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Original paper



Alexander V. Peregudov

Faculty of History, Voronezh State University

Voronezh, Russian Federation

E-mail: peregydoff@mail.ru

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. Д. 1169. А. 17 о6.

³¹ Ibid. Д. 1146. А. 7.

³² Ibid. А. 6 о6.

³³ Ibid. Д. 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. A. 30.

³⁷ Ibid. A. 31.

³⁸ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 3. Д. 1773. Л. 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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 Alexander V. Peregudov 

C.Sc. (History), Associate Professor of Political History
Faculty of History Voronezh State University,
SPIN-code: 5522-0773,
ORCID: 0009-0001-5617-0389

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