Policemen of the Tsar

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Published by Central European University Press

Abbott, Robert J.
Policemen of the Tsar: Local Police in an Age of Upheaval.
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Preface

Key instruments of tsarist power throughout their existence, Russia’s local police took on new importance in the reign of Tsar Alexander II (1855–1881). The liberation of 23 million serfs from their landlords’ control, growing fear of crime, and the terrorist violence of the closing years challenged law enforcement to take on tasks that worsened their already staggering burden. The regime’s response was a years-long struggle to reform and strengthen the police. The police’s role and performance in the mid-nineteenth century, the effort to transform them, and the implications of its results are the subjects of this book. For the first two subjects the focus is on 1855–1881, when the central authorities reexamined the police’s mission and struggled to improve them. The consequences of what the government did and did not achieve in what would prove the last major attempt to remake the police, however, were felt until tsarism’s fall. Our discussion of them, therefore, extends from 1881 into the twentieth century.

The major primary sources for this study came from the Russian State Historical Archives. The records of the Department of General Affairs and the Council of the Ministry of Internal Affairs include annual reports to the Tsar on the state of the local police.1 The journals of the Commission on Provincial and County Institutions, which prepared most of the proposals for strengthening the local police during 1859–1881, were also invaluable.2 So too were the papers of the State Council’s Departments and Chancellery, which recorded the intra-government debate on the proposals, and the state papers of P. A. Valuev, which include copies of key reports from this debate.

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1 Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv, hereafter RGIА, fonds 1284 and 1281.
2 RGIА, fond 1316.
missing from the State Council’s files. The multi-volume published materials of the Commission were also essential as was the compendium of Russian laws available on a website of the Russian National Library. Official histories of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which oversaw the local police, and of the St. Petersburg police, Russia’s largest and best-qualified force, were also useful sources. So were the works of Russia’s nineteenth-century “police scientists” whom Chapter 4 discusses.

The official histories and the works of the police scientists were the only scholarly studies of the local police produced until well into the twentieth century. In the Soviet period, the pre-revolutionary police were dismissed as obsolete tools of capitalism not worthy of historians’ attention. Western historians in these years, when examining the tsarist period, produced excellent studies of the political police but ignored the local police. By the 1970s, however, Western access to archives and other repositories of tsarist data allowed increased study of pre-Revolutionary institutions, including the local police. Historians have approached the subject from several perspectives. Daniel Brower and Robert Thurston examined the police’s efforts against crime as part of the political and social history of Russian cities. Cathy Frierson, Stephen Frank, and Christine Worobec discussed the peasant communities’

3 RGIA, f. 1160, 1162, 908.
5 Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del, 1802–1902: Isticheskii ocherk (St. Petersburg: Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del, 1902); Kratkii ocherk deiatel’nosti Ministerstva vnutrennikh del za dvadtsatatipatiletie 1855–1880 gg. (St. Petersburg: Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del, 1880); Nikolai Varadinov, Istoriia Ministerstva vnutrennikh del, 4 vols. in 8 (St. Petersburg: Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del, 1858–1862); and I. P. Vysotskii and V. E. Frish, S-Peterburgskaia stolichnaia politisia i gradonachal’stvo, 1703–1903: Kratkii isticheskii ocherk (St. Petersburg: R. Golike i A. Vil’borg, 1903).
6 See especially Ivan Andreevskii, Politseiskoe pravo, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg: V. V. Pratts, 1871–1873) and “Reforma ispolnit’el’noi politisi,” Sbornik gosudarstvennykh znani 5 (1878); Evgenii Anuchin, Isticheskii obzor razvitia administrativno-politseiskikh uchrezhdenii v Rossii s Uchrezhdenia o guberniakh 1775 g. do poslednego vremeni (St. Petersburg: Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del, 1872); and Ivan Tarasov, Politisia v epokhu reform (Moscow: A. I. Mamontov, 1885).
law enforcement needs and the central government’s failure to satisfy them.\textsuperscript{9} Louise McReynolds’s study of crime in the late tsarist period examined popular press accounts of the most sensational offenses and how they shaped public perceptions of the police.\textsuperscript{10} There also have been several short studies focused directly on the local police. These include an article by John Le Donne on Catherine the Great’s police, my own work on local law enforcement in specific localities, and Neil Weismann’s article on the local police on the eve of World War I.\textsuperscript{11} This book is the first in-depth assessment of the local police’s role in the tsarist system and how they affected Russia’s political and social development from the Age of the Great Reforms to the eve of tsarism’s collapse.

With one exception, this study focuses on European Russia and leaves discussion of police in the borderlands to an appendix.\textsuperscript{12} The exception is the Kingdom of Poland, which came under Russian rule at the Congress of Vienna. The police system established there after the 1863 revolution was a model that many Russian officials sought to apply to European Russia. For this reason it requires discussion in the main text. The appendix examines this system at greater length and also covers the police in the Baltic provinces, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Siberia. The appendix does not describe the police in the Grand Duchy of Finland, which the tsarist regime left largely undisturbed until the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12} For a succinct account of the administrative-police systems in these regions, see L. E. Lapteva, \textit{Regional’noe i mestnoe upravlenie v Rossii: Vtoraya polovina XIX veka} (Moscow: Institut gosudarstva i prava RAN, 1998), 55–57, 61–68.
For the benefit of readers whose primary interest is police and for readability’s sake, this study loosely translates the titles of police officials with an eye to their closest U.S. equivalents rather than transliterating the Russian titles. Specific dates are “old style,” according to the Julian calendar used in Russia until 1918. In the period covered here it was 12 days behind the calendar used in the West.