain Lalevich recruited an agent under the codename “Dimitriev” to report on the attitudes of naval officers⁴⁵. Most of Dimitriev’s reports dealt not with overt political questions but with the everyday lives of officers in the Siberian Flotilla and their relationships with enlisted sailors. Remembering that mutiny usually arose from grievances over living conditions and military service rather than from ideology alone, the gendarmes sought to monitor the daily conditions aboard the fleet’s vessels. Surveillance of the rank-and-file soldiers of the Vladivostok Fortress garrison, however, became considerably more difficult as a consequence of one of V.F. Dzhunkovsky’s most controversial reforms. In March 1913, he issued a special circular ordering the abolition of all political police informants serving within the armed forces. As he explained, “it should be the duty of the officers of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes to protect military units from the intrusion of revolutionary agitators from outside”⁴⁶. Direct surveillance of enlisted personnel, he argued, should instead be entrusted to their own commanding officers, regardless of whether those officers possessed any aptitude for intelligence work. In his memoirs, Dzhunkovsky later maintained that the presence of gendarme agents within military units undermined discipline and

⁴⁴ Ibid. Ф. 4888. Оп. 5. Д. 605. Л. 29–29 об.

⁴⁵ ГАИО. Ф. 600. Оп. 1. Д. 766. Л. 7.

⁴⁶ Политическая полиция России между реформами. От В.К. Плеве до В.Ф. Джунковского. Сб. документов / Вступ. ст., сост. и коммент. Е.И. Щербакова. М.: АИРО-XXI; СПб.: Алетейя, 2021. С. 275.

corrupted the armed forces⁴⁷. However controversial this policy may have been, it was implemented faithfully by the officers of the Corps of Gendarmes. Accordingly, on 24 April 1913, Captain Lalevich reported that he had dismissed every confidential informant serving among the enlisted personnel of both the army and the navy⁴⁸.

Monitoring of military personnel nevertheless continued through civilian informants who maintained regular contact with them. On 26 April, Shibkov, an official attached to the Security Section for special assignments, recruited the auxiliary agent “Volga” to report on the sailors of the Siberian Flotilla⁴⁹. On 12 July, another agent, “Vysokiĭ” (“Tall”)⁵⁰, was recruited to monitor the attitudes of the enlisted soldiers stationed in the Vladivostok Fortress garrison. In accordance with Dz-hunkovsky’s instructions, cooperation with military commanders also became an important source of intelligence. In January 1914, Captain Lalevich informed the commander of the 3rd Vladivostok Fortress Artillery Regiment that one of his soldiers, Jan Dobrowolski, a native of Warsaw Governorate, had before his conscription encouraged fellow Poles to join the Polish Cavalry Society, an organization established in Galicia for the purpose of spreading revolutionary ideas. Lalevich therefore requested that the regimental commander place Dobrovolsky under close observation⁵¹. Ordinary denunciations likewise continued to play their customary role. During the same month, the *Okhrana* received an anonymous accusation against Captain Czesław Rybinski, a military engineer responsible for the design and construction of Fort No. 6 of the Vladivostok Fortress. According to a neighbor at his summer residence, Rybinski and his wife were distributing illegal literature among the fortress garrison and construction workers⁵². The subsequent investigation demonstrated that these allegations were entirely unfounded.

Only in exceptional circumstances did such investigations proceed beyond routine surveillance. In February 1914, officers searched the

⁴⁷ Джунковский В.Ф. Воспоминания. Т. 2. М.: Изд-во им. Сабашниковых, 1997. С. 179.

⁴⁸ ГАИО. Ф. 600. Оп. 1. Д. 766. Л. 14.

⁴⁹ Ibid. Л. 15.

⁵⁰ Ibid. Л. 24.

⁵¹ РГИА ДВ. Ф. 536. Оп. 2. Д. 16. Л. 2.

⁵² Ibid. Л. 27.

residence of Lieutenant Boris Alemanov of the 2nd Vladivostok Fortress Artillery Regiment after his former orderly claimed that Alemanov had possessed illegal literature while previously stationed in Krasnoyarsk. During the search, officers indeed discovered two pamphlets. Alemanov explained that he had confiscated them from the very orderly who had later denounced him⁵³. Once the authorities concluded that the lieutenant had been maliciously slandered by his former subordinate, he was immediately released.

In addition to military personnel, the Security Section also monitored members of various civic organizations. During the spring of 1912, officers first encountered the distribution of what they described as “tendentious” literature in the Ukrainian language advocating national autonomy within the Russian Empire. By January 1913, the Section had established that correspondents of the Kyiv-based organization Rodina (“Homeland”) were operating in Vladivostok and regularly receiving the organization’s brochures and journals⁵⁴. In April 1913, the Ukrainian Amateur Dramatic Circle was established at the Pushkin People’s Reading House. Its declared objectives included maintaining close relations with other Ukrainophile organizations throughout the empire and promoting the reading and circulation of Ukrainian-language literature, including publications printed abroad⁵⁵. In January 1914, the organizers of the Vladivostok Ukrainian circle considered establishing a similar organization in Nikolsk-Ussuriysky, the second-largest city of Primorskaya Oblast, but ultimately abandoned the project for fear of arrest. Around the same time, a Ukrainian Social Democratic discussion circle also began to emerge around the theatrical society in Vladivostok⁵⁶.

It is worth noting that the performances staged by the Ukrainian dramatic circle enjoyed considerable popularity because productions presented in Ukrainian could often evade censorship that would have prohibited the same plays in Russian. Nevertheless, the circle’s activities never developed into a broader political movement – and not merely

⁵³ Ibid. А. 36.

⁵⁴ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 243. Д. 9ч. 64 л. Б. А. 4.

⁵⁵ Ibid. А. 35.

⁵⁶ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 244. Д. 163ч. 64 л. Б. А. 7 об. – 8.

because its members feared police repression. The two principal leaders of the circle were Stepan Mostipan, a railway telegraph operator, and Ivan Antonyuk, a turner at the Vladivostok Military Port. Mostipan had in fact been recruited as a confidential informant by the Gendarme Directorate of the Ussuri Railway under the codename “Ganul” in November 1912⁵⁷. Antonyuk, for his part, was recruited by the *Okbrana* under the codename “Kamchatsky” in November 1914⁵⁸.

In the autumn of 1913, the Section placed under surveillance two members of the State Duma, Fyodor Rodichev and Alexander Rusanov, during their tour of the Russian Far East. In private conversations with representatives of the local press, Rodichev urged provincial newspapers to support the informal alliance that had emerged between the liberal Constitutional Democrats (Kadets) and the parties of the Left. Describing the parliamentary opposition’s principal objective as the struggle against the government, he advised sympathizers to remain inactive and avoid overt political activity, comparing the situation in 1913 with that of 1903, when, in his view, a wave of economic strikes had laid the foundations for the subsequent revolutionary movement. At public meetings, Rodichev delivered lectures on Aleksander Herzen, couched in more restrained language but nevertheless expressing an unmistakably oppositional political outlook⁵⁹. Aleksander Rusanov, the Trudovik deputy elected from Primorskaya Oblast and known to maintain contacts with the Social Democrats, pursued an even more openly political course. Without hesitation, he criticized Nikolai Gondatti, Governor-General of the Priamur region, in the local press, activities that likewise attracted the close attention of the *Okbrana*⁶⁰.

The growing politicization of the regional press also became an object of police scrutiny. Following an increasingly bitter conflict between the editors of Vladivostok’s principal newspapers and Vice Governor Vladimir Ladezhinsky, Captain Lalevich prepared a memorandum analyzing the local press. In it, he characterized Vladivostok’s newspapers as predominantly progressive and oppositional, attributing this tendency

⁵⁷ Ibid. Ф. 4888. Оп. 5, Д. 605. Л. 5.

⁵⁸ Ibid. Л. 43.

⁵⁹ Ibid. Ф. 102. Оп. 243. Д. 5ч. 64 Л. Б. Л. 73–74.

⁶⁰ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 243. Д. 5ч. 64 Л. Б. Л. 73–74.

to the fact that many journalists were former or escaped political exiles or individuals holding liberal political views⁶¹. Because members of the regional press actively participated in Socialist Democratic and Socialist Revolutionary organizations, the *Okhrana* accumulated substantial intelligence on local journalism and came to regard the press as an independent and influential component of the Governorate's public life.

Another important aspect of the Vladivostok Security Section's work was the surveillance of Russian political émigrés abroad. This activity had begun in 1907–1908, when the Japanese port of Nagasaki was home to a substantial colony of Russian revolutionary émigrés, among whom the Eastern Autonomous Committee of the Socialist Revolutionary Party had been established⁶². The activities of these revolutionaries were jointly monitored by Security Section agents and the Russian consul in Nagasaki. After several successful interceptions of couriers carrying weapons and revolutionary literature from Japan to Vladivostok, the chairman of the Eastern Autonomous Committee, Boris Dmitrievich Orzhikh, decided to transfer the organization's activities to Shanghai⁶³. Subsequently, the principal leaders of the Russian revolutionary émigré community left East Asia altogether. Orzhikh departed for Argentina, while Nikolai Konstantinovich Sudzilowsky, leader of the Social Democratic émigré group, relocated to the Philippines. In August 1913, an agent of the Nikolsk-Ussuriysky detective post operating under the codename "Teacher" reported that no organized revolutionary groups remained either in Shanghai or in Nagasaki; what survived were merely the powerless remnants of the organizations formerly assembled by Orzhikh and Sudzilowsky⁶⁴. Their weakness, however, did not diminish the Section's determination to keep them under observation.

In November 1913, a Korean named Han-Ki-ton approached the Russian Consulate in Shanghai requesting financial assistance⁶⁵. To the Vladivostok Section, however, he was better known under the

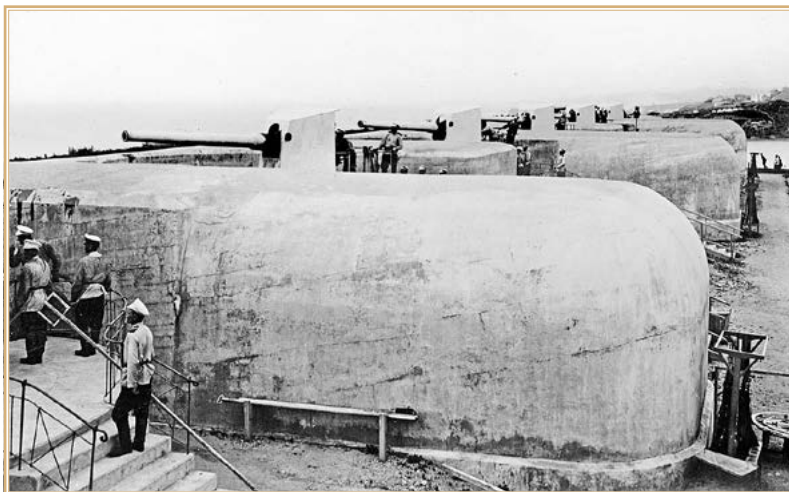
⁶¹ Аганов В.Л., Дударенок С.М. Записка начальника владивостокского охранного отделения. Документы Российского государственного исторического архива Дальнего Востока. 1913 г. // Исторический архив. 2016. № 1. С. 155.

⁶² РГИА ДВ. Ф. 536. Оп. 2. Д. 1. Л. 14.

⁶³ Ibid. Л. 99.

⁶⁴ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 243. Д. 9ч. 64 л. Б. Л. 97.

⁶⁵ ГАИО. Ф. 600. Оп. 1. Д. 766. Л. 47.



Innokentyevskaya Battery, Vladivostok. Canet guns.

Photograph, late nineteenth century.

From the collection of the Alexander Solzhenitsyn House of Russia Abroad

codename “Poputchik” (“The Fellow Traveler”), serving as its confidential agent among the Russian revolutionary émigrés in Shanghai. Captain Lalevich complained to his superiors in Irkutsk that “Poputchik” had repeatedly failed to maintain regular contact and that, because of the difficulties of postal communication between Russia and China, it had become impossible to pay him consistently for his services⁶⁶. After the Revolution, Han-Ki-ton was arrested and tried as a former Security Section agent. During the proceedings it emerged that he had originally worked for the political police in Nagasaki before being transferred to Shanghai, where he remained active from July until December 1913, when he was dismissed because of his persistent failure to observe communication procedures. In 1927, he was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment under conditions of strict solitary confinement⁶⁷.

The difficulties surrounding “Poputchik” prompted Lalevich to seek a replacement. His preferred candidate was another confidential operative, Anatoly Aleksandrovich Kaigorodtsev, better known in Vladivostok under the alias Andrei Vasilyevich Sikorsky. A former amateur actor and journalist for the newspaper *Priamursky Krai*, Kaigorodtsev possessed an adventurous and unconventional character.

⁶⁶ Ibid. Л. 50.

⁶⁷ Известия. № 66. 1927.

His biography was remarkable. A cousin of the Socialist Revolutionary terrorist Ivan Kalyaev, Kaigorodtsev had joined the Socialist Revolutionary Party, been arrested, and exiled to Nolinsk in Vyatka Governorate, from where he escaped to the Russian Far East. Arrested again in Vladivostok in 1909, he agreed to cooperate with the Security Section and was recruited under the codename “Olnem”. His duties included gathering intelligence on the press as well as on Socialist Revolutionary and Social Democratic organizations⁶⁸. Lalevich strongly recommended “Olnem” for assignment to Shanghai, emphasizing the extensive network of contacts that would support his cover. Among these were Ya.G. Shustov, a Social Democrat serving as assistant manager of the Shanghai branch of the Russo-Asiatic Bank; V.D. Dmitrienko, a Socialist Revolutionary and barrister who had acted as legal representative for the millionaire Vladivostok merchant Demby, of mixed British and Japanese ancestry; and acquaintances within the trading house Ivan Churin & Co., the Vladivostok branch of the Russo-Asiatic Bank, and the Volunteer Fleet shipping company. To provide himself with a legitimate public identity, Olnem intended to work as a journalist for the newspapers *Dalekaya Okraina*, *Primorsky Krai*, *Novaya Zhizn*, and *Priamurye*⁶⁹.

Despite these impressive credentials and the carefully constructed operational legend, Colonel Aleksei Vasilyev, head of the East Siberian Regional Security Section, rejected Lalevich’s proposal, stating simply that he knew Olnem only from an unfavorable perspective⁷⁰. Instead of Shanghai, Olnem was dispatched on a mission to establish clandestine contacts in Baku.

The complicated history of Poputchik and the unsuccessful attempt to replace him with Olnem demonstrates not only the determination of the Vladivostok Security Section to monitor the Russian émigré community in Shanghai but also the remarkably close ties connecting Shanghai and Vladivostok. The operational legend devised for Olnem relied upon banking, commercial, journalistic, and transportation networks linking the two cities, illustrating the intensity of their mutual connections. The sustained interest in the Russian colony at Shanghai

⁶⁸ ГА РФ. Ф. 4888. Оп. 5. Д. 605. Л. 12.

⁶⁹ РГИА ДВ. Ф. 536. Оп. 2. Д. 11. Л. 74.

⁷⁰ Ibid. Л. 78.

reflected the conviction of the leadership of the East Siberian Regional Security Section that, amid the revival of revolutionary activity in European Russia, Siberia and the Far East would increasingly serve as channels for importing revolutionary literature from Asia⁷¹. According to the findings of the Soviet court, Poputchik had monitored the revolutionary Pisarenko in Nagasaki, as well as the revolutionaries Vitkop, Dzherebovsky, and Popov in Shanghai⁷².

Between 12 September and 15 October 1913, Colonel Vasilyev himself undertook an inspection tour of Shanghai and Nagasaki. In his report, he noted that during the summer a Russian revolutionary named Pisarenko had arrived in Nagasaki from Australia and established contact with representatives of the Chinese revolutionary organization the Kuomintang⁷³. In Shanghai, Vasilyev identified as the principal figures of the Russian revolutionary colony the fugitive Russian officer Dzherebovsky, Moishe Dobkin, an employee of the Chinese Maritime Customs who operated under the alias Konstantin Popov, and Vitkop, a trafficker in women⁷⁴. Significantly, all of these individuals also appeared in the reports submitted by Poputchik⁷⁵, demonstrating that both the agent and his handler, Lalevich, had been highly effective in identifying the leading personalities of the Russian revolutionary colony in Shanghai.

The Soviet historian Nikolai Eroshkin, in his influential *History of the State Institutions of Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, argued that the principal method employed by the Police Department and its subordinate Security sections consisted of the extensive use of secret agents, which he characterized as “provocation”⁷⁶. In practice, however, the principal criterion by which officers of the Security Departments were evaluated was not the number of arrests they made but rather the number of

⁷¹ Иванов А.А., Кузнецов С.И. Документы ГАИО о создании в начале XX в. в Китае и Японии центров поддержки русского революционного движения // Вестник БНЦ СО РАН. 2021. № 4 (44). С. 103.

⁷² Известия. № 66. 1927.

⁷³ Иванов А.А., Кузнецов С.И. Документы ГАИО о создании в начале XX в. в Китае и Японии центров поддержки русского революционного движения // Вестник БНЦ СО РАН. 2021. № 4 (44). С. 104.

⁷⁴ Ibid. С. 105.

⁷⁵ ГАИО. Ф. 600. Оп. 1. Д. 766. Л. 47а1–47а6.

⁷⁶ Ерошкин Н.П. История государственных учреждений дореволюционной России. М.: РГГУ, 2008. С. 296.

crimes prevented and the proportion of arrests that ultimately resulted in successful prosecution⁷⁷. Judged by these standards, the Vladivostok Security Section must be regarded as an effective institution. It maintained surveillance over virtually every manifestation of political and public life within the region – from attempts to organize clandestine societies to the activities of individual revolutionaries – not only in Vladivostok itself but also in neighboring foreign cities with significant Russian communities. The Section's apparent passivity reflected not institutional weakness but rather the small size, fragmentation, and consequently limited danger posed by the revolutionary movement in the Priamur region, China, and Japan.

The Section's activities extended beyond political surveillance to encompass ordinary corruption as well. An intercepted letter in the autumn of 1913 revealed that Viktor Guzevich, Chairman of the Vladivostok District Court, issued certificates authorizing legal practice even to completely illiterate applicants. Vladimir Povalo-Shvykovsky, a private attorney in Nikolsk-Ussuriysky, allegedly employed bribery to secure favorable judicial decisions with the assistance of court bailiff Mikhail Barabash and Ekaterina Alekseeva, the wife of a local justice of the peace. Meanwhile, Pantelei Popovich, secretary of the Vladivostok District Court, accepted bribes in exchange for providing lawyers with access to case files and permitting the falsification of judicial documents. Information concerning these abuses was forwarded to the Minister of Justice, Ivan Shcheglovitov⁷⁸.

The effectiveness of this system depended largely upon the officers who served in the Vladivostok Security Section. The traditional image of gendarme officers engaged in political investigations was far from uniformly positive. Reflecting on the assassination of Pyotr Stolypin, Vladimir Dzhunkovsky later argued in his memoirs that one of the principal weaknesses of the Security Sections lay in the fact that they were headed by young officers lacking sufficient moral integrity⁷⁹. Pavel Kurlov, who had served as Assistant Minister of the Interior and

⁷⁷ Перегудова З.И. Политический сыск России (1880–1917). М.: Российская политическая энциклопедия (РОССПЭН), 2013. С. 135.

⁷⁸ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 243. Д. 20ч. 64 л. Б. л. 123–124.

⁷⁹ Джунковский В.Ф. Воспоминания. Т. 2. М.: Изд-во им. Сабашниковых, 1997. С. 605.

Commander of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes before his dismissal following Stolypin's murder, similarly complained that officers engaged in political investigations regarded themselves as occupying an exceptional position and frequently ignored both local civil authorities and the normal military chain of command⁸⁰. In October 1911, the Deputy Director of the Police Department, Sergei Vissarionov, proposed assigning young officers to Security Sections in order that they might acquire practical experience before assuming command of such institutions⁸¹.

The officer corps of the Vladivostok Security Section during the period under consideration embodied many of these characteristics. Its members were generally young officers who did not always observe formal administrative hierarchies and who on more than one occasion faced accusations of improper conduct.

From March 1913 onward, the Section was commanded by Captain Lalevich. The son of a landed proprietor from Bessarabia, he was born on 7 March 1880. After graduating from the Vladimir Cadet Corps in Kyiv and the Pavlov Military School with first-class honors, he received his commission in the 73rd Crimea Infantry Regiment⁸². In July 1904, Lalevich transferred to the 148th Caspian Infantry Regiment, with which he served during the Russo-Japanese War⁸³. Among his fellow officers was V.V. Vladimirov, who would later become one of the most distinguished gendarme officers and who was, during the First World War, Head the Special Section of the Baltic Fleet Headquarters. For his conduct in combat, Lalevich received the Order of St. Anna, Fourth Class, with the inscription "For Bravery", as well as the Order of St. Stanislaus, Third Class⁸⁴. Although serving as aide-de-camp to the commander of the regiment's Fourth Battalion, he repeatedly volunteered for reconnaissance raids and participated in firefights with advanced Japanese detachments. During the Battle of Mukden, he suffered a severe

⁸⁰ Курлов П.Г. Гибель императорской России. М.: Современник, 1992. С. 86.

⁸¹ Политическая полиция России между реформами. От В.К. Плеве до В.Ф. Джунковского. Сб. документов / Вступ. ст., сост. и коммент. Е.И. Щербакова. М.: АИРО-XXI; СПб.: Алетейя, 2021. С. 225.

⁸² Список общего состава чинов Отдельного корпуса жандармов, исправлен по 13 октября 1911 г. СПб., 1911. С. 664.

⁸³ Русский инвалид. № 148. 08.07.1904.

⁸⁴ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 17. Д. 359. Л. 557 об.



Vladivostok Police Administration. Early twentieth-century postcard.

From open sources

concussion from an artillery explosion and was evacuated to Russia for treatment. Following his recovery, he was temporarily assigned to the Irkutsk Local Brigade, from which he submitted his application for admission to the Separate Corps of Gendarmes in 1907.

Lalevich explained that his desire to leave the regular army stemmed from deteriorating health, which no longer permitted him to perform active field service. In addition to the lingering effects of his wartime concussion, he suffered from a congenital heart condition⁸⁵. His superiors consistently described him as a capable, conscientious, and morally upright officer, although they also remarked upon his frail appearance, unimposing physique, and short stature. After completing the preparatory courses at the Headquarters of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes, Lieutenant Lalevich was attached to the Tver Provincial Gendarme Directorate. While serving in Tver, he married Natalia Shlikhting (Schlichting), daughter of the Directorate's commander, Major General Vasily Shlikhting⁸⁶. Through this marriage he became connected to a wider family network within the Corps of Gendarmes. His brothers-in-law included Anton Shlikhting, who served in the Railway Gendarmerie and had been Assistant Chief of the Turkestan Regional Security

⁸⁵ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 2. Д. 11431. Л. 11 об.

⁸⁶ Ibid. Оп. 17. Д. 359. Л. 561.

Section between 1909 and 1911, and Viktor Shlikhting, an officer of the St. Petersburg Gendarme Division.

As in the Imperial Guard, close family connections among officers of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes were commonplace, giving rise to a number of enduring gendarme family dynasties.

After his service in Tver, Lalevich was assigned to the Novorossiysk Detective Post and was subsequently attached to the Astrakhan Provincial Gendarme Directorate to conduct investigations into political offenses, for which he was awarded the Order of St. Anna, Third Class⁸⁷. During his service in Astrakhan, Lalevich became the godfather of Maria, daughter of the Head of the Provincial Gendarme Directorate, Colonel Nikolai Burago, who was born on 20 June 1910⁸⁸. This episode demonstrates that the young officer enjoyed the confidence of his superiors, having been accorded such an honor. At the same time, it illustrates the formation of informal patronage networks within the Separate Corps of Gendarmes. It was also in Astrakhan, during the summer of 1911, that Lalevich received an offer to transfer to Vladivostok as Assistant Chief of the Security Section, which he readily accepted. He arrived in Primorskaya Oblast in November and immediately immersed himself in his new duties. During the investigation of the “Military Union of the Vladivostok Fortress”, it was Lalevich who personally conducted interrogations and forensic examinations⁸⁹. In November 1912, he participated in organizing the arrest of striking shop assistants employed by the Urin Brothers trading firm. After briefing the police officers involved in the operation, Lalevich left on official business and was knocked down by a powerful gust of wind, suffering a serious leg injury involving torn ligaments and multiple ruptures. Remarkably, this accident was officially recognized as a service-related wound and was entered into his service record accordingly. During his subsequent medical treatment, physicians also diagnosed him with neurosyphilis of the spinal cord⁹⁰. Among the symptoms of this illness are heightened irritability and suspiciousness, characteristics that may have influenced his personality in later years.

⁸⁷ Русский инвалид, № 86, 18.04.1910.

⁸⁸ Государственный архив Астраханской области (ГААО). Ф. 741. Оп. 3. Д. 80. Л. 8.

⁸⁹ РГИА ДВ. Ф. 536. Оп. 1. Д. 21. Л. 168.

⁹⁰ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 2. Д. 18556. Л. 10.

By the summer of 1913, after assuming command of the Vladivostok Security Section, Lalevich accused his predecessor, Captain Konstantin Nagrodsky, of embezzling departmental funds⁹¹. A brief investigation demonstrated that the accusation was entirely unfounded and stemmed from the personal resentment of the section's clerk, Emelyan Koverdinsky, who had taken offense because Nagrodsky had failed to pay him for helping pack his belongings before his transfer. No one investigated why Lalevich chose to support the accusation of a clerical employee against his former commander and fellow gendarme officer. V.F. Dzhunkovsky merely instructed that Lalevich be formally reminded that such personal quarrels among officers of the Corps were unacceptable, but no disciplinary or criminal sanctions followed⁹². Nevertheless, the episode appears to have established Lalevich's reputation as a difficult and quarrelsome officer. In December 1913, Lalevich forwarded a letter intercepted by the Vladivostok Security Section to Lieutenant Colonel Sizykh, Chief of the Middle Asian Railway Gendarme Police Directorate. Sizykh replied that the matter lay outside his jurisdiction and should instead be referred to the Turkestan Regional Security Section. Lalevich's response prompted the Police Department to submit a memorandum to the Headquarters of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes stating: "The sharpness and obvious disrespect shown toward Lieutenant Colonel Sizykh, who is his superior in rank, office, and position, are intolerable from the standpoint of the disciplinary regulations. When such conduct is carried over into official correspondence, it breeds mutual ill will and thereby exerts a highly detrimental influence upon the success of our common work [...] I consider it necessary to add that this incident is by no means an isolated example of the incompatibility of character and excessive self-confidence displayed by this junior officer"⁹³.

Despite these criticisms, Lalevich's career continued to advance. In the spring of 1914, he was awarded the Order of St. Stanislaus, Second Class⁹⁴. This distinction may partly be explained by the patronage

⁹¹ Ibid. Оп. 6. Д. 2951. Л. 3.

⁹² Ibid. Л. 52.

⁹³ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 316. Д. 51ч. 64. Л. 136.

⁹⁴ Русский инвалид, № 76. 06.04.1914.

of his father-in-law, Major General Shlikhting, himself a senior gendarme officer. Following an inspection conducted by the Chief of the East Siberian Regional Security Section in December 1913, the Vladivostok *Okhrana* received the following assessment: secret agent network – satisfactory; postal surveillance – good; physical surveillance – satisfactory; office administration and record keeping – in proper order. The principal shortcomings identified were the insufficient recruitment of new informants and the absence of effective intelligence on revolutionary organizations in the rural districts of Primorskaya Oblast⁹⁵. These criticisms, however, were not entirely fair. The limited number of agents and the absence of informants in rural areas reflected the immense territory under the Section's responsibility, the scattered settlements hidden throughout the taiga – many of them only temporary – and the simple fact that the Section lacked sufficient personnel to monitor such an extensive region.

From March 1913 onward, Lalevich's deputy was Captain Nikolai Vasilyevich Galyavin, who in many respects represented his complete opposite. Whereas Lalevich was a nobleman from Bessarabia, short in stature and frail in appearance, Galyavin came from a middle-class family in Rostov, Yaroslavl Governorate, possessed a tall and commanding physique, and was consistently described as being in excellent health⁹⁶. While Lalevich had transferred to the Corps of Gendarmes because his medical condition prevented further military service, Galyavin had been compelled to leave his regiment after beginning an affair with the wife of a fellow officer, Serafima Kavesskaya. As soon as her divorce was finalized, Galyavin married her. Despite these differences, the two officers shared remarkably similar military backgrounds. Both had served in the 148th Caspian Infantry Regiment during the Russo-Japanese War, both had participated in reconnaissance operations and combat, and both had received decorations for bravery. Lalevich had served as battalion commander's aide-de-camp, whereas Galyavin had commanded the regiment's volunteer reconnaissance detachment.

Galyavin entered the Separate Corps of Gendarmes in 1909 and was assigned to the Tambov-Ural Railway Gendarme Police Section.

⁹⁵ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 316. Д. 51ч. 64. Л. 149.

⁹⁶ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 2. Д. 12912. Л. 3.



Celebration of the victory of the February Revolution in Vladivostok. 1917.
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ggbain-24451

In 1910, he was temporarily attached to the Saratov Regional Security Section to receive training in political investigations. There he received an unfavorable evaluation from his superiors, who concluded that despite his diligence and professional abilities, his gentle and shy disposition rendered him unsuited for detective work⁹⁷. Nevertheless, Galyavin was appointed to Vladivostok, where he arrived in July 1913. In his new position, he successfully overcame his earlier timidity. By January 1914, he had recruited Nikifor Poluektov, a committed Marxist and one of the most prominent local socialist activists, as a confidential informant⁹⁸.

The third key figure within the Vladivostok Section was Pyotr Shibkov, a collegiate registrar serving as Officer for Special Assignments. He had begun his career as a district police officer before transferring to the Odessa Security Directorate. He later served as a clerical official in the Samara Provincial Gendarme Directorate, and in 1908 became Officer for Special Assignments and Head of Surveillance Desk of the Chita Security Section. In 1912, he was transferred to Vladivostok to occupy the same position⁹⁹.

Despite what might appear to have been far from an ideal combination of personalities among its officers, the Vladivostok Security Section succeeded in organizing its work so effectively during 1913–1914 that

⁹⁷ Ibid. Ф. 102. Оп. 316. Д. 51ч. 64. Л. 54 об.

⁹⁸ ГАИО. Ф. 600. Оп. 1. Д. 824. Л. 3а.

⁹⁹ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 316. 50ч. 64 т. 1 (1915). Л. 11 об.

when V.F. Dzhunkovsky initiated the liquidation of the regional Security sections, the Vladivostok office was one of the few preserved. Its effectiveness rested on two complementary factors. On the one hand, it possessed experienced personnel with extensive knowledge of political investigations in the Russian Far East, particularly Chief Lalevich and Officer for Special Assignments Shibkov, both of whom were thoroughly familiar with local conditions. On the other hand, although Deputy Chief Nikolai Galyavin initially lacked practical experience in political policing and had previously received unfavorable evaluations, he quickly adapted to the new environment and became an effective investigator.

Lalevich's illness ultimately brought his career to an early end. In May 1914, he was granted a year's medical leave, from which he retired directly in May 1915 with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, settling thereafter in Petrograd. During the summer of 1914, he was succeeded by Captain Ginsburg, former Chief of the Yaroslavl and Tomsk Security Sections, who had most recently commanded the Central Surveillance Detachment of the St. Petersburg Security Section. Lalevich's subsequent fate remains unknown. His deputy transferred to military intelligence during the First World War. During the Russian Civil War, Galyavin served in Admiral Kolchak's forces as Chief of Counterintelligence in Colonel Vrashtil's anti-partisan mounted ranger regiment and, together with several fellow officers, was killed by Red partisans on the Khor River in 1920. Pyotr Shibkov remained with the Vladivostok Security Section until its dissolution in February 1917; nothing is presently known of his subsequent life.

By 1913, the revolutionary upheavals of the previous decade had largely subsided and appeared to belong to a distant past. Despite continued reports from the Police Department, provincial gendarme directorates, and security sections, the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs had become convinced that the principal revolutionary threat had passed and that the remaining network of security sections had become inefficient, excessively bureaucratic, and prone to scandal¹⁰⁰. Consequently, only those sections considered indispensable because of

¹⁰⁰ Ерошкин Н.П. История государственных учреждений дореволюционной России. М.: РГТУ, 2008. С. 303.

their unique strategic circumstances were retained. The experience of the Vladivostok Security Section demonstrates that, at first glance, Dz-hunkovsky's assessment might appear justified. Between March 1913 and July 1914, the Section carried out no mass arrests, uncovered no extensive terrorist conspiracies, and dismantled no major clandestine revolutionary organizations. Yet this was not because such movements were impossible in principle. Rather, the Section's continuous and painstaking surveillance of individuals and small groups effectively prevented anti-government activity from developing into anything more substantial. Although this work appeared routine and often invisible, it reveals the high level of sophistication attained by the Russian Empire's system of political policing. At the same time, the Vladivostok experience exposed the principal weaknesses of that system: a chronic shortage of personnel to cover every sphere of intelligence work and the necessity of balancing the reformist ambitions of the Commander of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes with the operational demands of the Police Department. Even so, senior gendarme officials remained convinced that political surveillance was still inadequate and required constant expansion and improvement. Despite these persistent criticisms, the system continued to function – perhaps in spite of the shortcomings of its officers, or perhaps, paradoxically, because of the very human qualities they brought to their work.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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The Fatal Fur Coat: M.I. Trusevich and the Death of S.N. Myasoedov

Abstract

Drawing on a number of previously unpublished sources, this article uncovers the complex and non-linear connection between two high-profile events of the early twentieth century that occurred eleven years apart: the explosion at the Bolshaya Severnaya Hotel in April 1904 during preparations for an assassination attempt against the Minister of the Interior, Vyacheslav von Plehve, and the execution of Colonel Sergei N. Myasoedov in April 1915 after his conviction for espionage on behalf of Germany. The link between these two tragic episodes was provided by Mikhail I. Trusevich, then Assistant Prosecutor of the St. Petersburg Judicial Chamber and later Director of the Police Department, who was assigned to investigate the 1904 explosion, as well as by the fur coat belonging to the man killed in the blast, which became one of the key pieces of physical evidence in the case. The principal objective of the investigation was to establish the identity of the deceased. Through investigative work carried out in Montreux, Switzerland, and at the border station of



Verzhbolovo, Trusevich succeeded in locating a relative who had accompanied the victim while making purchases. This ultimately led to the identification of the deceased as the Socialist Revolutionary Alexei D. Pokotilov. The negligent handling of this crucial piece of evidence by Myasoedov, who at the time was responsible for gendarmerie supervision at Verzhbolovo, occurred despite repeated instructions from his superiors to provide full assistance to Trusevich. The unfavorable impression of Myasoedov's professionalism that Trusevich formed during the investigation had lasting consequences for the gendarmerie officer's career. It deprived him of corporate support within the service and ultimately made him an easy target for subsequent political intrigue.

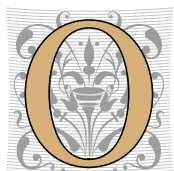
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n the night of April 1, 1904, in a room at the Bolshaya Severnaya Hotel in Moscow, A.D. Pokotilov, a member of the Combat Organization of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, was constructing a bomb intended for the hated Minister of Internal Affairs, von Plehve. Suddenly, the terrorist's hand slipped, a monstrous explosion thundered, and the perpetrator was blown to pieces.

Eleven years later, on April 2, 1915, Gendarme Colonel S.N. Myasoedov, wrongly accused of spying for Germany, was hanged by a court martial in the Warsaw Fortress. It would seem that there could be no connection between these two tragic stories, but in the intricate web of events in the pre-twilight empire, fateful coincidences are not uncommon, and sometimes even inevitable.

The first to suggest the influence of the Severnaya Hotel explosion case on Myasoedov's fate was British researcher William Fuller, but his explanation of the events of 1904 can hardly be considered exhaustive: succumbing to the charm of his hero, he extols his successes, sometimes only hypothetical, and often, without good reason, denounces the offenders of the executed man¹. V.V. Hutarev-Garniшевский, demonstrating a realistic representation of the true qualities of the former railway gendarme², and O.R. Airapetov, who wrote a review of Fuller's work³, also do not provide details of the 1904 incident that so damaged Myasoedov. Nor are they included in A.M. Popov's recent work on the "Myasoedov affair", although there are some hints about what happened⁴.

In fact, Myasoedov, an officer of the 105th Orenburg Infantry Regiment, should not have been assigned to the Separate Corps of

¹ Fuller William. *The Foe Within: Fantasies of Treason and the End of Imperial Russia* (Фуллер У. Внутренний враг: шпиономания и закат императорской России), trans. from English by M. Malikova. М.: Новое литературное обозрение, 2009. С. 40.

² Хутарев-Гарнишевский В.В. Был ли Мясоедов шпионом? // Родина. 2019. № 2. С. 112–115.

³ Айрапетов О.Р., Фуллер У. Внутренний враг: шпиономания и закат императорской России. М., 2009. [Peer review] // Русский сборник. Т. IX. М., 2010. С. 292–335.

⁴ Попов А.М. За два шага до бездны: интриги против военного министра и саморазрушение власти в России 1907–1915 гг. М.: Язуза-каталог, 2023. С. 194.



Bolshaya Severnaya Hotel. Postcard, early twentieth century.

From open sources

Gendarmes at all, since the assessments by his colleagues were far from flawless and contained details of his affair with the married daughter of his superior, Commander of the 17th Army Corps, General N.G. Zalesov⁵, and also contained references to the officer's numerous debts to "various Jewish tailors and moneylenders"⁶. Despite this, Myasoedov was accepted into the Corps, and in 1901 took up the lucrative position of Head of the Verzhbolovo Section of the Gendarme-Police Department of the Northwestern Railways.

In 1907, Myasoedov left Verzhbolovo and the Gendarme Corps amidst scandal. According to Fuller, shortly before this, the Ministry of Internal Affairs had received a denunciation accusing the border station's management of aiding smugglers. Consequently, Cornet L.E. Ponomarev⁷ arrived in Verzhbolovo to conduct an inspection; he was a hereditary gendarme (son of a sergeant major), a former student

⁵ Лавренова А.М. Отдельный корпус жандармов и российское общество в 1880–1917 гг.: дис. ... канд. ист. наук. М., 2018. С. 50; Хутарев-Гарнишевский В.В. *Op. cit.* С. 112–115.

⁶ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 2. Д. 6991. Л. 7–11.

⁷ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 316. ОО. 1906 г. Д. 1020; Д. 635, 635. Т. 2, 635. Т. 3; 1-е Д-во. 1907 г. Оп. 27. Д. 240; Ф. 110. Оп. 6. Д. 1636 а.



Alexei Dmitrievich Pokotilov.

From open sources

at the Mining Institute and a failed secret agent⁸. Unable to obtain evidence, he decided to fabricate it, but was exposed by Myasoedov in court. Myasoedov's testimony was deemed “tactless” by his superiors, especially since his statement caused a media frenzy painful for the Department⁹. Stolypin ordered Myasoedov transferred “no closer than the meridian of Samara”, but the former felt insulted and chose to leave the service altogether.

After retiring, Myasoedov pursued entrepreneurship, but an acquaintance with War Minister V.A. Sukhomlinov inspired him to seek reinstatement in 1911 and transfer to the War Ministry. His happiness was short-lived, though, as already in 1912, Myasoedov found himself embroiled in a major intrigue plotted by A.I. Guchkov against the War Minister. Wishing to stir up trouble, the Octobrist leader instigated a persecution of Myasoedov, accusing him of spying for Germany. The scandal was a resounding success, culminating in a duel in April 1912¹⁰. The short-sighted gendarme's bullet did not cause any harm to his opponent, which, however, did not prevent him from appearing in the Duma the next day with his arm in a sling¹¹.

⁸ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. ОО. 1902 г. Оп. 316. Д. 1536.

⁹ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. ОО. 1910 г. Оп. 316. Д. 75. Л. 49.

¹⁰ Лавренова А.М. Тонкая синяя линия: жандармы и общество на закате империи. М., 2023. С. 295–296.

¹¹ Фуллер У. Опр. cit. С. 113.



Guchkov's efforts were not in vain: the media frenzy, coupled with the perennial prejudice of the average person against the “blue uniforms”, ensured that the public accepted the flimsy and unsubstantiated accusations against Myasoedov at face value without further ado. That's why, when in 1915, following the defeats in East Prussia, General Headquarters needed a scapegoat, the dubious testimony of Second Lieutenant Ya.P. Kolakovsky, who claimed that the Germans who had recruited him had recommended he contact Myasoedov by searching for him in the capital's restaurants, served as the basis for his dreadful sentence.

Many of the high-ranking officials of the Separate Gendarme Corps did not believe in the veracity of the version about treason¹², while the military did not doubt the betrayal of the gendarmerie officer¹³. Incidentally, Myasoedov was not the only representative of the “blue uniforms” to face such accusations. For example, Captain M.V. von Plotto, Assistant to the Head of the Courland Provincial Gendarme Directorate, was accused of conspiring with the Baltic barons¹⁴, who allegedly hosted German airplanes, and Assistant to the Head of the Finnish Gendarme Directorate, Lieutenant Colonel N.N. Kornilov, was accused of assisting the espionage activities of the German consul in Tornio¹⁵. As is well known, despite the baselessness of the accusations, Myasoedov was hanged on the personal orders of Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich.

In the gallery of enemies of the executed man, there is one figure who became truly fatal for him, a figure due to whose influence Myasoedov lost the corporate solidarity of his colleagues and the patronage of his superiors, which, in turn, made him first an easy prey for Guchkov, and then a victim, given over to slaughter. In a report to P.A. Stolypin dated September 1, 1909, Myasoedov claimed that he owed the ruin of his career to M.I. Trusevich, whose resignation as Director of the Police

¹² Глобачев К.И. Правда о русской революции: Воспоминания бывшего начальника Петроградского охранного отделения / Под ред. З.И. Перегудовой; сост.: З.И. Перегудова, Дж. Дейли, В.Г. Маринич. М., 2009. С. 76–79; Спиридович А.И. Великая война и Февральская революция 1914–1917 годов. Кн. 1. Нью-Йорк: Всеславянское изд-во, 1960. С. 106–111.

¹³ Деникин А.И. Путь русского офицера. М.: ВАГРИУС, 2002. С. 281.

¹⁴ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 2. Д. 19495.

¹⁵ ГА РФ. Ф. 124. Оп. 69. Д. 466.



Maximilian Ivanovich Trusevich.
From open sources

Department in 1909 prompted Myasoedov to attempt to reinstate himself in the Gendarme Corps. Myasoedov wrote that he had been repeatedly warned at Corps Headquarters that Trusevich felt hostility toward him saying he would never forget how he had been treated in Verzhbolovo. “I have never known and do not know any guilt toward Trusevich”, Myasoedov wrote, asserting that his colleague, Colonel Schultz, who later died in the explosion of Stolypin's dacha on Aptekarsky Island, was somehow involved. According to Myasoedov, Schultz, a lawyer, “due to some corporate grievances, treated Trusevich less than kindly”. Furthermore, Trusevich allegedly perceived mockery in the actions of the head of the Verzhbolovo section, which manifested itself in the fact that Myasoedov sent him a dirty, torn fur coat, material evidence, without packaging, thereby embarrassing him in front of officers of the St. Petersburg State Gendarme Directorate¹⁶. At the height of the Guchkov campaign, the 1909 petition leaked to the press, and the *Birzhevye Vedomosti* newspaper exercised its eloquence: “Gogol's hero was ruined by a goose, Myasoedov by a fur coat! Yes, yes, a simple one, and, what's more, an old, worn-out fur coat...”¹⁷

¹⁶ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. ОО. 1910 г. Оп. 316. Д. 75. Л. 2 об., 82, 91.

¹⁷ Биржевые ведомости № 92. 19 апреля 1912 г.



The bitter irony of fate was that this was indeed the case. The fur coat in question belonged to the terrorist killed by his own bomb and was one of the few pieces of evidence in the case. After the explosion, the government was left with only false documents in the name of Arkady Petrovich Kazanov, a mutilated corpse, and some charred clothing, which needed to be used to establish the identity of the deceased and the organization behind him. Maximilian Ivanovich Trusevich, then Assistant Prosecutor of the St. Petersburg Judicial Chamber, played a key role in this investigation. The only lead was a stamp on the buttons of the deceased's trousers, which identified a tailor from a resort town on the shores of Lake Geneva. Trusevich hastily departed for Switzerland, and the best forces of the Russian political police were dispatched to assist him: L.A. Rataev, head of the Foreign Agents Service of the Police Department, was dispatched from Paris to Geneva. At that time, he was the handler of the notorious Azef, assisted by the head of the Berlin Intelligence Office, A.M. Garting. The investigation was overseen by the Director of the Police Department, A.A. Lopukhin, and the Prosecutor of the St. Petersburg Judicial Chamber, E.I. Vuich.

Trusevich first established that the terrorist, who had lived on the farm of the émigré E.E. Lazarev, had been visited by a relative named Mikhailov, who had made purchases with him. On April 22, 1904, the assistant prosecutor went to Verzhbolovo, where he hoped to identify this individual by his customs declaration. He succeeded: the bomber's relative turned out to be a clerk at the Dvoryansky Bank, colleague councilor D.A. Mikhailov. He was quickly found and interrogated, which led to the discovery of the identity of the deceased. He turned out to be Mikhailov's wife's brother, A.D. Pokotilov. Interestingly, Azef, Head of the Combat Organization of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, had been deceiving his handler Rataev until the very end and revealed Pokotilov's name only when further concealment not only made no sense but also threatened to lose the trust of his handler¹⁸.

¹⁸ See: Лавренова А.М., Трухин М.Д. Холодная весна 1904 г.: дело о взрыве в «Северной гостинице», швейцарский вояж М.И. Трусевича и кальсоны Покотилова // Ежегодник Государственного архива РФ: публикации, исследования, рецензии [2024] / Гл. ред. С.В. Мироненко. М., 2024. С. 58–96.



Sergei Nikolaevich Myasoedov.
From open sources

There's little doubt that, at the height of the Socialist Revolutionary Party's hunt for the Minister of Internal Affairs, there was no investigation more important than the Severnaya Hotel explosion. Although Myasoedov wasn't privy to its details, as a gendarme officer, he couldn't help but understand the gravity of Trusevich's mission and the significance of the material evidence, especially since he'd been repeatedly informed of this by individuals whose orders he should have heeded. On April 5, Myasoedov received a telegram from Lopukhin, Director of the Police Department, about the need to "assist Assistant Prosecutor Trusevich, who was sent abroad on a secret mission, so that Prussian border authorities wouldn't inspect his baggage"¹⁹. On April 7, Chief of Verzhbolovo gendarmes was sent a bundle of material evidence, which he was ordered to send further to Geneva, to Rataev²⁰. On April 22, he again received²¹ telegram from Lopukhin, informing him of Trusevich's imminent arrival with a repeated

¹⁹ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. ОО. 1904 г. Оп. 232. Л. 155. А. 80.

²⁰ Ibid. Л. 102–103.

²¹ Ibid. Л. 170.



request for assistance. Myasoedov apparently took this request lightly. In a published report dated May 21, 1904, Trusevich pointed out to Lopukhin Lieutenant Colonel Myasoedov's disregard for his official duties and his unacceptable manner of communicating with an official. However, the incident had no formal consequences at the time.

Thus, Trusevich's dislike of Myasoedov was not due to his overly vulnerable pride, but rather simply to his own judgment of the railway gendarme officer's professional qualities. His vibrant social life and the favor of foreign crowned heads passing through the border station, who generously showered Myasoedov with their countries' medals²², apparently contributed to his loss of touch with reality and became the cause of his defiantly reckless behavior, which ultimately led him to such a disastrous end.

State Archives of the Russian Federation.

Ф. 102. ОО. 1904 г. Он. 232. Д. 155. м. 2. Л. 29—30.

*Manuscript. On the letterhead of the Assistant Prosecutor
of the St. Petersburg Judicial Chamber.*

**Letter from Assistant Prosecutor of the St. Petersburg Judicial
Chamber M.I. Trusevich to Director of the Police Department
A.A. Lopukhin regarding Lieutenant Colonel S.N. Myasoedov's
improper handling of material evidence in the case of the
explosion at the Severnaya Hotel. May 21, 1904.**

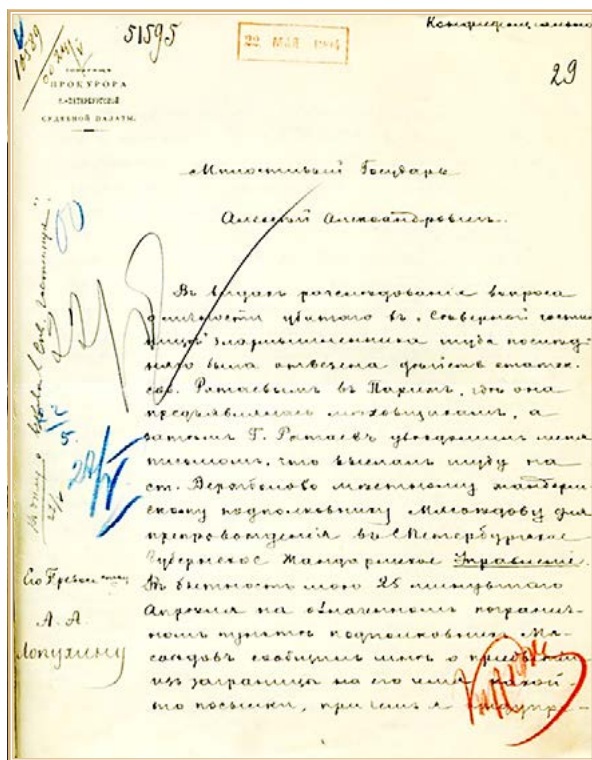
Confidentially

To His Excellency A.A. Lopukhin

Dear Sir Alexei Alexandrovich,

In order to investigate the identity of the criminal killed in the Severnaya Hotel, the latter's fur coat was taken by the act[ual] st[ate] coun[cilor] Rataev to Paris, where it was presented to furriers, and

²² Лавренова А.М. Жандармский надзор в Вержболово накануне Первой мировой войны // Транспортные коммуникации Российской империи в годы Первой мировой войны: Материалы Международного круглого стола, 28 января 2014 г. / Сост. А.С. Сенин, Л.Д. Шаповалова. СПб.: Нестор-История, 2014. С. 175.



Memorandum concerning a fur coat.
Государственный архив РФ. Ф. 102. ОО. 1904 г.
Оп. 232 Д.155. т. 2 Л. 29

then Mr. Rataev informed me by letter that he had sent the fur coat to the Verzhbolovo station to the local gendarme lieutenant colonel Myasoedov for forwarding to the St. Petersburg provincial gendarme office. During my stay on the 25th of last April at the said border post, Lieutenant Colonel Myasoedov informed me of the arrival of some parcel from abroad addressed to him (and I had warned him about the upcoming delivery to him from L.A. Rataev of the aforementioned fur coat, which constituted material evidence in the case, and about the need to send it to the said gendarmerie office).

On the 20th of May, a city messenger came to this office, having with him the aforementioned fur coat, wrapped in paper, and an opened letter, without an envelope, on an official blank: "Sergey Nikolaevich Myasoedov", addressed to Vladimir Sergeevich²³, whom

²³ Probably Lieutenant Colonel Starov, Chief of Section at the Warsaw Station. (Ed. note.)



Mr. Myasoedov asks to “transfer this fur coat to Trusevich”. Having received the coat and the letter, the gendarme non-commissioned officers began a futile search for “Vladimir Sergeevich”, apparently embarrassed to approach me directly with the scorched and torn coat, not knowing its connection to any case, as it was not indicated in the rather strange manner of its shipment. Having confirmed, however, that there was no “Vladimir Sergeevich” at the office, the sergeant showed me the aforementioned note, the significance of which I only grasped when I saw the coat and realized that in this case, the gendarme officers were sending material evidence to an official of an outside agency. Fortunately, the glove of the deceased, which was in the coat's pocket, was not lost.

I consider it my duty to bring the above to the attention of Your Excellency, and I most humbly request you to accept the assurance of my full respect and complete readiness to be of service to you.

M. Trusevich

May 21, 1904

Note: re: the case of the Sev[ernaya] Hotel explosion 27/V.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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Original paper



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The Life, Work, and Extraordinary Adventures of the Secret Agent Guytov in Revolutionary Russia

Abstract

This article examines the practices of undercover intelligence work and the relationships between informants and their handlers through the career of the secret agent Alexander I. Guytov. The subject was selected because of the exceptional survival of a comprehensive body of archival materials, including intelligence reports, the agent's personal file, investigative records, and official correspondence. These sources make it possible to reconstruct Guytov's biography not only during his pre-revolutionary collaboration with the St. Petersburg Security Section, the Kronstadt Gendarmerie Administration, and other organs of the political police, but also throughout the Revolution of 1917 and the Russian Civil War. The article demonstrates the practical methods by which the political police managed their secret agents, methods that often differed substantially from those prescribed in official regulations and instructions. It also analyzes the causes of informants' operational failures. Having become one of the most effective secret agents operating within the Baltic Fleet, Guytov subsequently built a remarkable career within the revolutionary

authorities of Kronstadt, eventually joining the leadership of the local Soviet. Rather than concealing his previous association with the political police, the former informant took the extraordinary step of securing the release of his former handlers from prison after the Revolution. Guytov's case is particularly noteworthy because he appears to have been the only known gendarmerie informant who later pursued a successful career in the intelligence service of the White movement, serving as the head of an intelligence post within the Armed Forces of South Russia. Employing a biographical approach, the article uses the experience of a single individual to explore broader historical questions, including methods of recruiting, supervising, and protecting secret agents, the causes of their operational failures, and the difficult choices they faced following the collapse of the Russian Empire.

Keywords:

A.I. Guytov; V.V. Vladimirov; Political surveillance; Secret agents; Kronstadt; Gendarmerie; February Revolution; Russian Civil War; Armed Forces of South Russia; Counterintelligence

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ecret police agents — also known as informants or agent provocateurs — formed the backbone of the political police's investigative work, alongside postal censors who intercepted correspondence, surveillance operatives (*filery*),

and the Bertillon system of criminal identification. The importance of this agent network can hardly be overstated. It was on the basis of agents' reports that security officers conducted both criminal investigations and broader intelligence analysis: they investigated specific political offenses, assessed public opinion, and developed strategies for combating revolutionary movements and the legal opposition. Paradoxically, however, the individuals who served as secret agents have received remarkably little attention from historians. One might object by pointing to Azef, the subject of several books and dozens of articles and a figure familiar even to schoolchildren. Yet Azef is, unfortunately, precisely the exception that proves the rule. Outside the relatively small circle of scholars specializing in revolutionary movements and the political police, few professional historians could name many secret informants. They might recall Yevno Azef, Roman Malinovsky, or Zinaida Zhuchenko-Gerngross, but little beyond that. We cannot even determine the exact number of secret agents who served in the security sections and gendarme administrations, owing to substantial methodological difficulties in working with the surviving documentary evidence.

The study of secret agents naturally lends itself to a biographical approach. Such an approach makes it possible not only to reconstruct the practical realities of undercover work – which often diverged considerably from the official instructions issued by the Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs – but also to uncover the moral values and behavioral strategies of the agents themselves. These strategies are of particular scholarly interest in the context of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Civil War, when former informants suddenly faced the danger of exposure. They were forced to make existential choices: to hide from the revolutionary authorities in order to preserve their lives and freedom, to join the counterrevolutionary forces, or, conversely, to enter the service of the new revolutionary regime. Some former informants, accustomed to leading double lives and playing multiple roles, attempted all three courses simultaneously.

One such agent, Alexander Ivanovich Guytov, is the focus of this article. Before the Revolution, he spent ten consecutive years working as a secret informant for the gendarmerie and the *Okhrana* in St. Petersburg, Baku, Tiflis, London, and Kronstadt, betraying dozens of his fellow revolutionaries to the authorities. He lived under seven different

surnames and aliases and possessed several genuine passports issued in different names. After the Revolution, he joined the leadership of the Kronstadt Soviet and served on the commission investigating the alleged “crimes” of the tsarist police. In that capacity, he interrogated – and ultimately secured the release of – the very gendarme officers who had once supervised him in the Kronstadt Gendarme Administration. He attempted to build a revolutionary career before trying to flee Kronstadt, but was exposed and arrested by the revolutionary authorities. Remarkably, despite his position as a traitor to the revolutionary cause, he behaved with considerable audacity during the investigation. Guytov nevertheless managed to evade punishment, escaped to southern Russia, entered the counterintelligence service of the Volunteer Army, earned the confidence of his superiors, and eventually became head of one of the intelligence sections of the Armed Forces of South Russia.

Guytov’s activities have attracted some scholarly attention. The present author has previously discussed him in the context of the work of his intelligence handler, Lieutenant Colonel V.V. Vladimirov¹. Petersburg historian P.N. Gordeev² has examined in detail the circumstances surrounding Guytov’s arrest in 1917, while historian of the Russian security services N.S. Kirmel³ mentions him briefly in connection with the Civil War. Nevertheless, no comprehensive scholarly study has yet been devoted to Guytov himself. This is likely due, at least in part, to the poor survival of the archival records of the Kronstadt Gendarme Administration, which complicates research on political policing in Kronstadt and the Baltic Fleet. The archive of this institution, preserved in the Central State Historical Archive of St. Petersburg (Ф. 2087), contains only twenty-one files. For all practical purposes, the archive was either lost or deliberately destroyed. Consequently, the principal source base for this study consists of materials preserved in the State Archive of the Russian Federation and the Russian State Military Archive.

¹ *Хутарев-Гарнишевский В.В. Призраки измены. Русские спецслужбы на Балтике в воспоминаниях подполковника В.В. Владимирова, 1910–1917 гг.: Сборник воспоминаний и документов. М.: «Историческая память», Родина, 2019. С. 34–36, 279.*

² *Гордеев П.Н. Кронштадт и кронштадтцы в 1917 году. СПб.: Изд-во Европейского университета в Санкт-Петербурге, 2024. С. 91–98.*

³ *Кирмель Н.С. Белогвардейские спецслужбы в Гражданской войне. 1918–1922 гг. Монография. М.: Кучково поле, 2008. С. 158.*



Building of the St. Petersburg City Governor's Administration.

Premises of the Security Department. *Postcard, 1896.*

From open sources

All surviving sources identify Alexander Ivanovich Guytov as a member of the petty-bourgeois (*meshchanin*) estate of the town of Novorzhev in Pskov Governorate. Although no dedicated genealogical investigation has been undertaken, the available evidence indicates that the Guytov family belonged to the respectable urban middle class and possessed a degree of financial security. During his first interrogations by members of the Executive Committee of the Kronstadt Soviet in April 1917, Guytov attempted to explain the considerable sums of money at his disposal. Initially, he claimed to be the son of wealthy landowners who supposedly owned 600 *desyatinas* (approximately 655 hectares) of land. During a subsequent interrogation, however, he altered his account, stating that he lived on money received from his grandfather after renouncing his inheritance⁴.

In the 1840s, the Guytovs were modest merchants in Kudever Volost, Novorzhev Uyezd, Pskov Governorate. In the village of Dorozhkovo they owned a house with a small retail shop generating an income of five rubles. The head of the family was merchant Ivan Nikolaevich Guytov. In the mid-1850s he moved to the town of Novorzhev, purchased a house, and transferred from the merchant estate to the urban petty-bourgeois class. The Pskov archives preserve a court file concerning

⁴ ГА РФ. Ф. 1657. Оп. 1. Д. 17. Л. 2–3.

the illicit cohabitation of townsman Ivan Guytov and Alexandra Pastukhovskaya⁵. On the eve of the Revolution, another townsman, Vladimir Petrovich Guytov⁶, owned a house on Novgorod Street in Pskov. It is therefore possible that Alexander Ivanovich's testimony referred to relinquishing his share in the family house in exchange for a cash settlement.

Ivan Nikolaevich's brother, Nikolai Nikolaevich Guytov, enjoyed a measure of local respect. According to M.M. Pakhomenkova, head of the Novorzhev branch of the Pskov Museum-Reserve, he was appointed by the district court as guardian to the young Mikhail Osipovich Menshikov, who would later become one of the leading ideologues of Russian nationalism⁷. Interestingly, Menshikov was educated at the Technical School of the Naval Department in Kronstadt and later published in *Kronshtadtsky Vestnik* and the *Morskaya Gazeta* in St. Petersburg. It is possible that, in gratitude, Menshikov later helped Alexander Ivanovich Guytov obtain employment in the imperial capital. Menshikov undoubtedly maintained connections with the Police Department, the St. Petersburg Security Department, and the provincial gendarme administration, which even assigned him police protection in 1912 as a prominent conservative journalist⁸.

Another link between the Guytov family and the Baltic region also emerges. Between 1896 and 1898, Ivan Silovich Guytov, another close relative of Alexander Ivanovich⁹, served as an officer in the Sveaborg Fortress Infantry Battalion. During the First Russian Revolution, the famous Sveaborg Uprising of July 1906 effectively destroyed Captain Guytov's military career. On 19 July 1906, he commanded the 2nd Company of the Sveaborg Fortress Infantry Regiment on Alexandrovsky Island, where

⁵ ГАПО. Ф. 59. Оп. 3. Д. 20к.

⁶ ГАПО. Ф. 50. Оп. 1. Д. 391.

⁷ Пахоменкова М.М. «Из писем родственников». Эпистолярное творчество Меншикова М.О. [Electronic resource] <https://museumpskov.ru/uploads/library/i2y181y5Ve.pdf>

⁸ Гребенкин А.Н. Деятельность Охранной команды Санкт-Петербургского охранного отделения по обеспечению безопасности лиц, временно подлежавших охране // Социально-гуманитарный вестник. Всероссийский сборник научных трудов. Выпуск 32. Барнаул: ИП Колмогоров И.А., 2023. С. 36.

⁹ Русский инвалид. 1896. № 104. 14 мая. С. 13; Сенатские ведомости. 1898. № 88. 5 ноября. С. 344.

his men fired upon the insurgents to prevent them from crossing the causeway from Mikhailovsky Island. When his soldiers were reduced to only two to five rounds of ammunition per man, one of the leaders of the uprising – the Bolshevik Second Lieutenant Kokhansky – approached Guytov and proposed that the company surrender its arms. Recognizing both the hopeless military situation and the imminent prospect of unnecessary bloodshed, Captain Guytov ordered his men to surrender their weapons – eighty-five rifles in total¹⁰. The subsequent commission investigating the disturbances concluded that he had exceeded his authority, an offense punishable by disciplinary sanctions or six months' detention. His military career never recovered. In that same year, Alexander Ivanovich Guytov, who had previously belonged to a Bolshevik organization, entered the service of the St. Petersburg Security Section as a secret informant. It is reasonable to suggest that these two events may have been directly connected through a cause-and-effect relationship.

Beginning of the journey

The reasons for and exact timing of A.I. Guytov's arrival in St. Petersburg have not yet been established. The details of his personal life must be reconstructed from the records of his two interrogations before the Investigative Commission of the Kronstadt Soviet in 1917. During the first interrogation, Guytov stated that he had arrived in the capital in 1903 and found employment at the N.K. Geisler & Co. Electromechanical Works. During the second interrogation, however, he claimed that he had entered the L.L. Beyer Copper Foundry and Mechanical Works as an apprentice in the copper-boiler workshop, earning 30 kopecks per day. In 1904, a turner named Tikhon Ivanovich, who maintained contacts with socialist parties, introduced the young apprentice to socialist doctrine.

From this point onward, Guytov's testimony becomes inconsistent, most likely because he deliberately introduced confusion in order to mislead investigators and conceal his true activities. During his first interrogation, he claimed that he joined the Social Democratic combat

¹⁰ Военные восстания в Балтике в 1905–06 гг. М.: Партийное изд-во, 1933. С. 233–234.

organization in the capital and was subsequently sent to the city of Tula to work in an underground printing press. According to his account, this assignment was arranged by one of the organizers of the St. Petersburg Social Democrats, a comrade known as Foma (Foma Ivanovich Ignatyev). During the second interrogation, Guytov described his party activities in St. Petersburg differently: “My main role at that time was simply running errands to obtain literature”. He further claimed that he soon traveled to Tula together with a socialist named Kostomozov to meet a liaison, the Bolshevik Sofia Nikolaevna, who operated under the pseudonym “Ivan Ivanovich”. At that time, the split within the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks had not yet developed into open confrontation, and local Social Democrats frequently cooperated. According to Guytov, in Tula he worked for the Mensheviks as a courier under the alias Foma Ivanovich Ignatyev, before becoming an assistant proofreader in an illegal printing house¹¹.

During his first interrogation, Guytov stated that in 1907 he returned from Tula to St. Petersburg together with Ignatyev and worked under the surname Dobrovolsky. Soon afterward, in 1908, the secretary of the Okhta subdistrict organization of the Social Democrats allegedly provided him with a forged passport in the name of Stanislav Petrovich Baynarovich (or Vaynarovich), a townsman from Kiev. However, he was unable to use this passport for long. He was arrested together with the secretary. Officially, he was held for three months in the Okhta detention facility without any evidence being presented – not for a political offense, which the authorities were unable to prove, but for residing under another person’s passport. He was then transferred to solitary confinement for six months before being exiled to his hometown of Novorzhev.

During the second interrogation, Guytov altered important details of his account. According to this version, he returned from Tula not to the capital but to Moscow, where he obtained a new passport. With financial assistance from his comrades, he then returned to St. Petersburg, where he lived on Leuchtenberg Street using a passport issued in the name of one Vasily Fyodorovich. He worked as a maintenance mechanic at Petrov’s vodka distillery and later at various small workshops and factories while remaining actively engaged in party work.

¹¹ ГА РФ. Ф. 1657. Оп. 1. Д. 17. Л. 1–2.

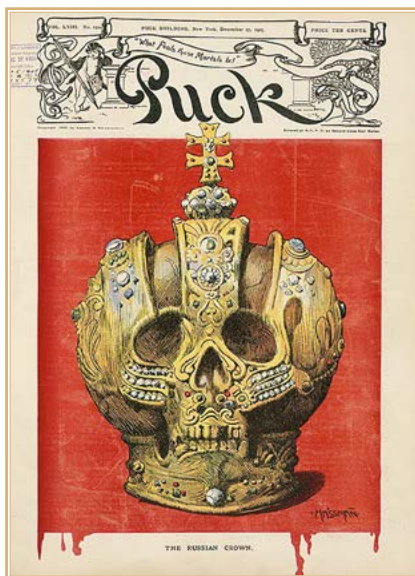
He claimed that he was arrested in May 1908 on Bolshaya Okhta, together with five comrades, in the apartment of an artist named Elisey, whom he frequently visited on party business. Besides the forged passport issued in the name of Baynarovich, the police also found a revolver in Guytov's possession. The detainees were held not at the Okhta but at the Kolomna police precinct.

As can be seen, the two versions of events have little in common. The only consistent elements are the forged passport in the name of Baynarovich, the fact of Guytov's arrest in the Okhta district of St. Petersburg, and his subsequent six-month imprisonment. During his second interrogation in 1917, Guytov gave a detailed account of his questioning by the gendarmes in 1908: "They took me to the secret police headquarters for interrogation. A few days after my arrest I was questioned by a gendarme officer. The second time I was questioned by an elderly man in civilian clothes; he was extremely rude, and they kept me there for eight days on a leather sofa. Altogether, during the second round I was questioned twice. Various other officers also asked all kinds of questions. I spent five or six months in Kresty Prison, and from there I was taken to the secret police headquarters for questioning on two occasions. At the end of the summer I was transferred from the transit prison under escort to my district town of Novorzhev in Pskov Governorate"¹². The conclusion of both narratives – the return to Novorzhev – is identical. Nevertheless, it is difficult to believe that a man arrested together with a group of socialists while carrying both a revolver and a forged passport would simply have been sent home to his parents.

In a secret memorandum devoted entirely to the intelligence activities of A.I. Guytov, dated 13 December 1916, V.V. Trzeciak, head of the Kronstadt Gendarmerie Section, informed A.T. Vasilyev, Director of the Police Department, that Guytov had been recruited in 1907 as a confidential informant by the St. Petersburg Security Section under the operational codename "Kirillov". In the same year, he assisted the police in dismantling a group of Maximalist Socialist Revolutionaries, within which he himself had operated under the party alias "Sizov". In 1908, he exposed a military Social Democratic cell in the capital¹³. This in-

¹² Ibid. А. 2.

¹³ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 316. Д. 1. Ч. 58. Лит. Д, Т. 1 (1915 год). А. 10.



Cover of the American magazine *Puck*. Caricature of the Russian monarchy during the 1905 Revolution. Artist: Carl Hassmann.
 Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ppmsca-26019

dicates that Guytov was already serving as a secret police agent at the time of his arrest. Such arrests constituted one of the standard methods used to protect informants who had come under suspicion of acting as provocateurs. The precise circumstances of Guytov's recruitment remain unknown, since the archives of the Petrograd Security Department have survived only in fragmentary form. Nevertheless, indirect evidence from later years suggests that the recruitment most likely took place in 1906¹⁴. Guytov himself stated that he gave testimony personally to General Gerasimov. This was most likely A.V. Gerasimov, Head of the Security Section between 1905 and 1909, renowned for his work with Azef. Gerasimov reformed the entire system of intelligence operations, placing particular emphasis on recruitment and personally supervising the most valuable agents.

Writing in exile, Gerasimov later described his methods of recruiting intelligence agents: "The principal [agents. – H.-G.] were recruited anew. To achieve this, I gave appropriate instructions to the officers who conducted interrogations of those under arrest. I myself did not ordinarily conduct such interrogations. However, if my officers reported

¹⁴ Ibid. Ф. 1657. Оп. 1. Д. 17. Л. 8 об.

that a particular prisoner displayed a willingness to speak openly during questioning or appeared uncertain in his revolutionary convictions, then – provided that the individual possessed contacts within revolutionary circles that were of interest to me – I invariably sought a personal interview with him. If that conversation confirmed my initial impression, I spared no effort in ‘working over’ the prisoner. The arguments I employed varied from case to case. Some were intimidated by the severity of the punishment they faced; others were tempted by money; still others were motivated by personal animosities toward particular revolutionaries... My experience showed, however, that the most valuable recruits were those who had become sincerely disillusioned with the revolutionary movement for one reason or another. I devoted considerable time to such individuals, doing everything possible to win them over, and I must say that in many instances I succeeded in acquiring exceptionally useful and valuable agents. By the end of my service in the Security Department, I had no fewer than 120–150 such agents spread across all revolutionary and opposition parties... As for the especially important agents who maintained ties with the central organizations, I communicated with them personally. There were five to seven such agents, and for meetings with each of them I maintained a separate safe house”¹⁵. In his memoirs, the general repeatedly emphasized the importance of protecting every confidential informant and shielding them from exposure. In a sense, his attitude toward his agents could even be described as paternalistic. Gerasimov is widely regarded as one of the foremost specialists in intelligence operations in the Russian Empire. He was entrusted with highly sensitive assignments, including surveillance (abroad) of the Tsar’s brother, Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovich, and the Grand Duke’s companion Natalia Wulfert¹⁶. Under Gerasimov’s guidance, Guytov received an exceptional education in clandestine operations, skills that proved invaluable throughout his subsequent career.

Particularly noteworthy is Guytov’s aforementioned return to Novorzhev, which occurred after he had already begun cooperating actively with the *Okhrana*. We suggest that this move represented an attempt

¹⁵ Гeрасимов А.В. На лезвии с террористами. Париж: YMCA-Press, 1985. С. 57, 58.

¹⁶ Перегудова З.И. Политический сыск России (1880–1917 гг.). М.: РОССПЭН, 2000. С. 164.

to escape, brought about by a nervous breakdown following two major police operations carried out on the basis of his information. Secret informants lived under the constant fear of exposure and retaliation by their former comrades and frequently suffered from depression and emotional collapse. Yet “Kirillov” had become an exceptionally productive operative, and withdrawing from intelligence work was by no means a simple matter.

The police found an immoral yet effective means of compelling their valuable informant to return to service. On 30 December 1908, Caesar Ivanovich Obukh-Voshchatynsky (Obuch-Woszczatyński), a State Councillor and judicial investigator for especially important cases at the St. Petersburg District Court, sent a secret, highly urgent request to the Novorzhev District Police Administration, demanding the immediate arrest and transfer to St. Petersburg of the Novorzhev townsman Alexander Guytov, who was accused of robbery and murder¹⁷. Guytov was charged under Articles 924 (forming a gang for the purpose of robbery or counterfeiting), 927 (committing crimes as a member of a criminal gang), 1459 (causing death through negligent homicide while committing other unlawful acts of violence), and 1633 and 1634 (armed robbery accompanied by murder) of the *Code of Criminal and Correctional Punishments*. Collectively, these charges carried penalties ranging from eighteen years of penal servitude to capital punishment, depending on the circumstances¹⁸. Could these accusations have served as one of the means by which the authorities exerted pressure upon their confidential agent?

A sinister reputation surrounded this investigator. Although outwardly courteous, he was known as a man without principles – ruthless and relentless in pursuing his victims. His personality closely resembled that of Porfiry Petrovich, the examining magistrate in Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*. It was Obukh who arrested Korney Chukovsky for allegedly insulting the Emperor through satirical articles published in the journal *Signal*, which Chukovsky edited. The writer secured his release only after the sister of A.I. Kuprin posted the enormous bail of 10,000 rubles. Even then, the investigator continued his efforts to

¹⁷ ГА РФ. Ф. 63. Оп. 32. Д. 1132. Л. 9.

¹⁸ Уложение о наказаниях уголовных и исправительных 1885 года. Изд. проф. Имп. Училища правоведения... Н.С. Таганцевым. СПб.: Типография М. Стасюлевича, 1886. С. 357, 358, 509, 603.

have Chukovsky imprisoned. On 31 January 1906, Chukovsky recorded in his diary: “I visited Obukh. My situation is bad. He has seized upon an entirely innocent article – simply to destroy me”¹⁹. Chukovsky later described both his arrest and Obukh himself: “He was energetic, bald, and fidgety. His face was expressive and agreeable, hardly resembling that of a bureaucrat. Taking my hand warmly in both of his and seating me in a monumental armchair, he gazed at me intently for a long while, as though unable to look enough. Then he pulled open a desk drawer and produced a glossy folder containing my *Signal*, every page covered with neat red lines, marks, symbols, flourishes, and annotations that together formed an intricate and elegant pattern. ‘Your crimes’, he said in a confidential, ingratiating voice wholly at odds with the harsh meaning of his words, ‘your crimes are so grave and serious that Prosecutor Kamyshansky’ – here Obukh’s voice became especially gentle – ‘has ordered that you be taken into custody... unless, of course, you are willing to post bail in the amount of ten thousand rubles’. ‘Ten thousand? Rubles?’ I showed him my wallet, which contained a single three-ruble note. ‘In that case...’ My new friend pressed what I later realized was a concealed bell button beneath his desk with his knee. A uniformed attendant with green piping entered. ‘This way! To Cell 107!’ Obukh said with a melancholy smile, waving to me cordially in the manner of fashionable society people bidding farewell to friends departing by train for the Caucasus or Nice”²⁰.

It was this man who seized upon Guytov with unyielding determination. Curiously, no actual criminal case against Guytov ever existed in the records of the St. Petersburg District Court, and no trace of such proceedings has been found in the historical archives of St. Petersburg. It appears that the accusations amounted to little more than outright blackmail. The official requests sent to Novorzhev were merely attempts to apprehend the fugitive Guytov on ordinary criminal charges, carried out secretly and without placing him on the empire-wide wanted list. Most revealingly, the search for Guytov ceased immediately after he agreed to resume cooperation with the St. Petersburg Security Section.

¹⁹ Чуковский К.И. Собрание сочинений. В 15 т. Т. 11: Дневник 1901–1921 / Предисл. В. Каверина; коммент. Е. Чуковской. 2-е изд. М.: Агентство ФТМ, ЛТА, 2013. С. 123.

²⁰ Никитин Е.Н. Какие они разные... Корней, Николай и Лидия Чуковские. Н. Новгород: Деком, 2014. С. 39, 40.

It is therefore highly unlikely that Guytov had in fact participated in a robbery involving murder. Department of Police circulars explicitly prohibited the use of secret agents who had committed ordinary criminal offenses²¹. The accusations thus appear to have served as a means of coercing him into continued service for the *Okhrana*.

Work in Southern Russia

In 1909, Guytov, still operating under the codename “Kirillov”, was transferred from St. Petersburg to Baku, where he infiltrated the local organization of the Socialist Revolutionary Party while simultaneously serving the local political police. This transfer may have been connected with the retirement that same year of his patron, General A.V. Gerasimov, head of the St. Petersburg Security Section.

The card index of the Police Department preserved in the State Archive of the Russian Federation specifies that during this period Guytov first worked for the Gendarmerie Police Administration of the Transcaucasian Railways and later for the Baku Security Section. There he became a member of the regional committee of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, and acting on his information, the party’s printing press in Baku was raided and dismantled on 1 May 1910²².

One of the most significant operations of this stage of his intelligence career was the prevention of a planned bank robbery in Vladimir Governorate. On 14 June 1910, Guytov appeared before Colonel A.P. Kritsky, head of the Samara Provincial Gendarmerie Administration, identifying himself as the confidential operative “Kirillov” of the Baku Security Section, temporarily assigned to Samara on Transcaucasian business, and requested official assistance. The Baku authorities confirmed that “Kirillov” had indeed been dispatched to monitor members of a group of Baku anarchists traveling through Samara who intended to carry out a major expropriation in either Shuya or Ivanovo-Voznesensk in Vladimir Governorate. Two of the intended participants lodged in an apartment

²¹ Агентурная работа политической полиции Российской империи. Сборник документов. 1880–1917 / Сост. Е.И. Щербакowa. М.: АИРО-XXI; СПб.: Дмитрий Буланин, 2006. С. 106, 107.

²² ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 316. Д. 1. Ч. 58. Лит. Д. Т. 1 (1915 год). Л. 10.

rented by Guytov and soon came under surveillance by local detectives. They were later joined by a non-party professional thief, Matrena Dmitrievna Shevchenko, known by the nickname “Little Snake”. Internal disagreements soon emerged among the conspirators, however, and they concluded that their forces were insufficient to carry out the operation.

On 6 July, “Kirillov” departed for Kazan in search of another suspected participant in the planned expropriation before continuing to Moscow at the invitation of Colonel P.P. Zavarzin, head of the Moscow Security Section²³. This move was prompted largely by the lack of cooperation from the Samara gendarmerie. Colonel Kritsky distrusted Guytov’s intelligence and provided virtually no assistance apart from a clumsily organized surveillance operation that nearly exposed Guytov to his criminal associates. In his memoirs, Colonel A.P. Martynov, head of the Saratov Security Section, described Kritsky as “slow-moving, indolent, and childishly naïve in matters of political investigation – an elderly devotee of the card game *preferans*”²⁴.

Guytov’s infiltration of an anarchist terrorist group while simultaneously belonging to the Socialist Revolutionary Party was an extraordinarily dangerous undertaking and soon aroused suspicion. The principal reason was his concealed leadership position within the local Socialist Revolutionary organization, which he deliberately kept hidden from the anarchists. On 26 July 1910, one of his associates, the anarchist Vasily Vasilyevich Anishchenko, received a letter from comrades in Baku expressing suspicions that Alexander Ivanovich was acting as a police provocateur. Another associate, Alexei Egorovich Kuzmin, frustrated by the indefinite postponement of the bank robbery, developed a close friendship with Guytov, which likewise attracted suspicion. On 24 October, the Samara anarchists took decisive action. They contacted the local Socialist Revolutionaries and resolved to dispatch the student G.G. Albrecht to the Baku organization with a message declaring that A.I. Guytov and A. Kuzmin were agents of the Security Section. At the same time, they abandoned plans to attack Shuya and Ivanovo-Voznesensk, instead

²³ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 316. Д. 282 (1910 год). Л. 39–41.

²⁴ Мартынов А.П. Моя служба в Отдельном корпусе жандармов // «Охранка»: Воспоминания руководителей охранных отделений / Вступ. ст., подгот. текста и коммент. З.И. Перегудовой. В 2 т. Т. 1. М.: Новое литературное обозрение, 2004. С. 221.

requesting that Baku send a fresh group to Samara equipped with weapons and bombs for future expropriations and terrorist attacks within Samara itself. The head of the gendarmerie permitted Albrecht to leave the city but placed him under covert surveillance. The Transcaucasian police were warned in advance. As a result, on 3 November, the authorities arrested in Baku several members of a Socialist Revolutionary cell preparing terrorist attacks: Heinrich (Genrikh) Genrikhovich Albrecht (party alias “Freak”), together with Nison Movshev Evenson (“Thick-Lips”), Khana Gita Gersheva Klyachko (“Poisonous”), Iosif Avgustov Evseev (“Hunchback”), and Khasya Sruleva Goldshtein²⁵. The planned bank robbery was successfully prevented, as were the anticipated terrorist attacks in Samara. The Baku anarchists and Socialist Revolutionaries were arrested, and the immediate danger confronting Guytov disappeared. Nevertheless, his cover had been irreparably compromised. The principal cause of this failure was the carelessness of his handler, Captain P.P. Martynov, head of the Baku Security Section, who sent written instructions signed with his own initials directly to the apartment in Samara where Guytov was living alongside his fellow conspirators. One of these letters was most likely intercepted and opened by Vasily Anishchenko. In the subsequent official review of the operation, S.E. Vissarionov, Vice Director of the Police Department, explicitly blamed Martynov for the loss of such a valuable intelligence operative²⁶.

In 1911, after his cover had been compromised through the negligence of his handler and fearing retaliation from both the Socialist Revolutionaries and the anarchists, Guytov attempted gradually to withdraw from clandestine work and obscure his trail. On 24 January, he assumed a new identity by obtaining a passport in the name of Konstantin Alexandrovich Zinoviev, a landless peasant born in 1883 in the Gri-va Volost of Novorzhev Uyezd, Pskov Governorate, whose occupation was listed as that of a laborer. From that point onward, Guytov used this document alongside those issued in his own name²⁷. The passport was prepared by Ivan Nikiforov, the clerk of the Gri-va Volost administration. Guytov then returned to Moscow, where he nevertheless continued to

²⁵ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 316. Д. 282 (1910 год). Л. 54–60.

²⁶ Ibid. Л. 50, 51.

²⁷ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 316. Д. 1. Ч. 58. Лит. Д. Т. 2 (1915 год). Л. 64.



Sergei Evlampievich Vissarionov, Deputy Director
of the Police Department of the Ministry of the Interior.

From open sources

maintain contact with the local Security Section. On 23 August 1911, he departed Moscow – where he had been living at the Lubyanskie Nomera Hotel on Myasnitskaya Street – for Pskov, and from there proceeded to his native Novorzhev. There he obtained yet another passport, No. 136, issued by the district police chief, this time in the name of Alexander Nikolaevich Guytov, altering his patronymic from *Ivanovich* to *Nikolaevich*. He now possessed three separate passports, issued in the names of K.A. Zinoviev, A.I. Guytov, and A.N. Guytov. The former confidential agent hoped to begin a new life. The Security Section, however, had never ceased watching him. Detectives of the Moscow *Okhrana* monitored him under the surveillance codename “Polkan”. On the very same day – 23 August – Lieutenant Colonel Turchaninov, Assistant Chief of the Moscow Security Section, revived the long-forgotten case pending before the St. Petersburg Military District Court and ordered the Pskov police to arrest Guytov immediately.

In the Kronstadt Gendarmerie Directorate

What happened next remains uncertain. Documentary evidence suggests that either at the end of 1911 or the beginning of 1912, Guytov agreed to return to clandestine service – this time for the Kronstadt Gendarmerie Directorate, under the new operational codename

“Kamensky”. On 23 December 1911, the military prosecutor of the St. Petersburg Military District Court suspended the search and arrest proceedings²⁸. In 1912, Turchaninov likewise ordered the search for Guytov to be discontinued. The conclusion that the entire criminal investigation and subsequent manhunt had been orchestrated to compel a valuable operative to resume cooperation is difficult to avoid. During the operation involving the planned bank robbery, Guytov had remained continuously in Moscow, maintained regular contact with the head of the Security Section, Martynov, and his deputy Turchaninov, and his whereabouts and movements were known to them at all times. Significantly, a search of his room at the Lubyanskie Nomera Hotel was carried out the day after he had already departed for Pskov.

Within the Kronstadt Gendarmerie Directorate, “Kamensky” was assigned to monitor revolutionary activity among the crews of the Baltic Fleet. At this stage he definitively abandoned his former identity and assumed that of the worker K.A. Zinoviev, living entirely underground. He initially resided in Sveaborg, where he served as second engineer aboard the transport ship *Mezen*²⁹. Later he temporarily settled in Petrograd, at 2 Znamenskaya Street, before moving permanently to Kronstadt. During his testimony in 1917, Guytov recalled: “Since I had many acquaintances in Petrograd, I found it impossible to remain there because I was evading military service... My illegal passport was entirely reliable, so I had no reason to fear exposure. In Kronstadt I [...] found employment [...] at the Office of the Fortress Construction Administration”³⁰. There he worked as a mechanic.

This account contains a measure of truth. His real identity having been compromised, Guytov could no longer appear openly before St. Petersburg revolutionaries. Although no conclusive proof of his collaboration with the state police had ever been produced, suspicions concerning him had become widespread. Consequently, he would no longer have been entrusted with revolutionary work. His illegal status also had practical disadvantages: he was unable to enter military service legally. In addition to the criminal accusations previously fabricated

²⁸ ГА РФ. Ф. 63. Оп. 32. Л. 1132. Л. 9. Л. 8.

²⁹ Ibid. Ф. 1657. Оп. 1. Л. 17. Л. 2 об.

³⁰ Ibid. Л. 2.

against him by Obukh-Voshchatynsky, he now also faced liability for evasion of compulsory military service.

Guytov was fortunate in his new posting. In Kronstadt he worked under Lieutenant Colonel Vladimir Vladimirovich Vladimirov, one of the foremost specialists in intelligence operations within the gendarmerie, who supervised the Directorate's network of confidential agents. Among the most significant assignments entrusted to "Kamensky" was a mission to London to investigate the activities, connections, and intentions of the well-known revolutionary and former member of *Narodnaya Volya*, Alexei Lvovich Teplov, who had lived in the British capital since 1893 and published the newspaper *Russian Worker* (*Russky Rabochy*). Some background is necessary to understand the importance of this assignment. Teplov belonged to the close circle of V.L. Burtsev. Initially in Paris and later in London, he had manufactured bombs intended for terrorist attacks in Russia. During the 1910s, however, he shifted toward comparatively peaceful activity, organizing politically minded Russian émigrés into informal trade unions. The Police Department nevertheless regarded him as a serious threat and sought to place him under constant surveillance. In 1909, Captain V.I. Andreev, head of the Foreign Agency of the Police Department, reported that Teplov enjoyed "enormous influence" among socialists in general and maintained particularly close ties with the Socialist Revolutionary Party³¹. On 11 July 1913, together with Nikolai Klikh, Dmitry Baranov, and Mikhail Alexandrov (whose real surname was Traduchan), Teplov established the Union of Russian Sailors Abroad in London, intending to organize revolutionary activity within the Imperial Russian Navy³². Recruitment continued actively until the summer of 1914. Membership included not only political émigrés but also sailors serving in Russia itself – for example, Alexander Vantsev and Karl Tam from the steamship *Tsesarevich Alexei*, as well as the stoker Nikolai Golodny from the Russian steamship Tula, which regularly called at London. The Union sought both to organize Russian sailors serving on foreign vessels and to establish political organizations among crews of the Baltic Fleet. In an appeal to sympathizers, Teplov declared: "We have embarked upon the open road, and this compels

³¹ Агентурная работа. С. 178.

³² ГА РФ. Ф. 1721. Оп. 1. Д. 11. Л. 2.

us to organize a Fighting Union of Russian Sailors Abroad”³³. These ambitions were far from harmless. According to Dmitry Anichkin, the Union’s secretary and Teplov’s closest associate, the organization maintained contacts with numerous naval forces and represented far more than a fanciful project of a handful of political exiles.

Between 14 and 21 February 1914, a joint conference of the Union of Russian Sailors Abroad together with the Black Sea and Caspian Sailors’ Unions brought together delegates representing military and civilian maritime organizations whose combined membership, according to official lists submitted by the unions, totaled 5,594 individuals. This figure undoubtedly included inactive members and many who had no political involvement. Nevertheless, the Conference assigned the London Union responsibility for organizing sailors throughout both the military and merchant fleets of the Baltic and instructed it to convene a separate Baltic Conference in the future. Anichkin and Teplov envisioned establishing branches of the Baltic Union in every port visited by Russian steamships³⁴. In 1914, Teplov also founded the Union of Former Servicemen. Officially, this organization existed to provide mutual assistance and facilitate discussion of events in Russia among its members. Unofficially, however, it served to finance revolutionary activities among military personnel through a special organization established by Teplov and known as the “Fund for Struggle”³⁵.

In 1916, under the direction of his handler, Lieutenant Colonel V.V. Vladimirov, “Kamensky” was dispatched to Libau (Liepāja) to investigate reports of revolutionary organizations within the navy connected with the activities of Alexei Teplov. From there he was sent onward to London. The head of the Kronstadt Gendarmerie Directorate, V.V. Trzeciak, summarized Kamensky’s mission in a memorandum only briefly, noting that he had “*successfully rendered intelligence services in connection with the émigré Teplov, well known to the Police Department and residing in London*”³⁶. Further details emerge from Guytov’s testimony before the Kronstadt Soviet in 1917: “In the spring of 1913 I left

³³ Ibid. Д. 73. Л. 18.

³⁴ Ibid. Л. 1–2.

³⁵ Ibid. Д. 11а. Л. 1–7.

³⁶ Ibid. Ф. 102. Оп. 316. Д. 1. Ч. 58. Лит. Д. Т. 1 (1915 года). Л. 10.

for Libau, where I found employment at the Matisson factory and later worked for a Jewish medical practitioner on Dorovaya Street. I remained in Libau for about three months. From Libau I slipped to London as a stowaway. A Jew who worked at the Matisson factory helped arrange the crossing. A certain Sholobarits traveled with us; I had met him by chance on the street. With Fait's assistance, Sholobarits' journey was also arranged. In London we went through a great deal before, thanks to the directions of a Russian barber, we finally located Teplov. I stayed in London for about three months before returning to Libau. I explained my going abroad by wishing to see foreign countries"³⁷. These recollections demonstrate how skillfully Lieutenant Colonel Vladimirov succeeded in embedding his operative within Teplov's circle.

The Jewish intermediary referred to as Fait, who organized the passage to London, was apparently an individual named Nelson, a former émigré who had secretly returned to Russia to organize revolutionary activity within the Baltic Fleet. Zinoviev (Guytov) succeeded in gaining Nelson's confidence. Even more revealing are the surviving written instructions issued by Vladimirov to "Kamensky", which provide a rare glimpse into the operational methods employed by an undercover agent. The instructions read: "Through the émigré Nelson and his wife, who are residing illegally in Libau, identify those transporting illegal literature, those receiving it, and those distributing it among the sailors. Having gained the confidence of the senders and recipients of this literature, determine where it is stored. Through third parties identify those sailors who receive the literature and who simultaneously serve as representatives responsible for weapons. Further development of these tasks requiring direct contact with the sailor community is not to be permitted.

Under no circumstances may the illegal literature brought into Russia aboard merchant vessels be received by him [Kamensky. — H.-G.] for distribution aboard naval ships, for delivery to politically influenced sailors, or for transmission to anyone else. He is not to participate actively in propaganda, especially aboard naval vessels, nor is he to engage sailors or dockworkers in political discussions. Only in exceptional cases of particular intelligence importance may he forward correspondence

³⁷ Ibid. Ф. 1657. Оп. 1. Д. 17. Л. 2.

from sailors maintaining contact with political émigrés or publish articles in the revolutionary press.

When providing information concerning the disposition of naval vessels, only such information as is already available in open sources, including the legal press, may be disclosed. Kamensky should temporarily avoid direct contact with Teplov. To prevent sailors from visiting him without his knowledge, Kamensky's residence in Libau must not serve as a safe house, and he should generally avoid establishing close personal relations with sailors"³⁸.

This document is remarkable not only because written operational instructions to confidential agents have survived – a rarity in itself, as such directives were ordinarily given only orally – but also because it illustrates the exceptional care with which Vladimirov managed his operative. He sought to prevent Kamensky from undertaking any action that might reasonably be construed as criminal or provocational. Vladimirov consistently attempted to shield his agent from direct interaction with revolutionary sailors, who might have demanded increasingly active participation in illegal activities, while any refusal could have aroused suspicion. His handling of Guytov stands in marked contrast to the far more exploitative attitude displayed by Guytov's previous handlers in Baku and Saratov, whose carelessness had effectively blown his earlier cover.

Guytov-Kamensky's standing within the clandestine apparatus of the Kronstadt Gendarmerie Directorate can be reconstructed from surviving lists of confidential agents and informants compiled in 1915–1916. The earliest surviving register of agents directly supervised by V.V. Vladimirov dates from January 1915. It excluded so-called *shtuchniki* – occasional informants who supplied isolated pieces of information and were paid individually for each report. The document reveals that the Directorate's intelligence network remained surprisingly small, consisting of only thirteen individuals. Of these, only two were classified as confidential agents (*sekretnye sotrudniki*), actively infiltrated into revolutionary organizations. The remaining eleven served merely as informants (*osvedomiteli*). The distinction was significant: confidential agents belonged to revolutionary party cells themselves, whereas informants had no formal membership but simply maintained contacts

³⁸ Ibid. A. 12–12 o6.

with politically suspect individuals, providing information that was often second- or third-hand and therefore considerably less valuable. Surveillance of the Social Democrats was entrusted to the operative “Mirsky-Milovidov”, identified as Dmitry Yefimovich Tikhomirov, a worker at the Ericsson Factory who also served aboard the cruiser *Diana*. He received the substantial monthly salary of 50 rubles. Responsibility for monitoring the Socialist Revolutionary Party rested with “Kamensky”. He was the highest-paid confidential agent of the Kronstadt Gendarmerie Directorate, receiving 125 rubles per month, more than double the salary of “Mirsky-Milovidov”. The remaining eleven informants – known by the codenames “Pavlov”, “Porodin”, “Zhuk”, “Mirsky”, “Leonov”, “Kubov”, “Kustov”, “Argus”, “Lesnoi”, “Sudovoi”, and “Zapisnoi” – reported on political sentiments in workshops, military units, throughout Kronstadt generally, and even aboard merchant vessels. Their monthly remuneration ranged from 10 to 40 rubles, substantially below that paid to the two principal undercover agents. These records indicate that at the beginning of the First World War the majority of the Directorate’s intelligence personnel were very young, inexperienced, and only recently recruited. Only four of the thirteen agents had entered service before 1914³⁹. The situation had deteriorated slightly by June 1915. The network had shrunk to twelve agents, with several personnel changes. The informants “Argus”, “Kustov”, “Lesnoi”, and “Porodin” disappeared from the roster and were replaced by “Belyakov”, “Andreevsky”, and “Syurguchev”⁴⁰.

In January 1915, the Directorate spent 440 rubles per month on agents’ salaries, together with an additional 25 rubles in travel expenses for “Mirsky-Milovidov”. The total budget authorized for intelligence work amounted to 600 rubles monthly. These figures demonstrate that the limited intelligence coverage of the Baltic Fleet and its naval bases resulted not from inadequate funding, but rather from the fact that officers of the Kronstadt Gendarmerie Directorate had only begun systematically developing an intelligence network in March 1914. Recognizing this circumstance, the Police Department subsequently reduced the Directorate’s monthly intelligence allocation to 500 rubles. Funding for physical

³⁹ Ibid. А. 1. Ч. 58. Лит. Е. Т. 2. А. 4.

⁴⁰ Ibid. А. 23.

surveillance was likewise curtailed. Whereas in January 1915, the central administration allocated 400 rubles for the salaries of the clerk responsible for the naval district and the permanent surveillance agents (*filery*), together with 120 rubles for daily allowances and operating expenses, by June the salaries of the surveillance personnel had been reduced to 350 rubles, while travel and operational expenses fell to 105 rubles. The position of district clerk disappeared from the budget altogether⁴¹. The utilization of surveillance funds also declined noticeably. In January, the Kronstadt Gendarmerie Directorate expended approximately 90 percent of the funds allocated for physical surveillance. By June, however, only 76.5 percent of the available appropriations were actually being used.

By the end of 1915, the intelligence crisis within the Kronstadt Gendarmerie Directorate had largely been overcome. The December personnel register listed twenty-five agents, compared with only thirteen earlier that year. As before, only two were classified as confidential agents – “Kamensky” and “Mirsky-Milovidov” – while the remaining twenty-three served as informants. Nineteen of these informants, representing 76 percent of the Directorate’s entire intelligence network, had been recruited between June and December 1915, with more than half of them (twelve individuals) entering service in December. The quality of these new recruits can be judged from their remuneration. Uncertain of their reliability and usefulness, the gendarmerie assigned the newcomers salaries of only 5–10 rubles per month, while eight informants received no fixed salary at all, being paid only for specific information⁴². Guytov nevertheless remained the Directorate’s leading and highest-paid confidential operative. His monthly salary exceeded that of the informant “Gorbunov” by a factor of twenty-five. These figures demonstrate that the effective core of the Kronstadt Gendarmerie Directorate’s intelligence apparatus remained extremely small and that most operational work depended upon no more than five or six experienced agents. Describing his relationship with his superior, Lieutenant Colonel Vladimirov, Guytov later testified before the investigator of the Kronstadt Soviet: “There were no reports signed by the agent himself – only typewritten copies. I wrote quickly, while Vladimirov revised

⁴¹ Ibid. A. 3, 22.

⁴² Ibid. A. 52.



Artillery Barracks, Kronstadt. Early twentieth-century postcard.

From open sources

them and often added material of his own. The Gendarmerie Directorate trusted... only the informants”⁴³.

A particularly valuable source consists of recollections recorded after Guytov’s exposure from individuals who had known him personally in Kronstadt. According to the testimony of the electrician N.M. Shimarev, in 1912 Guytov lived under the name K.A. Zinoviev on Petrovskaya Street, in Turkin’s building, apartment 30 or 31, while employed in the construction of the fortress. Shimarev recalled: “Groups of sailors from various ships of the fleet, as well as from the First Baltic Naval Crew (sailor Utochkin) frequently gathered at Zinoviev’s apartment. That same year Zinoviev suddenly disappeared from Kronstadt without warning any of his comrades. After his departure arrests took place aboard several ships, including *Peter the Great* and the First Baltic Crew, where the sailor Utochkin, who had visited Zinoviev’s apartment, was arrested. Alexei Kashin from *Pavel I*, who had never visited Zinoviev’s apartment, and many others were also arrested”⁴⁴. This reflected a standard security practice employed by the political police. Arrests – or, in the terminology of the Security Department, “liquidations” – were deliberately carried out only after an undercover operative had left the area, thereby reducing suspicion that the agent himself had informed on his associates. Not all handlers adhered to this principle, however.

⁴³ ГА РФ. Ф. 1657. Оп. 1. Д. 17. Л. 49.

⁴⁴ Ibid. Л. 3.

Some rushed to make arrests before their agent had safely withdrawn, often resulting in the operative's exposure.

Intrigues within the Police Department

Despite occasional suspicions, “Kamensky's” work proceeded smoothly and successfully. The gravest threat to his security arose unexpectedly – not from his own mistakes or those of his immediate superiors, but from decisions made by the highest leadership of the political police. The outbreak of the First World War brought about the mass mobilization of confidential agents into military service, severely disrupting the empire's intelligence network. On 29 July / 11 August 1914, the head of the Kronstadt Gendarmerie Directorate, V.V. Trzeciak, wrote to V.F. Dz-hunkovsky, Assistant Minister of the Interior: “With the declaration of war and the mobilization of the fleet, many of the confidential agents and informants serving my naval district have been called to active military service, significantly weakening our intelligence capabilities. I therefore request permission [...] to continue maintaining contact with such individuals for the duration of the war”. The request was categorically rejected by the commander of the gendarmerie⁴⁵. Nevertheless, Trzeciak continued to fight for certain especially valuable agents. On 29 October 1914, he petitioned V.A. Brun-de-Saint-Hippolyte, Director of the Police Department, asking that “Kamensky” be granted an exemption. Legalizing the agent's status would require him to submit a petition to the Emperor requesting pardon for evading compulsory military service and for residing under forged documents. Such a procedure, Trzeciak warned, would “inevitably expose Kamensky and deprive us of him as an intelligence asset”⁴⁶.

In a memorandum submitted on 17 August 1914 to the Vice Director of the Police Department, A.T. Vasilyev, Trzeciak explained why legalizing Kamensky's identity was impossible. The agent still faced a genuine threat of revenge. In 1906–1907, while operating in St. Petersburg under the party alias “Sizov”, Guytov had belonged to a cell of the Maximalist Socialist Revolutionaries, whose members he subsequently betrayed

⁴⁵ Ibid. Ф. 102. Оп. 316. А. 210 (1913 г.). А. 158.

⁴⁶ Ibid. Ф. 1657. Оп. 1. А. 17. А. 10.

to the police. Although he managed to escape suspicion by relocating to Baku, those Maximalists who had avoided arrest continued searching for the traitor. By the end of July, they located Zinoviev in Kronstadt and identified him as Guytov (*Sizov*). The search was directed by the St. Petersburg Socialist Revolutionary Blinov, known within the party as “Bat’ka” (“Father”), together with Alexander Chvannikov, who had previously been implicated in the case involving twenty-nine expropriators. Guytov responded with considerable ingenuity. Relying on the fact that his appearance had changed dramatically over the years – he had gained weight and grown a full beard – he arranged through a trusted intermediary to send Blinov and Chvannikov a recent photograph of himself. After examining it, the Maximalists concluded that the Kronstadt resident Zinoviev did not resemble the Guytov/Sizov they were seeking and abandoned their search. Nevertheless, because Zinoviev avoided meeting them in person – where he might have been recognized by his voice or mannerisms – they continued to harbor lingering suspicions. Had Zinoviev been forced to reclaim documents in the name of Guytov, as would have been required for legalization and military service, his true identity would almost certainly have been exposed, endangering not only himself but also the intermediary who had assisted him and who was probably himself connected with the gendarmerie⁴⁷.

Vasilyev, claiming to act in the interests of Kamensky’s safety, proposed an entirely different solution. He instructed the Kronstadt authorities to accelerate the “liquidation” (that is, the arrest) of the Blinov-Chvannikov group, after which the agent could safely be legalized. In reality, this proposal virtually guaranteed the operative’s exposure. Unlike the experienced officers of the Security Department and the gendarmerie, Vasilyev possessed little practical understanding of clandestine intelligence work. His order demonstrated a fundamental misunderstanding of the operational principles governing the protection of undercover agents. The professional limitations of Vasilyev were later aptly characterized by the historian Z.I. Peregudova in her introduction to the publication of his memoirs. In October 1916, when Empress Alexandra Feodorovna asked him about growing social unrest, Vasilyev replied: “A revolution is entirely impossible in Russia. Certainly, there

⁴⁷ Ibid. A. 8 о6.

is a degree of nervous tension among the population because of the continuing war and the burdens it has imposed, but the people trust the Tsar and have no thought of rebellion”⁴⁸. Throughout his career, Vasilyev was distinguished less by initiative than by his meticulous adherence to regulations and instructions, rarely displaying the independent judgment required for effective political intelligence work.

On 7 November 1915, A.T. Vasilyev once again demanded that several confidential agents who had been evading military service – including “Kamensky” – be placed on a legal footing. These operatives were to surrender the passports issued under assumed identities and begin living under their true names. Such a measure would inevitably have aroused suspicion among all of their acquaintances in Kronstadt and almost certainly resulted in their immediate exposure. The leadership of the Kronstadt Gendarmerie Directorate again attempted to protect Guytov by quietly ignoring the Department’s directive. Colonel V.V. Trzeciak, Head of the Directorate, succeeded in delaying its implementation. On 18 December 1915, he openly rejected the Department’s demand, stating that “under present circumstances, the legalization of Kamensky cannot be carried out in the immediate future”⁴⁹. The Police Department continued its pressure in January 1916. On 12 May, Trzeciak reported that Guytov had supposedly been legalized and had entered military service on 1 March, being assigned to the engineer troops stationed in Luga, where he worked repairing automobiles. Because of this alleged legalization, the confidential agent “Kamensky” had officially been removed from the Kronstadt intelligence network on 1 April. The matter, however, did not end there. The Department demanded that Trzeciak submit Zinoviev’s passport as proof that the false identity had been abandoned. On 22 July, Trzeciak replied that Guytov had supposedly destroyed the passport issued in the name of Zinoviev upon entering military service, making it impossible for him to forward the document to the Department⁵⁰. The Department’s response was extraordinary. Fully aware of Guytov’s whereabouts and military assignment, Vice Director

⁴⁸ Перегудова З.И. «Охранка» глазами охранников // «Охранка»: Воспоминания руководителей охранных отделений / Вступ. ст., подгот. текста и коммент. З.И. Перегудовой. В 2 т. Т. 1. М.: Новое литературное обозрение, 2004. С. 21–22.

⁴⁹ ГА РФ. Д. 1. Ч. 58. Лит. Д. Т. 2 (1915 год). Л. 8, 13.

⁵⁰ Ibid. Л. 12, 15.



First Baltic Fleet Crew. Early twentieth-century postcard.

From open sources

I.K. Smirnov nevertheless issued a circular order on 29 July instructing every political police agency throughout the Empire to arrest K.A. Zinoviev⁵¹. Such a circular would naturally have reached the Kronstadt Gendarmerie Directorate itself. By doing so, the leadership of the Police Department effectively signaled its distrust of Trzeciak and sought to eliminate any possibility that Guytov might continue living under the “Zinoviev” identity, continue working as a confidential agent, or disappear altogether while still carrying documents issued in that name.

On 13 December 1916, Trzeciak submitted to the Police Department a memorandum reviewing A.I. Guytov’s service under the operational codenames “Kamensky” and “Kirillov”. The report constituted an exceptionally favorable assessment of his performance as an intelligence operative. The memorandum also reveals that Alexander Ivanovich personally petitioned Trzeciak for permission to continue serving as a confidential agent – not in Kronstadt, where exposure had become increasingly likely, but within the Saratov Provincial Gendarmerie Administration. Trzeciak supported this request and forwarded it to Police Department Director A.T. Vasilyev, who rejected the proposal on 21 December⁵². Vasilyev’s position appears strikingly prejudicial toward Guytov and inconsistent

⁵¹ Ibid. T. 2 (1915 гoд). Оп. А. 64.

⁵² ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 316. Д. 1. Ч. 58. Лит. Д. Т. 1 (1915 гoд). Л. 10–11.

with the Department's own official policy concerning confidential agents who had been drafted into military service. As early as 24 March 1916, Vasilyev's predecessor, Major General E.K. Klimovich, had circulated instructions to local security agencies emphasizing precisely the opposite approach: "The successive conscription into active military service of persons liable for military duty has ultimately resulted in certain investigative institutions losing part of their confidential intelligence network, a circumstance which has naturally affected the effectiveness of political investigations. Accordingly [...], the Police Department intends to raise the question of exempting from military service those confidential agents who have already been called up"⁵³.

Viewed in this context, Trzeciak was acting entirely in accordance with departmental policy. By this time, however, influential officials in Petrograd had formed an unfavorable opinion of the colonel, and his recommendations no longer carried significant weight. During late June and early July 1916, Major General P.K. Popov, an inspector attached to the Minister of the Interior, conducted an official inspection of the intelligence work of both the Kronstadt and Estland Gendarmerie Directorates on the instructions of Deputy Minister A.V. Stepanov.

Popov's conclusions were sharply critical. He reported that:

- individual intelligence files were not maintained for each confidential agent, only general registers of reports;
- no separate analytical summaries existed for individual political parties;
- only general surveys of revolutionary activity within the fleet were compiled;
- among all the informants, only "Sluchainy" ("Accidental") and "Pukhov" possessed genuine intelligence value;
- among the confidential agents, only "Tretyakov" could be considered truly valuable.

The overall tone of the report was overwhelmingly hostile toward Trzeciak⁵⁴. Although some of Popov's criticisms were not entirely unfounded, the inspection appears to have been far from impartial and

⁵³ Агентурная работа. С. 361, 362.

⁵⁴ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 316. Д. 1. Ч. 58. Лит. Д. Т. 2 (1915 год). Л. 11–16 об.

resembles a politically motivated indictment more than an objective professional evaluation. Most notably, Popov failed to mention that the Directorate's two most valuable confidential agents – “Kamensky” and “Mirsky-Milovidov” – had been removed from service only a few months earlier at the insistence of the Police Department itself, despite Trzeciak's vigorous objections. Both men had successfully infiltrated revolutionary organizations and regularly supplied intelligence on the activities of the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Social Democrats – the very areas in which Popov accused the Kronstadt Directorate of possessing inadequate information. The evidence suggests that, for certain officials within the Ministry of the Interior, the desire to remove Trzeciak from office took precedence over maintaining effective political security within the Baltic Fleet and its principal naval bases. In pursuit of bureaucratic objectives, they undermined the state's own intelligence capabilities. Against the backdrop of Popov's accusations, Trzeciak's repeated efforts to preserve the services of Guytov – and the repeated refusals issued by the Police Department – appear in an entirely different light. Shortly afterward, V.V. Trzeciak was relieved of his command. On 7 January 1917, he formally transferred the Directorate's registers of confidential informants to his successor, Colonel N.N. Aplecheev⁵⁵.

In testimony later given before the Kronstadt Soviet, Aplecheev maintained that the Kronstadt Gendarmerie Directorate had made every effort to preserve “Kamensky” for future intelligence work and to prevent his being sent to the front: “The higher authorities [the Police Department] ordered that he be placed at the disposal of a certain military commander, but the Security Department intervened and had him returned. This procedure continued for two months”⁵⁶. Archival evidence substantially confirms this account. Initially, in May 1916, Guytov was assigned to a non-combat company stationed in Luga, from which he was later transferred as a private to the 4th Rear Automobile Workshop at Polotsk. Subsequently, by order of the Kronstadt Fortress Headquarters dated 9 July 1916, he was reassigned to the fortress staff and appointed to the Kronstadt Fortress Artillery Depot, where he served as a specialist coppersmith and solderer⁵⁷.

⁵⁵ Ibid. A. 60–62.

⁵⁶ Ibid. Ф. 1657. Оп. 1. Д. 17. Л. 2 об.

⁵⁷ Ibid. A. 52.

In the Kronstadt Soviet

The February Revolution in Kronstadt, accompanied by mass extrajudicial killings of police officials, naval officers, and gendarme officers, confronted Guytov with a difficult existential choice. Escaping from Kotlin Island was extremely difficult. Leaving required a pass, which could now only be obtained from the new revolutionary authorities. The threat of being exposed as a secret informant called his very survival into question. There was another danger as well: surviving detectives and counter-intelligence officers, bargaining for their lives and freedom, could easily reveal the identities of their agents. Guytov decided to take the risk, following the well-known maxim “If you can’t beat them, lead them”.

The city, however, was experiencing dual power: on one side stood the Kronstadt Committee of the Movement, and on the other, the Soviet of Military Deputies. Guytov resolved to join both bodies. During the days of the revolution, he entered the Committee of the Movement, and on March 2, he became a delegate representing the Committee, the Artillery Depot, and the Noncombatant Company to the Petrograd Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies⁵⁸. At the same time, he was elected by the soldiers of the fortress artillery depot to the Kronstadt Soviet of Deputies. According to the memoirs of the Bolshevik F.N. von Dingelstedt, Guytov also joined the city’s highest governing body, the Council of Ten⁵⁹.

On March 8, at a meeting of the Kronstadt Soviet chaired by the Socialist Revolutionary I.A. Krasovsky, the question was raised of electing members to the first permanent organ of revolutionary authority – the Executive Committee. Thirty-six members were elected in the first composition, representing the fleet, artillery, infantry, institutions, and administrative bodies. Guytov was elected as one of the five artillery representatives. In this way he acquired real authority in the city⁶⁰. One of the most pressing issues at the time concerned the treatment and fate of the arrested officers. The Soviet leadership sought to put an end to extrajudicial reprisals and to treat the defeated humanely by bringing them

⁵⁸ Ibid. A. 57.

⁵⁹ *Дингельштедт Ф.Н. Весна пролетарской революции. Из впечатлений агитатора о марте 1917 года* // Красная новь. 1925. № 1(12). С. 197–198.

⁶⁰ *Кронштадтский совет в 1917 году. Протоколы и постановления. Т. 1: Март – июнь 1917 г.* СПб.: Дмитрий Буланин, 2017. С. 28.

before lawful courts. As early as March 9, the Executive Committee resolved to separate political prisoners (including gendarmes and police officers) from the ordinary arrested officers and subject them to a stricter detention regime, while allowing the others visits from relatives and the receipt of food parcels. Personal bed linens, however, were prohibited for everyone. The day's principal decision was to isolate the political prisoners and place them under the authority of a special commission charged with determining the degree of their guilt. The commission included Executive Committee members A.K. Baranov, A.I. Guytov, M. Dergachev, G.I. Ivanov, V.F. Pankratov, and I.D. Sladkov, assisted by physicians and lawyers⁶¹.

Having secured a place on the special commission, Guytov now needed to seize the initiative within it. To do so, he found an ally in I.D. Sladkov, a member of the Kronstadt Committee of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. How he managed to win over an old Bolshevik and experienced revolutionary remains unknown. The next day, March 10, at 12:30 p.m., Guytov presented a report to the Executive Committee on the conditions of the imprisoned officers. At 3:00 p.m. he delivered an expanded version before the Kronstadt Soviet, explaining that he had inspected all three prisons and found them severely overcrowded with arrested officers, lacking even basic comforts and necessities. Sladkov supported the report. The Soviet approved instructions, drafted by Guytov, governing the treatment of prisoners. These required that political offenders be separated from the other officers and that sailors and soldiers under no circumstances be allowed access to the detainees. The special commission would determine the degree of each prisoner's political guilt⁶².

That same day, the city's revolutionary commandant, Korachkov, issued Guytov a pass granting him unrestricted access to all prisons and detention facilities, authorizing him to inspect and question prisoners at any hour of the day or night⁶³. The circle had closed: the former agent now enjoyed exclusive control over his previous handlers in the intelligence services, and their lives, conditions of confinement, and outside contacts now depended on him. His next objective was to secure the

⁶¹ Ibid. C. 35–36.

⁶² Ibid. C. 36–37.

⁶³ ГА РФ. Ф. 1657. Оп. 1. Д. 17. Л. 63.

release of those who might testify against him while preventing any examination of the gendarmerie archives, which contained compromising material about Guytov himself.

Interestingly, Commandant Korachkov also issued Guytov another pass authorizing travel through the Petrograd Gate to Oranienbaum in the execution of assignments from the Committee of the Movement. This effectively provided an open route for escape. Yet Alexander Ivanovich returned to Kronstadt. Whatever his motives, the decision to return speaks to a certain degree of personal courage.

During the second half of March, largely at Guytov's initiative, nearly all of his former handlers were released. Among them were Lieutenant Colonel Vladimirov, head of the Special Department of the Headquarters of the Baltic Fleet, and Major General Trzeciak, chief of the Kronstadt Gendarmerie Administration⁶⁴. On the one hand, the former agent was protecting himself, since the imprisoned gendarmerie officers might sooner or later begin giving evidence against him. On the other hand, the act may also be interpreted as an expression of gratitude for their earlier role in saving him from exposure and from death at the front in 1915–1916.

We know the details of Vladimirov's release from memoirs he wrote in emigration during the 1950s: "I remained in the civil prison until March 18 without any particular hardships. No one bothered me, and no one came to interrogate me. Meanwhile, my former informants and associates who remained at liberty worked on my behalf, and thanks to one of them, whom I shall not name, I was released and immediately departed for Petersburg. In earlier times I had rescued him from a difficult situation into which he had accidentally fallen, and he had not forgotten it. Having become acquainted with members of the Revolutionary Committee, he obtained an order for my release, came to the prison by automobile, and took me to my apartment. Naturally, I thanked him warmly and advised him to leave Kronstadt himself as quickly as possible, since the situation was highly unstable and he might be drawn into trouble and exposed because of his acquaintance with me. He followed this advice"⁶⁵.

⁶⁴ ГА РФ. Ф. 504. Оп. 1. Д. 268. Л. 18.

⁶⁵ *Владимиров В.В. Февральская революция в Кронштадте* // Columbia University. Bakhmeteff Archive. Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Vladimir Vladimirovich Vladimirov Papers. "Fevral'skaia Revoliutsiia v Kronshtadte". P. 30.

As we shall see, Vladimirov was mistaken on one point: Guytov intended to follow the advice, but did not manage to do so in time. It is possible that his escape was delayed for personal reasons. His investigative file contains letters from an unidentified young woman named Maria – either a close relative or a lover – complaining of harassment by her former husband. On March 26, 1917, Guytov received leave to visit relatives in Odessa until April 26. It was an ideal opportunity to flee⁶⁶. Yet, for reasons that remain unknown, he returned to Kronstadt after his leave expired.

Arrest

Remaining in Kronstadt had become extremely dangerous for Guytov. Many people knew him as Zinoviev and suspected him of collaborating with the police. When they encountered him, they addressed him as Zinoviev, but he refused to respond to that surname. An electrician, N.M. Shimarov, who had lived with Guytov, made considerable efforts to expose his former roommate, whom he had long distrusted. Zinoviev was also identified by the Bolshevik worker A.K. Samoukov and by a man named Fyodor Smirnov. The exposure of Guytov as a secret informant has been described in detail by the historian of the Kronstadt Soviet, P.N. Gordeev, and will not be examined here⁶⁷.

Guytov was arrested on April 16, 1917, directly inside the premises of the Kronstadt Soviet and placed in the Naval Investigative Prison. The investigation and interrogations were conducted by F.N. Pokrovsky, Deputy Chairman of the Soviet. Soon afterward, an Extraordinary Investigative Commission attached to the Kronstadt Soviet was established as a temporary body specifically to investigate Guytov's case. At the Soviet meeting of April 26, however, it was decided to extend the Commission's mandate. G.I. Ivanov, a Menshevik deputy representing the soldiers of the 1st Kronstadt Fortress Artillery Regiment, bluntly observed: "An entire machinery of dark affairs is being uncovered"⁶⁸.

⁶⁶ ГА РФ. Ф. 1657. Оп. 1. Д. 17. Л. 77.

⁶⁷ Гордеев П.Н. *Оп. cit.* С. 95–97.

⁶⁸ Кронштадтский совет в 1917 году. С. 218.

Seeking proof of Guytov's work for the political police, the Commission at last examined the archives of the gendarmerie administration, and a hunt began throughout the city for former informants. By May 8, those arrested on suspicion of informing included former sergeant-major Chernikov of the Sveaborg Company; sailor Alexei Bogdanov; secret agent Alexander Vasilyevich Boytsov (codename "Batumsky"); workers at the Sveaborg port Tarasov ("Svechin"), Kakhanovsky ("Pisny"), and Kalinin ("Rabochiy"); sailor Nikolai Borisov of the transport ship *Rus'*; and two women, Maria Novikova ("Sreda") and Elena Martin ("Koltsov"), who had worked as secret informants in Vyborg⁶⁹.

The State Archive of the Russian Federation preserves the investigative file of A.I. Guytov. Unfortunately, the official interrogation records do not always allow us to construct a psychological portrait of the man, even though they preserve his own words. The investigator generally recorded only information of factual value to the prosecution, condensing statements and omitting material considered irrelevant to the investigation. During the first two interrogations, Guytov denied everything, apparently believing that anyone capable of testifying against him was beyond the investigator's reach. But once the Kronstadt gendarmerie archives had been opened, denial became pointless. On June 25, 1917, Guytov submitted a brief written confession acknowledging that he had served as a secret informant in various security departments and gendarmerie administrations in Petrograd, Baku, Tiflis, and Kronstadt under the codenames "Kirillov" and "Kamensky"⁷⁰. Subsequent attempts to extract more detailed testimony from him proved unsuccessful.

Guytov's case is particularly interesting because it preserves a penciled draft of a conversation between Alexander Ivanovich and his investigator that took place after his confession. The discussion occurred in a relatively informal atmosphere, as suggested by comments in the notes such as "lights a cigarette". Guytov behaved with remarkable defiance for someone in the position of an exposed informant, displaying neither embarrassment nor attempts at self-justification. Perhaps this was a deliberate tactic intended to unsettle the investigator, or perhaps, expecting no favorable outcome, he simply decided to "tell the blunt

⁶⁹ ГА РФ. Ф. 1657. Оп. 1. Д. 17. Л. 80.

⁷⁰ Ibid. Л. 5.

truth". He expressed no remorse whatsoever for his work with the political police: "It makes no difference to me how people look at me..." "I have no intention of rehabilitating myself..." "I knew I would be arrested. There is a file on me in the *Okhrana*. We want to free innocent people! I served the autocratic regime as its eye; now it no longer exists. And the new regime should be against me. You arrested me for being a provocateur, yet now provocateurs may occupy even more prominent positions. Let them serve, with God's blessing"⁷¹.

When the investigator demanded that he identify other individuals who had worked for the political police, Guytov categorically refused: "I am an old agent of security. I prefer to think well of people. What you have here is the settling of personal scores. Everything has changed now; there are no longer people on the side of the old regime. I am not accusing you personally of settling scores. You understand – it would be dishonorable of me to betray my old comrades. I'd rather put a bullet through my head". At the same time, he spoke respectfully of the officers of the Kronstadt gendarmerie administration: "They are all honest men". "Colonel Vladimirov was my handler. He gave me an excellent evaluation. I was of use in Kronstadt"⁷².

Guytov also articulated what might be called a doctrine of informant "purism": an informer should never provoke crimes but should report only genuine revolutionary activists. "If I was merely an agent of the Security Section, then I should not be judged; but if I entered an organization with the intention of betraying it, that is another matter. Our [that is, the security police's. – H.-G.] task was to find a way to free all innocent people". "Those people had been drawn in. But these others were all non-party people who knew nothing. When non-party people are arrested, it is painful to look at them. There is no interest in holding someone who is worth nothing". "I met Teplov in London, but I did not take a single address from him". "The worst thing I have already endured is being called a provocateur"⁷³.

Guytov also openly questioned the revolutionary legal order and doubted that the new regime would live up to socialist ideals:

⁷¹ ГАРФ. Ф. 1657. Оп. 1. Д. 17. Л. 47, 48, 51.

⁷² Ibid. Л. 47, 49, 50.

⁷³ Ibid.

“We release robbers while keeping provocateurs in prison”. “When, after the verdict, will I see a state governed by law? Then publish all the documents”. “As for socialism – we are still a long way from it. The issue is purely political”⁷⁴.

Yet the question of Guytov’s conviction and punishment was unexpectedly postponed. There were good reasons for this. The historian L.V. Lukyanchikova, who studied the work of the Extraordinary Investigative Commission of the Kronstadt Fortress, notes that the Commission was directly subordinate to the Soviet Executive Committee and was empowered to determine the degree of guilt of those arrested for political crimes committed under the old regime. Those found innocent were released, while those found guilty remained imprisoned until the convening of the Constituent Assembly, which Kronstadt’s revolutionaries believed should determine the fate of those who had served the tsarist regime. Cases involving secret police informants – that is, traitors from within the revolutionary movement – were referred to the Public Democratic Court, which was accountable both to the Kronstadt Soviet and to its Executive Committee. The court’s powers were likewise limited. Depending on the degree of guilt and the available evidence, it could release a former informer under public supervision, forbidding departure from Kronstadt; release the individual while publishing his name on an official list of the guilty together with the degree of culpability and notifying revolutionary authorities at his place of residence; release him while depriving him of voting rights; or, if considered particularly dangerous, keep him imprisoned until a separate law governing provocateurs could be enacted. The principle of revolutionary justice was succinctly expressed by the Chairman of the Extraordinary Investigative Commission in a speech concerning the conviction of the informer aboard the destroyer *Gavriil*, who operated under the codename “Sinichkina” (A.M. Ankudinov): “We can determine whether the accused is guilty or not guilty. In the first case we release him; in the second we apply one of five preventive measures. The old laws have been rejected, and we cannot yet create new ones. We must judge according to what our honor and conscience dictate”⁷⁵.

⁷⁴ Ibid. Л. 47, 51.

⁷⁵ Лукьянчикова Л.В. Следствие и суд по политическим делам в России в 1917 г. (по материалам ЧСК Кронштадтской крепости) // Лубянские чтения – 2022. Актуальные проблемы истории отечественных органов

The difficulty was that, several months after the February Revolution, the initial wave of revolutionary terror and extrajudicial reprisals justified by “popular anger” had subsided, while no legal framework yet existed for prosecuting former informants. Trying them under the laws of the old regime was equally problematic, since police intelligence work had generally been conducted within the bounds of existing legislation. As a result, they could only be judged “according to conscience” – or not judged at all. The Extraordinary Investigative Commission of the Kronstadt Fortress held its first session on October 14, 1917. Various political parties delegated representatives to investigate the activities of provocateurs. The Bolsheviks were represented by T.I. Ulyantsev (Otradnev), a sailor and member of the Kronstadt Committee of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (Bolsheviks), who had recently been released from a tsarist prison. The Menshevik Internationalists were represented, somewhat surprisingly, by the former Socialist Revolutionary Y.M. Zubelevich (“Dasha of Kronstadt”), a veteran of the 1905 Revolution. The Socialist Revolutionary Maximalists delegated a certain Martinson; the Soviet Executive Committee was represented by Poligoshko; the Peasants’ Union by Kuznetsov; the trade unions by Tellast; the municipal government by Popov; and the Executive Committee’s investigative commission by a man named Semenov, who was possibly Vasily Pavlovich Semenov, a sailor aboard the destroyer *Okhotnik* and a member of the Third and Fourth Central Baltic Fleet Committees (Tsentro Balt). Following the October Revolution, the Commission’s work was partially paralyzed. Its democratic members entered into opposition, while the Bolshevik Ulyantsev took an active part in the overthrow of the Provisional Government⁷⁶.

In November, the Extraordinary Investigative Commission transferred its case files to the Public Democratic Court of the Kronstadt Fortress. Most of the former secret informants were released, as the court concluded that “the guilty parties had engaged in police intelligence work not out of hostility toward the liberation movement, but because

безопасности: сборник материалов XXVI научно-теоретической конференции «Исторические чтения на Лубянке». Москва, 2 декабря 2022 г. / Войсковая часть 33965. М., 2023. С. 46–48, 50.

⁷⁶ Раскольников Ф.Ф. Кронштадт и Питер в 1917 году. 2-е изд. М.: Политиздат, 1990. С. 240, 241, 316.

of their political immaturity, under the pressure of poverty or fear of the gendarmerie authorities”. The case of Ankudinov, however, was returned for reconsideration⁷⁷. An exception was made for three former secret informants. They remained in prison because sailors’ crews threatened to lynch them if they were released. They were apparently regarded as “ideological” collaborators. In light of Guytov’s own statements quoted above, it was not difficult to reach the same conclusion in his case.

The Public Democratic Court did not issue its decision in Guytov’s case until December 2, 1917. The charge of provocation – that is, establishing revolutionary organizations for the purpose of exposing and arresting their members – was dismissed. At the same time, the accusation of informing, namely writing denunciations, was found to have been proven. The court nevertheless declined to pass sentence, ordering that Guytov remain imprisoned “until laws determining the fate of informants are enacted”⁷⁸. At the end of December, the Public Democratic Court of Kronstadt was dissolved pursuant to the Decree on the Courts of November 22, 1917, which abolished all existing judicial bodies and investigative commissions⁷⁹.

The new change of power proved a salvation for many employees of the tsarist political police, especially in the provinces. Taking advantage of the reorganization of the judicial system, many of them managed to secure their release in January 1918 and disappear before the Bolsheviks’ emerging apparatus of repression became fully operational⁸⁰.

In the armed forces of South Russia

After the trial, Guytov unexpectedly disappears from the historical record. At first glance, one might be tempted to end the biography of

⁷⁷ ГА РФ. Ф. 1657. Оп. 1. Д. 27. Л. 17.

⁷⁸ Гордеев П.Н. *Op. cit.* С. 98.

⁷⁹ Decree on courts. 22 November (5 December) 1917 г. [Electronic resource] https://www.hist.msu.ru/ER/Etext/DEKRET/o_sude1.htm

⁸⁰ Мистрюгов П.А. Государственная политика Временного правительства и советской власти по отношению к бывшим служащим общей и политической полиции России в марте 1917 – декабре 1921 г. (по материалам Самарской губернии) // Genesis: исторические исследования. 2018. № 10. С. 29.



February Revolution in Kronstadt.
Russian State Archive of the Navy

this police informant with an eloquent ellipsis. The chaos of the Civil War enabled many secret informants — and even police and gendarme officers — to leave the country. Those who remained in Russia generally had only two viable strategies for survival: either find employment outside their former profession or join one of the opposing sides in the conflict, putting their experience and expertise to use. For former gendarme and police officers, entering Red service was often a matter of survival, whereas joining the anti-Bolshevik forces was motivated both by ideological convictions and by practical considerations: intelligence and counterintelligence work was the only profession they knew, and service in the White armies was, quite simply, a professional employment.

This, however, generally applied to commissioned officers and civil officials — not to secret informants. Guytov became an exception to this rule. He entered the service of the Whites despite having no formal intelligence training and despite the traditionally hostile attitude toward informants within the officer corps. Fate, once again, was ironic. Guytov's immediate handler in the Kronstadt gendarmerie, Lieutenant Colonel Vladimirov, chose a very different path. Acting out of considerations of survival, he voluntarily entered the Red Army on August 3,

1918⁸¹. He was not mobilized as a military specialist, since he had actually been discharged from military service for health reasons on January 13, 1918. On August 13, 1919, Vladimirov was appointed commander of the newly formed 1st Reserve Rifle Regiment stationed in Smolensk Governorate, becoming the only known gendarmerie officer to command an entire regiment of the Red Army during the Civil War⁸².

How Guytov reached southern Russia remains uncertain. It is possible that he traveled to the relatives in Odessa mentioned earlier and there found himself caught up in the Civil War. Speculation, however, is unwarranted. In August 1919, units of the Volunteer Army occupied Kyiv. Shortly thereafter, the Intelligence Section of the Quartermaster-General's Directorate of the Headquarters of the Troops of the Kyiv Region was established. It was headed by Colonel Vladimir Mikhailovich Melnitsky, a graduate of the Imperial Nicholas Academy of the General Staff who, during the First World War, had worked on counterintelligence matters in the Quartermaster-General's Department of the Headquarters of the Eighth Army. Among the Section's responsibilities were:

- maintaining records of enemy warlords operating behind the front lines;
- organizing extensive agent intelligence of every kind and processing the information obtained;
- collecting intelligence on the enemy rear;
- producing periodic operational maps of the enemy rear;
- preparing five-day radio intelligence summaries;
- compiling weekly reports on enemy dispositions accompanied by maps;
- issuing daily intelligence summaries based on reports received from divisional headquarters;
- collecting enemy propaganda literature.

For the period from September through December 1919, the Headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of South

⁸¹ Columbia University. Bakhmeteff Archive. Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Vladimir Vladimirovich Vladimirov Papers. Documents. Учетно-воинский билет.

⁸² РГВА. Ф. 37976. Оп. 2. Д. 9–280. Л. 2–4.

Russia allocated 800,000 rubles for these activities. The money, however, never arrived. The Quartermaster-General of the Kyiv Regional Headquarters managed to secure alternative funding, though on a much smaller scale: 200,000 rubles in Denikin government currency and another 100,000 Soviet rubles⁸³. The latter were needed to pay agents operating behind Soviet lines. In October, the Intelligence Section also received Soviet passports, identification papers, official seals, and rubber stamps captured by units of the 7th Infantry Division of the Armed Forces of South Russia⁸⁴. The most pressing problem, however, remained personnel.

The appointment process for intelligence officers is usually poorly documented, leaving historians with little more than official appointment orders. In this case, however, a unique source has survived: a penciled transcript of a telephone conversation held on October 15, 1919, between Colonel Genrikh (Heinrich) Ivanovich Shlidt (Schlidt), Head of the Intelligence Section at Volunteer Army Headquarters, and Colonel Melnitsky, head of the Kyiv Regional Intelligence Section. Shlidt stated: "Today I am sending you a man who has been working in your area. I have given him a letter addressed to you. He has established communications with the Petliura zone and also with the headquarters of the Soviet Twelfth Army. He will report the details to you personally. He is entirely trustworthy. Do not spare money – it will be too late otherwise. Take him into your service. If you consider this undesirable, then, after hearing his report, send him back. He has been working continuously in the Kyiv area, has provided excellent intelligence, and has organized the operation superbly. He should arrive in about three days"⁸⁵. For reasons of security, Guytov's name was naturally not mentioned during the conversation. Nevertheless, Melnitsky's reports on the activities of his intelligence organization leave no doubt that Guytov was the individual in question. It has not yet been possible to establish exactly when Guytov entered the service of the Volunteer Army Intelligence Section, although Shlidt himself had served in the Army Quartermaster-General's Department since December 2, 1918.

⁸³ ПГБА. Ф. 39666. Оп. 1. Д. 46. Л. 165–166.

⁸⁴ Ibid. Л. 17.

⁸⁵ Ibid. Л. 30 об. – 33 об.



Leadership of the Kronstadt Soviet.

From open sources

Guytov was appointed Chief of Intelligence Post No. 2 of the Intelligence Section of the Headquarters of the Troops of the Kyiv Region. The exact date of his appointment is unknown, but it must have occurred no later than October 24, since on that day Melnitsky signed an authorization permitting Guytov to obtain an official seal certifying his position⁸⁶. It is worth considering the circumstances under which Guytov worked and the tasks assigned to him.

During the autumn and winter of 1919 – first during the advance on Moscow and later during the unsuccessful effort to hold the collapsing front – one of the principal problems confronting the Armed Forces of South Russia was the large number of warlords operating in their rear. Suppressing them required the diversion of substantial military forces from an army that was already dangerously small. According to Intelligence Section reports, twenty-eight warlords with a combined strength of up to 15,000 men were operating in the Kyiv Region alone, terrorizing fourteen uyezds. By comparison, White forces in the province numbered only about 9,000–10,000 troops. The largest groups, commanded by Atamans (warlords) Petenko and Zeleny, operated in Kanev Uyezd and possessed between four and six artillery pieces⁸⁷.

⁸⁶ Ibid. A. 59.

⁸⁷ Ibid. A. 43. A. 142.

In a report entitled *The Insurrectionary Movement in Little Russia*, Colonel Melnitsky argued that the region had become “one continuous field of banditry”. Every uyezd contained several armed groups, whose members ranged socially from peasants to former officers. Politically, he divided these groups into three categories:

1. non-ideological (purely criminal);
2. Ukrainian nationalist;
3. Bolshevik.

Some groups consisted of the remnants of defeated Petliurist or Red Army formations – for example, Petenko’s force, which had been formed from survivors of the Red Army’s Odessa Group. Such organizations maintained close contacts either with Symon Petliura or with Moscow, from which they received money and operational instructions. Having begun as small detachments of fifteen to twenty men during the regime of Hetman P.P. Skoropadsky, they rapidly expanded because, as Melnitsky observed, “insurrectionary banditry became a highly profitable and comparatively safe profession, offering a quick and reliable path to wealth”⁸⁸. Some warlords eventually created armies of their own. Thus Ataman Zelenko, subordinate to the Ukrainian People’s Republic, proclaimed a mobilization in the Kyiv, Bila Tserkva, and Vasylykiv uyezds – even behind White lines – calling up conscripts of the 1913–1919 classes, as well as officers, physicians, and medical orderlies.

For the Armed Forces of South Russia to effectively combat such groups, it was essential to know precisely their location, numbers, military plans, and other relevant information. The task of collecting intelligence fell to the Kyiv Regional Intelligence Section, which operated three intelligence posts: No. 1 in Kyiv, No. 2 in Cherkasy, and No. 3 in Tiraspol. Kyiv Intelligence Post No. 1 was headed by Captain Pavlovsky, whom the head of the Intelligence Section described as “a very capable officer, well versed in the intelligence tasks assigned to him and able, in a short period of time, to recruit good agents”⁸⁹. His responsibilities included espionage against the Soviet 12th Army, at whose headquarters he maintained his own informants, as well as intelligence gathering in

⁸⁸ Ibid. A. 164.

⁸⁹ Ibid. A. 46. A. 166.



"Gendarme" chocolate.

Partnership of A.I. Abrikosov and Sons. Russian State Library

Kyiv Uyezd. He had agents in Korosten and surrounding villages. In December 1919, Pavlovsky proposed creating an anti-Soviet Ukrainian insurgent movement in territories occupied by the Red Army. However, due to a lack of funds and the impending organizational collapse of the Armed Forces of South Russia, the project was never implemented. Tiraspol Intelligence Post No. 3, headed by Staff Captain Biedrzycki, conducted political and military intelligence operations in Bessarabia and Romania and was naturally not involved in the fight against banditry.

The main burden fell on Intelligence Post No. 2, located in the city of Cherkasy at 34 Nikolaevskaya Street. It was headed by A.I. Guytov. In his report on the work of the Kyiv Intelligence Section, Colonel Melnitsky described its activities as follows: "The main task of this post was intelligence on the Petliura Army, both military and political. In addition, with the appearance of armed bandit groups in our rear, the post was assigned the task of gathering intelligence on these gangs. The head of the post, Guytov, through his agents, established close links between the gangs and Petliura's headquarters. He sent a number of agents into Petliura's headquarters, who uncovered the entire organization and leadership of the insurgent movement"⁹⁰.

⁹⁰ Ibid. A. 166 об.

The Russian State Military Archive preserves several reports from Guytov to Melnitsky concerning underground bandit activity in Kyiv Region, dated November 13, 23, 28, 29, and 30, 1919. These documents make it possible to assess the nature and results of his work⁹¹. Most of the surviving reports by A.I. Guytov concern the activities of the armed groups led by the following atamans:

- Zeleny (D. I. Terpilo);
- A.N. Vyshkvarka (Vyskovorka);
- A.A. Hulyi-Hulenko (Khulyi-Khulenko);
- V. Eremenko;
- P.D. Kaliberda (Keleberda);
- S.D. Kotsura;
- G.N. Ryabokon;
- V.S. Chuchupak.

Some reports were organized thematically. For each armed group, Guytov provided information on:

- the identity of its leader;
- the leader's biography and personal characteristics;
- the group's strength, social composition, and sources and methods of recruitment;
- the group's deployment: headquarters, main occupied villages, weapons depots;
- material resources (food supplies, financial resources, quantities of weapons and ammunition);
- espionage activities (methods and nature of the group's intelligence work);
- the presence of defectors from the Army to the Bolsheviks or Petliurists;
- political attitudes within the group;
- connections and relations with other groups;
- means of transportation and communication⁹².

⁹¹ Ibid. А. 43. А. 123, 129, 173–176 о6., 185–190.

⁹² Ibid. А. 185–189 о6.

Guytov placed his own agents inside the groups, sent them to observe settlements occupied by such groups, and maintained informants within Ukrainian financial and public organizations as well as at Petliura's headquarters. He succeeded in proving that several groups were being financed through intermediaries by the "Ukrainbank" and the cooperative association "Dneprosoyuz".

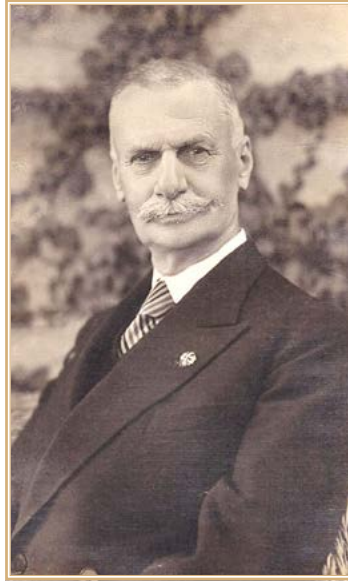
Reading Guytov's reports, one is immediately struck by their style. Reports written by intelligence officers who had no pre-revolutionary experience in investigative work and had previously served merely as army officers often contain lengthy reflections, unsupported assumptions, and personal conclusions presented as fact. Guytov's texts, by contrast, are concise, precise, rich in concrete information, and characterized by a strict structure of presentation. The influence of the old imperial political police's intelligence tradition is immediately apparent.

Using the material he collected and organized, the leadership prepared analytical reports on the condition of the "internal front", which were sent to the Commander of the Regional Forces, the Quartermaster-General, and the Chief of the Rear Services. These reports served as the basis for planning and carrying out punitive expeditions, organized by Colonel S.I. Khrapko, Chief of Staff of the Rear Services, and intensified after Lieutenant General G.P. Rozalion-Soshalsky had assumed the post of Chief of the Rear on November 24⁹³.

In his report on the Intelligence Section dated December 19, Colonel Melnitsky emphasized Guytov's efficiency, his ability to create an extensive agent network within a very short period, and noted that among all intelligence received by the section, "the most valuable information came from Intelligence Post No. 2, which worked specifically on the insurgent movement"⁹⁴. The White forces were unable to neutralize all of the warlords because they were forced to abandon Kyiv Region. The intelligence post itself relocated to the city of Novomyrhorod in Elisavetgrad Uyezd of Kherson Governorate. Melnitsky petitioned his superiors to preserve Guytov and his intelligence post in order to continue monitoring relations between Petliura, the Bolsheviks, and the Poles. No further documents illuminating Guytov's fate have been

⁹³ Ibid. A. 50. A. 1–20.

⁹⁴ Ibid. A. 46. A. 156 o6.



Lieutenant General Georgy Petrovich Rozalion-Soshalsky,
Chief of the Rear Services of the Kyiv Region of the Armed Forces
of South Russia, in exile.

Photograph from the White Guard public group

discovered. It is possible that contact with Melnitsky was lost because Intelligence Post No. 2 was evacuated west of the Dnieper and was expected to retreat with the White forces toward Odessa, while the personnel of the main Intelligence Section were evacuated from Kyiv to Rostov and Ekaterinodar⁹⁵.

It has not been possible to determine what happened to Alexander Guytov after the defeat of the Whites. Did fortune finally abandon him, and did he perish during the White retreat in 1919? Did he remain in Soviet Russia, once again changing his identity and documents? Was he able to escape abroad? These questions remain unanswered.

The history of Guytov is not merely an interesting case study for academic research; it also allows several broader conclusions to be drawn. We can see that approaches to intelligence work in different investigative organizations varied greatly and often contradicted official instructions, which required careful treatment of informants. All of Guytov's failures resulted not from his own carelessness but from the incompetent actions of his handlers or of the Police Department itself.

⁹⁵ Ibid. A. 108.

It became clear that, beyond ordinary blackmail during recruitment, the *Okbrana* employed far more sophisticated methods, such as placing individuals on wanted lists through fabricated criminal cases. We also see that, contrary to regulations, valuable agents were sometimes taken back into service after exposure, but under different codenames and with new documents. Having passed through this “school of life”, a secret informant, under competent supervision, could master intelligence work to such a professional degree that he could eventually lead an entire intelligence organization and achieve significant results.

The story of Guytov vividly demonstrates the importance of the human factor in intelligence operations.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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**GENDARME UNIFORMS
DURING THE REIGNS
OF THE EMPERORS FROM
ALEXANDER I TO NICHOLAS II.
1817—1911**



1. Private of the Gendarme Commands.
1817–1825



2. Staff Officer of the Gendarme Divisions.
1817–1825



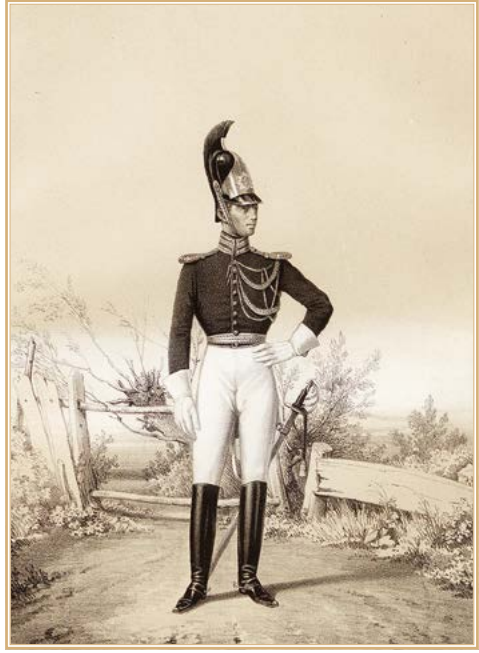
3. Private of the Gendarme Divisions.
1817–1825



4. Trumpeter of the Gendarme Divisions.
1817–1825



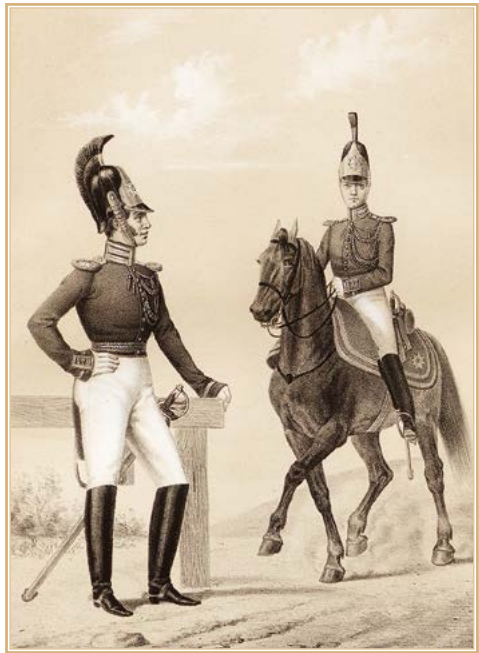
5. Trumpeter of the Life Guards
Gendarme Half-Squadron.
1820—1825



6. Junior Officer of the Gendarme
Half-Squadron.
1817—1825



7. Trumpeter and Junior Officer of the
Life Guards Gendarme Half-Squadron.
1816—1817



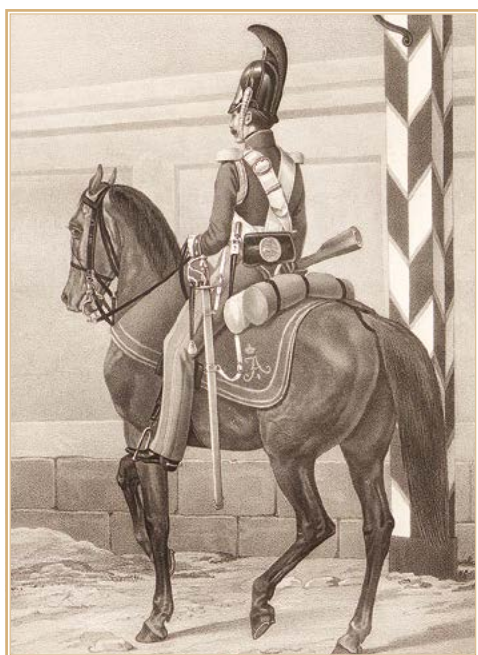
8. Junior Officers of the Life Guards
Gendarme Half-Squadron.
1815—1816



9. Non-Commissioned Officer
and Private of the Life Guards
Gendarme Half-Squadron.
1815– 1816



10. Non-Commissioned Officer
and Trumpeter
of the Gendarme Regiment.
1820– 1825



11. Private
of the Gendarme Regiment.
1817– 1820



12. Non-Commissioned and Junior
Officers of the Gendarme Regiment.
1817– 1820



13. Staff Officers
of the Gendarme Regiment.
1815—1820



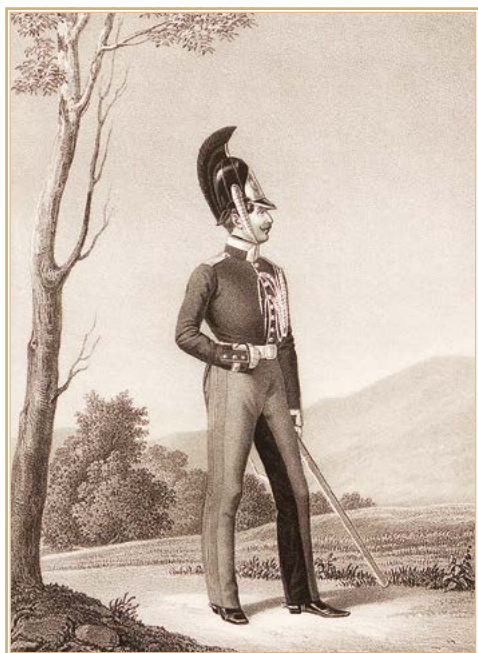
14. Staff Officers
of the Gendarme Regiment.
1815—1817



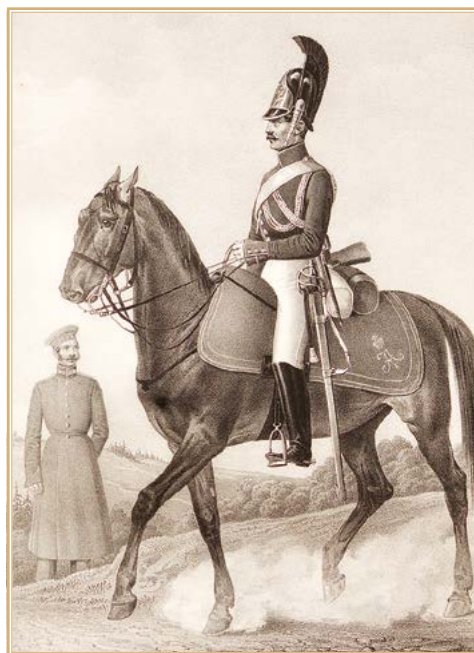
15. Junior Officer
of the Gendarme Regiment.
1815—1817



16. Trumpeter and Staff Trumpeter
of the Gendarme Regiment.
1815—1817



17. Non-Commissioned Officer
of the Gendarme Regiment.
1815–1817



18. Privates
of the Gendarme Regiment.
1815–1817



19. Junior Officer
of the Gendarme Corps.
1854–1855



20. Junior Officer of the Gendarme
Commands of the Caucasus Region.
1853–1855



21. Non-Commissioned Officer
and Private of the Gendarme
Commands of the Caucasus Region.
1853–1855



22. Trumpeter
of the Gendarme Divisions.
1845–1855



23. Private of the Gendarme Regiment
and Junior Officer of the Gendarme
Divisions.
1845–1855



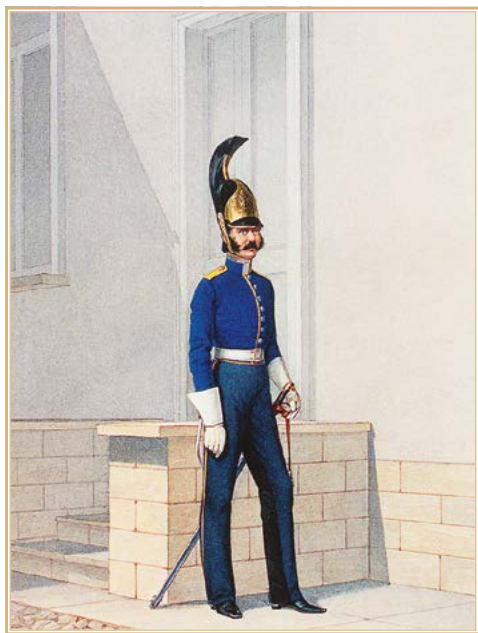
24. Private
of the Gendarme Commands.
1836–1845



25. General of the Gendarme Corps.
1827–1845



26. Private of the Gendarme Divisions.
1826



27. Non-Commissioned Officer
of the Gendarme Commands.
1826



28. Staff Officer and Trumpeter
of the Gendarme Divisions.
1826



29. Junior Officer
of the Gendarme Regiment.
1826



30. Private
of the Gendarme Regiment.
1826



31. Junior Officer of the Gendarme
Regiment in full-dress uniform.
15 March 1855



32. Private of the Life Guards Gendarme
Half-Squadron in full-dress uniform.
4 November 1862



33. Non-Commissioned Officer of the Gendarme Squadrons and Junior Officer of the Gendarme Commands and Divisions in full-dress uniform.
4 November 1862



34. Private of the Gendarme Divisions and Commands in full-dress uniform.
4 November 1862



35. Full-dress and field uniform of the Gendarme Commands.
16 September 1872



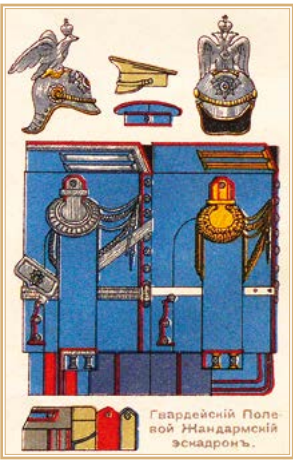
36. Junior and non-commissioned officers of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes in full-dress uniform.
1881



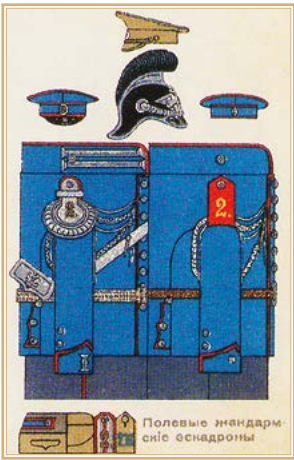
37. Junior Officer and Vakhmistr (Sergeant Major) of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes in full-dress uniform. 1897



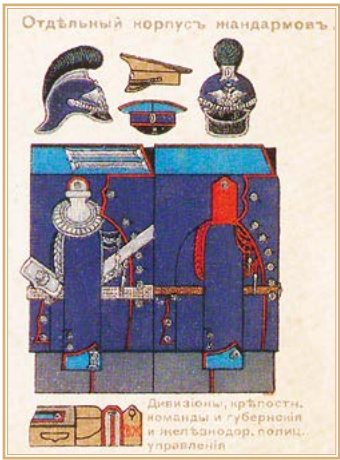
38. Full-dress uniform of the Gendarme Squadrons. 1897. From left to right: Private (2) and Staff Officer (1) of the Guards Gendarme Squadron; Junior Officer and Non-Commissioned Officer of the Field Gendarme Squadrons



39. Uniform of the Guards Field Gendarme Squadron. Early 20th century



40. Uniform of the Field Gendarme Squadron. Early 20th century



41. Uniforms of the personnel of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes. Early 20th century



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34. Private of gendarme divisions and units in full dress uniform. November 4, 1862 / Chromolithogr. by Bek, in: *Changes in the uniforms and armaments of the troops of the Russian Imperial Army from the accession to the throne of Emperor Alexander Nikolaevich*. Notebook 66 / Compil. by K.K. Piratsky. St. Petersburg: Military printing house, 1863. Fig. 395 (in Russ.).
35. Full dress and campaign uniform of gendarme units. September 16, 1872 / Chromolithogr. by Konrad, in: *Changes in the uniforms and armaments of the troops of the Russian Imperial Army from the accession to the throne of Emperor Alexander Nikolaevich*. Notebooks 94–95 / Compil. by P.K. Gubarev. St. Petersburg: Military printing house, 1873. Fig. 559 (in Russ.).
36. Chief and non-commissioned officers of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes in full dress uniform, 1881, in: *Illustrated description of changes in the uniforms and equipment of the Imperial Russian Army for 1881*. Iss. 1. St. Petersburg, 1898. Fig. 13 (in Russ.).
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38. Full dress uniform of gendarme squadrons, 1897. From left to right: Private (2) and staff officer (1) of the Guards Gendarme Squadron, chief officer and non-commissioned officer of field gendarme squadrons, in: *Illustrated description of changes in the uniforms and equipment of the Imperial Russian Army for 1897*. Iss. 18. St. Petersburg: Military printing house, 1899. Fig. 156 (in Russ.).
39. Uniform of the Guards Field Gendarme Squadron, early 20th century, in: *Tables of uniforms of the Russian Army: Compiled as of May 10, 1910* / Compil. by V.K. Shenk. St. Petersburg: Lithography of N. Kadushin, 1910 (in Russ.).
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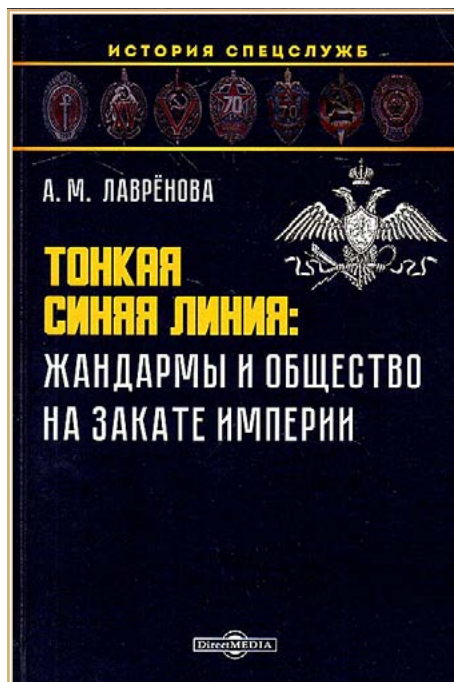
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Review of A.M. Lavryonova's Monograph The Thin Blue Line: Gendarmes and Society at the Twilight of the Empire.

Moscow; Berlin: Directmedia Publishing, 2023. 516 pp.

Abstract

This article presents a critical review of the monograph *The Thin Blue Line: Gendarmes and Society at the Twilight of the Empire* (2023) by the historian of Russian political surveillance Anastasia M. Lavryonova. The book is evaluated in the context of recent achievements in Russian historiography on the pre-revolutionary security services and the archival discoveries of recent years. The reviewer concludes that, despite several gaps in its treatment of the history of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes, the monograph is written to a high scholarly standard and incorporates an extensive body of quotations from previously unpublished archival documents. Lavryonova addresses a wide range of contested issues concerning the history of the law enforcement institutions of late imperial Russia, including the functions of the Gendarmerie Police Administrations of the Railways, the relationships



between provincial governors and central and local police authorities, and the diverse spectrum of public responses to the activities of the gendarmerie. The monograph also briefly considers the extent to which the work of provincial gendarmerie administrations corresponded to the methods employed by the security sections. Another important issue examined is the attitude of provincial gendarmerie commanders toward the use of confidential informants. Among the book's principal strengths are its statistical data on the size of the gendarmerie and the number of students involved in public disturbances, as well as its incorporation of material from pre-revolutionary periodicals and contemporary memoirs. At the same time, the reviewer expresses reservations about the insufficiently critical treatment of certain memoir sources cited in the monograph. Overall, Lavryonova's study represents a significant contribution to the continuing scholarly investigation of the investigative and security institutions of the Russian Empire.

Keywords:

A.M. Lavryonova; Sergei V. Zubatov; Police Department; Separate Corps of Gendarmes; Political surveillance

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In 2023, Directmedia Publishing published a monograph by A.M. Lavryonova, C.Sc. (History), *The Thin Blue Line: Gendarmes and Society at the Twilight of the Empire*¹. In 2018, the researcher had defended her dissertation, *The Separate Corps of Gendarmes and Russian Society in 1880–1917*, and the monograph became a logical continuation of the author's archival research. A.M. Lavryonova's book consists of four chapters and thirteen appendices. The appendices contain background information on the number of injured police officers and Separate Corps of Gendarmes (SCG) officials in 1905–1909, the growth dynamics of SCG officials; students who participated in the riots of 1899–1901, information on the number of “political” and “non-political” inquiries conducted by railway gendarmerie officials, etc. While preparing the monograph, A.M. Lavryonova's work was impressive: according to preliminary estimates, she used over two hundred files from the State Archives of the Russian Federation, 55 sources of personal provenance, 27 collections of published documents, six reference and information publications, 20 dissertations, and six monographs and articles in English. Periodicals were represented by articles from *Vestnik Politsii*, *Birzhevye Vedomosti*, *Russkaya Molva*, *Utro Rossii*, and other magazines and newspapers.

¹ Лавренова А.М. Тонкая синяя линия: жандармы и общество на закате империи. М.; Берлин: Директмедиа Паблишинг, 2023. 516 с.

Of particular interest, in my opinion, are the previously unpublished memoirs of the surveillance operative of St. Petersburg Security Section, E.L. Zaitsev, and fragments of memoirs about the youth of the Head of Warsaw Security Section, P.P. Martynov, included in the publication. Unfortunately, the memoirs of P.P. Martynov are not preceded by an introductory article by the author of the monograph; readers can find a brief biographical note about him only on pp. 68–69. The tendentious notes of E.L. Zaitsev, who turned out to be a revolutionary and sympathized with the plans to blow up the Security Section (p. 344), require a more detailed commentary. For example, Zaitsev's assertion that "Gapon was one of the secret police's own men" (p. 341) is not confirmed by the works of authoritative historians. Most of them did not consider G.A. Gapon an agent of the *Okhrana*². The priest's contact with the St. Petersburg secret police did not lead to an ongoing, mutually beneficial cooperation. In the context of a critical analysis of Zaitsev's memoirs, it would be interesting to examine his investigation file. The author's claims about repeated beatings he suffered during interrogations certainly require verification. Overall, it is quite difficult to understand the chronological or substantive logic behind the inclusion of some fascinating archival documents as appendices to the monograph.

The main content of the monograph under review is preceded by an introduction, which provides general reflections on the negative attitude toward gendarmes in various historical periods. At the same time, A.M. Lavryonova expresses concern regarding "a tendency toward the forced glorification of some representatives of the Separate Corps of Gendarmes" (p. 8), without, however, citing examples of such studies. The virtual absence of a review of the academic literature on the topic in the monograph is regrettable: while fairly assessing the high level of Z.I. Peregudova's monograph, A.M. Lavryonova cites the

² Потолов С.И. Георгий Гапон и петербургские рабочие: пути и перепутья рабочих организаций России накануне и в годы первой русской революции / Рабочие и общественно-политический процесс в России в конце XIX–XX в.: Материалы VI Всерос. науч. конф.: В 2 ч. / Отв. ред., сост. А.М. Белов. Кострома: КГУ им. Н.А. Некрасова, 2012. Ч. II. С. 29–42; «Охранка». Воспоминания руководителей политического сыска / Вступ. ст., подгот. текста и коммент. З.И. Перегудовой. Т. 2. М., 2004. С. 541–542.

source-rich study of L.V. Ulyanova's "controversial and curious," and the works of V.V. Hutarev-Garnishevsky are only cited in the list of references. A detailed analysis of the important, and in some ways iconic for all researchers of political investigation, works of G.N. Bibikov, M.V. Sidorova, L.V. Ulyanova, and V.V. Hutarev-Garnishevsky³, as it would seem, would help readers determine the author's position on important issues in the topic under study, as well as understand the range of scholarly problems of interest to her. Although the works of G.N. Bibikov and M.V. Sidorova are devoted to an earlier period in the history of the Russian gendarmerie, it would be interesting to understand the extent to which A.M. Lavryonova agrees or disagrees with their assessments of the effectiveness of gendarmerie surveillance in the public administration system. Unfortunately, the names of the historians whose works A.M. Lavryonova cites are not included in the index, which complicates work with the publication.

The information from the sources cited by Lavryonova requires commentary and clarification. For example, on page 67, the researcher quotes the head of the St. Petersburg Security Section, A.V. Gerasimov, as saying that S.V. Zubatov, more than anyone else, became closely associated with gendarmerie activities. However, this opinion contradicts her own account on page 71 and the overall monograph's Conclusion: "The relationship between gendarmes and police officials was often competitive. The small Corps of Gendarmes could not meet the need for political oversight in the provinces, and therefore police officials had to assume some of these functions. This duplication of functions led to excessive secrecy, mutual distrust, and rivalry..." (p. 309). The long-standing conflict between the Gendarme Directorate and the *Okbrana* has been extensively covered in the scholarly literature. As an example

³ Биби́ков Г.Н. Жандармский надзор в системе государственного управления Российской империи (1826–1856 гг.). М.: Квадрига, 2023; Биби́ков Г.Н. А.Х. Бенкендорф и политика императора Николая I. М.: Три квадрата, 2009; Сидорова М.В. О жандармах, императорах и изобразительном искусстве: архивные заметки. СПб.: Алетейя, 2023; Улья́нова Л.В. Политическая полиция и либеральное движение в Российской империи. Власть игры, игра властью. 1880–1905. СПб.: Алетейя, 2022; Хута́рев-Га́рнише́вский В.В. Противостояние. Спецслужбы, армия и власть накануне падения Российской империи, 1913–1917 гг. М.: Изд-во Института Гайдара, 2020.

from archival documents, we can cite the review of the head of the Riga Security Section on the work of local gendarmerie departments, sent to the Director of the Police Department, M.I. Trusevich, on December 8, 1907: "The Chief of the Livonian Gendarme Directorate's role in the investigation consists of monitoring Lieutenant Colonel Papadzhanov's investigations. The latter's efforts, however, yield no positive results, as he has no staff. The Chief of the Courland Directorate's role in the investigation consists of him personally conducting the investigation"⁴. A significant number of gendarmerie directorates' leaders sabotaged work with secret agents, raising the question of the fundamental rejection of "Zubatov's methods" within the gendarmerie. The percentage of local gendarmerie leaders and officers who recognized the usefulness of infiltrating agents into revolutionary circles remains to be determined by future historians.

A.M. Lavryonova's monograph addresses a number of controversial issues related to the activities of railway gendarme police departments. On page 91, the researcher, unfortunately without providing the date of the document, cites a Police Department circular prohibiting the participation of lower-ranking Railway Gendarme Police Directorate officers in searches. Since 1903, due to the insufficient number of personnel at the Railway Gendarme Directorate, local railway gendarme police officers began to be involved in searches at the request of the Gendarme Police Directorate heads (p. 92). According to the researcher, the number of Railway Gendarme Police Directorate inquiries into state crimes constituted less than one-tenth of a percent of the total number of inquiries. In the pre-war years, "not a single political investigation was launched" (pp. 93–94). This information allows the researcher to conclude that the local railway gendarme police officers were placed even lower than the regular police in terms of investigating state crimes (p. 91), and also that "the railway gendarmes ... were not actually a political police..." (p. 109).

A.M. Lavryonova's conclusions do not correlate with the historiographic data on the issue under consideration. P.A. Kolpakov, who has written several articles on the railway's Gendarme Directorate, cites a secret order of the Police Department of the Ministry of Internal

⁴ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 237. Д. 3. Ч. 21. Л. 28.

Affairs dated November 15, 1915, No. 17531, which stated that “railway gendarmes were ordered to take measures to remove from circulation printed materials containing joint images of Nicholas II and Wilhelm II”⁵. The confiscation of printed materials involved searches, and, as the document suggests, these did not require permission or an order from the head of the Gendarme Directorate. The distribution of joint portraits of the German and Russian emperors during World War I was a political crime, and combating the dissemination of unacceptable images was a political investigation. In another article, Kolpakov, based on an analysis of a significant number of archival documents, concludes that “the fight against military espionage was one of the most important areas of activity for railway gendarmes during the war years”⁶. Counterintelligence, given the overlapping functions of various police agencies and the shortage of personnel in the Separate Corps of Gendarmes and Border Guards, can be considered political investigative work. Z.I. Peregudova also writes about the political investigation of the Railway Gendarme Directorate: “The revolutionary uprisings of 1905 and the active role played by railway workers in giving the October Strike a nationwide character forced the government to take urgent measures and involve the Railway Gendarme Police Directorate in the fight against revolutionary uprisings. By order of the Separate Gendarme Corps of July 28, 1906, No. 14528, the Directorate officials were charged with conducting inquiries into all ‘criminal actions’ of a political nature ‘committed within the railway right-of-way’... As a result, the Directorate began to function as political police. Secret intelligence surveillance was also established on the railways, which obliged the Railway Gendarme Police Directorate to maintain their own secret agents”⁷. Information that during the 1905–1907 revolution and in subsequent years, the Railway Gendarme Police

⁵ Колпаков П.А. Противодействие распространению антиправительственных изданий на железных дорогах России в последней четверти XIX — начале XX в. По материалам жандармской железнодорожной полиции // Вестник архивиста. 2024. № 1. С. 181.

⁶ Колпаков П.А. Разыскные циркуляры железнодорожной полиции как источник изучения шпионажа на территории России в конце XIX — начале XX вв. // Вестник Государственного университета просвещения. Серия: История и политические науки. 2024. № 1. С. 77.

⁷ Перегудова З.И. Политический сыск России. 1880–1917. М., 2013. С. 131.

Directorate “exceeded all other units of the combined in terms of personnel”⁸, also testify to the permanent involvement of their officials in the investigation of political crimes throughout the entire area of operating railways and railways under construction⁹.

On page 131, A.M. Lavryonova shares with readers a dubious story from the work of N.G. Rabotnov, a member of the Commission for the Analysis of the Archives of the Former Yaroslavl Provincial Gendarme Directorate and the Yaroslavl Security Section: “N.G. Rabotnov describes an incident that occurred in Yaroslavl, when police agents forcibly drove surveillance agents away from houses within their area of observation and deliberately exposed them”. It’s quite difficult to imagine such a picture. The author of *The Secrets of the Yaroslavl Torture Prison* collected the material in the spring and summer of 1917 and, obviously, was intended to present the facts, or “facts”, within the context of public demand for condemnation of the monarchical system of power in general and police institutions in particular. On the following (132) of the monograph, A.M. Lavryonova recounts a surprising story from an article by M.S. Chudakova: “Bünting [Governor of Tver. —S.M.] ... ordered local police to report all political incidents not to the Gendarme Directorate, as was the norm, but to the Governor’s Office. Furthermore, by order of the governor, all persons visiting the Directorate were registered. The police often made information they received about undercover agents public”. The information uncovered by Chudakova inevitably raises a number of questions. How was information about undercover officers disclosed? What were the consequences of exposing the gendarmerie undercover officers? How did the Police Department respond to the blatantly subversive actions of the Governor and general police?

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ A.M. Lavryonova’s monograph cites an article by V. Sherwood published in *Vestnik politsii* (the date of publication is not provided), in which he describes the Railway Gendarme Police Administration as understaffed (P. 135). Information on the Railway Gendarme Police Administration drawn from an article by the little-known V. Sherwood can scarcely be regarded as more reliable than the data available in Z.I. Peregodova’s now-classic monograph. Unfortunately, the principles of internal source criticism are not applied to Sherwood’s article.

Similarly, Felix Dzerzhinsky's stories about the gendarmes raise doubts. A.M. Lavryonova, apparently not doubting their veracity, recounts scenes from the life of an 18-year-old female prisoner who allegedly repeatedly "punched the gendarmes in the face" (p. 166). The monograph under review also conveys the myth of the Soviet publicist D.I. Zaslavsky about S.V. Zubatov. The head of the Moscow Security Section did not intend to make Maria Vulfovna Vilbushevich a star of the Zionist movement (p. 172). The Independent Jewish Labor Party, which carried out its activities in the Pale of Settlement, primarily opposed the propaganda of the Jewish socialist party "Bund". The "Independents", like police agents in workers' mutual aid societies in various industries, tried to switch the attention of the working class from political demands to economic ones. Unfortunately, Maria Vilbushevich was unable to live up to Zubatov's hopes. Several years ago, historians found documents indicating that she had been under the care of a psychiatrist since her youth¹⁰.

As noted above, A.M. Lavryonova's monograph is dominated by negative information about the gendarmes. The study depicts gendarmes drinking, intriguing, causing scandals, playing cards, shooting themselves, and their wives accepting bribes for the release of prisoners. The section entitled *Negative Public Attitudes Toward the Gendarmes: Origins and Realization* takes up 60 pages of the book (pp. 246–306). However, it is clear that a section entitled *Sources and Examples of Positive Public Attitudes Toward the Gendarmes* would also have a right to exist. Loyal workers and peasants, nobles, merchants, and industrialists could express gratitude to the gendarmes, security officers, and members of the general police for their effective service in protecting the country from the illegal actions of radical socialists or in combating criminals. For example, in 1907, 400 workers from the Berestovo-Bogodukhov mines sent a request to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers P.A. Stolypin to reinstate Dudarev, "as a tactful and skilled police inspector"¹¹. In A.M. Lavryonova's monograph there are expressions that are inappropriate for serious historical research. On p. 49 we find that "the officials... were

¹⁰ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 226. Д. 103.

¹¹ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 105. Д. 169. Л. 4.

eager for promotions”, and on p. 38 “the cornet started working like a snowplow”.

Overall, A.M. Lavryonova's book lacks generalizations, authorial analysis, and an analytical perspective on the key issues of the SCG during the revolutionary period of Russian history. In my opinion, the study can be defined as a potpourri of interesting stories from the lives of gendarmes of various ranks and units.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the monograph is of a high scholarly standard, introducing new sources and facts into scholarly circulation that will attract the attention of specialists and anyone interested in the history of the SCG. The section *Gendarmes and Women* (pp. 207–246) is absolutely unique; this topic has not previously been examined in such detail in serious scholarly works. Most of the review's comments are interpretative in nature; I hope that in future studies, A.M. Lavryonova will deem it possible to explore these themes, thereby undoubtedly complementing and enriching the body of literature on the political police. The book is written in accessible language and abounds with interesting stories from the official activities of security agencies; the author speaks from the perspective of a professional chronicler of the everyday life of the gendarmes.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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