Chapter I

The Local Police at Mid-Century

In his annual report for 1855, his first to new Tsar Alexander II, new Russian Minister of Internal Affairs Sergei Lanskoii apologized for the state of the local police: “Majesty! I dare not and must not conceal the true state of these officials . . . because without such knowledge improving them will be impossible. Rather, I am obliged to inform Your Imperial Highness that the police often fail to carry out their assignments and, when they do execute them, do so poorly because of their moral corruption . . . . In the view of our people, a police search in a village is a calamity equal to that of fire.” Recalling a survey of provincial governors 10 years earlier, Lanskoii noted approvingly that several had said that for all practical purposes there were no police.¹

Critical Mission, Weak Force

As the minister responsible for the local police, Lanskoii had particular grounds for concern over their poor performance. His, however, was not the only ministry dependent on the police. A contemporary journalist described the local police as, in effect, the eyes, ears, and hands of the state. “Almost everything discussed by ministerial departments,” he noted, “originates with them and goes back to them for enforcement.”² Count Benkendorf, the first director of the political police, whom the new tsar’s father had tasked with monitoring all the bureaucracy, had made a similar observation: that “everything” depended on the local police.³ Public health and sanitation, regula-

tion of weights and measures, collection of vital statistics, and information on prices and the state of the harvest as well as the prevention and suppression of crime and public disorders fell to the local police. In addition, the police were responsible for arranging the billeting of troops, suppressing violations of the tax laws, trying petty criminal cases, and a long list of other duties.4

The early development of the local police reflected the efforts of Russia’s most enlightened rulers to replicate Western models. Peter the Great, who reigned from 1682 to 1725, founded the Russian police in St. Petersburg in 1718 under Anton Divier, a Portuguese Jew whom he recruited in his travels to Western Europe. Peter instructed Divier to transform the new capital into a European city. To this end he made him responsible for the design of buildings, public sanitation, and flood control as well as keeping the peace.5 Catherine the Great, empress from 1762 to 1796, corresponded with Sartine, the chief of the Paris police, for insight on improving Russia’s police forces.6 She also expanded the police into Russia’s rural areas in 1775. Seven years later she did the same for cities that did not have them.7 She and Peter I were seeking to create institutions that could change society in positive ways rather than simply maintaining the status quo. Their effort to build what historian Marc Raeff has called a “well-ordered police state” had been the goal of rulers in Western and Central Europe since the seventeenth century. As Raeff observed, however, the corporations of nobility, urban guilds, and church authorities that Europe’s rulers had sought first to displace and then to enlist as instruments of their power were much weaker in Russia. The result was to require the creation of — and reliance on—a bureaucracy less capable than its European counterparts and that widened the gap between the autocracy and most of its subjects.8

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A year after coming to the throne in 1801, Alexander I, supported by enlightened bureaucrat Michael Speranskii, centralized command of the police in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In 1811 he also created a separate Ministry of Police modeled after Napoleon’s. Like Napoleon, however, Alexander soon grew concerned that this Ministry might threaten his own power and in 1819 he abolished it. Tsar Nicholas I moved the police in a different direction. As historian Nicholas Riasanovsky observed, Nicholas was a great admirer of Peter the Great, who had first opened up Russia to Western ideas and practices. The failed revolt of December 1825 by army officers seeking to block his accession, however, made him suspicious of the Western political ideas that had inspired many of the rebels. To suppress such influences Nicholas created a political police, the Third Section of His Majesty’s Own Chancellery. A later Russian police historian assessed that this move reflected a belief that the local police had failed to achieve the lofty goals set by his predecessors. It did not, however, mean the abandonment of the regime’s reliance on the local police. Rather, in 1837, Nicholas enacted a statute that expanded the local police system he had inherited deeper into the countryside. But as Lanskoi complained to Nicholas’s successor, by the end of his reign in 1855, Russia’s police remained a weak and ineffective force.

Organization, Numbers, and Qualifications

Within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, oversight of the police fell to the Department of Executive Police, so named because its police were to execute the regime’s laws and decrees. Its 100-man staff comprised sections for different

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10 1st PSZ, 31 (1811): no. 24687; 36 (1819): no. 27964.
13 Ivan Tarasov, Politziia v epokhu reform (Moscow: A. I. Mamontov, 1885), 6.
14 2nd PSZ, 12 (1817): no. 10305.
police functions, and sections for accounting, record-keeping, and ad hoc business. The Department did not control police operations. To the extent that the poor state of communications allowed, provincial governors—some responsible for tens of thousands of square miles of territory—directed the police.

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**Figure 1**: Organization of the St. Petersburg Police circa 1855

At mid-century Russia had a patchwork of separate police systems that differed greatly from the imperial capitals to the lesser cities and towns and the countryside. St. Petersburg had the most elaborate system (Figure 1). In 1855 its Police Commissioner reported to the Minister of Internal Affairs through the Military Governor-General and presided over a partially elected Police Board. Beneath the Commissioner were three Police Chiefs, whose jurisdictions were separated by the Neva and Fontanka rivers, 12 districts, each with its own police station, and 56 wards. Each district had two Inspectors, one for administration and one for investigations. Police Commanders headed the wards. At the lowest level were City Guards, who because of their posting in the streets, were known as outdoor police. Most manned booths and some were in a reserve on call for responding to emergencies. By 1855, the police booths had become substantial structures capable of housing three guardsmen, who served successive shifts—and sometimes members of their families. Since 1803, St. Petersburg had also had a full-time fire department attached to the police. Firefighting posts were spread throughout the capital. In addition to their regular duties, the firefighters administered corporal punishment at the request of the authorities and serf owners. After 1858 the police were responsible for the security of the capital’s electronic telegraph system. The Police Commissioner and the police districts had telegraphic connections with each other, the Winter Palace, the Military Governor-General, and local military commands.

Except for Moscow, the second capital, where the police were like St. Petersburg’s, other urban areas had simpler systems. Provincial capitals such as Kiev had police chiefs appointed by and reporting to their governors. Like St. Petersburg’s Police Commissioner, Kiev’s Police Chief was the presiding officer of the Police Board and was assisted by district inspectors and ward commanders. In a county capital, a Town Magistrate managed a force that might or might not include districts and wards. Smaller towns generally did not have police forces and police tasks fell to the

18 Popov, "Under the Halberd."
19 2nd PSZ, 33 (1858): no. 315252.
21 2nd PSZ, 29 (1854): no. 28685.
members of the town councils.\textsuperscript{22} Under Nicholas I the government had ordered the construction of fire-lookout towers in every Russian city and specified the number of firefighters, horses, and equipment each city was to maintain. The military was responsible for supplying troops to serve as firefighters.\textsuperscript{23} Every city and town had a municipal guard known, as in St. Petersburg, as the outdoor police. Initially, the guard was manned on a rotating basis by members of the lowest urban estates and later by hired personnel, but most cities had objected to the high cost. In response, in 1853, the government had authorized the transfer of soldiers to the municipal guards.\textsuperscript{24} Within a few years the guard forces consisted of military detailees in all but a handful of cities.\textsuperscript{25}

In rural areas, where most Russians lived, Nicholas I’s 1837 statute, which covered 44 provinces at mid-century, organized the police by county, district, and village. At the county level, Rural Sheriffs were roughly analogous to the city Police Chiefs. In provinces that had gentry assemblies, the assemblies elected the sheriffs. Elsewhere, the government appointed them. In either case, they reported to the governors and chaired the Rural Police Court, a collegial body of elected assessors: a senior one from the gentry and two others from the state peasants (see below).\textsuperscript{26} Below the Sheriffs, who—along with the other elected members of the court—had to reside full time in the county capitals, were District Inspectors. They lived in separate towns and were appointed by the governors of their province. The lowest ranking police officials in the countryside, they depended on generally unsalaried peasant wardens whose positions predated Peter the Great but had been subordinated to the official police under Nicholas I’s 1837 police statute. They included both senior

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} A. D. Gradovskii, \textit{Organy mestnogo upravleniia}, in \textit{Sobranie sochinenii} (St. Petersburg: M. M. Stasiulevich, 1904), 9: 314.
\item \textsuperscript{24} 2nd PSZ, 28 (1853): no. 27372.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Tarasov, \textit{Politsiia v epokhu reform}, 22.
\item \textsuperscript{26} State peasants were farmers who were technically free but permanently bound to lands owned by the state. They differed from serfs, who were the property of gentry landlords. In the mid-nineteenth century the two groups were roughly the same size and together accounted for about two-thirds of the Russian populace.
\end{itemize}
and junior wardens, who were responsible for policing roughly 100–200 households, respectively; hence their designation as “hundreds” and “tanners.”

The metropolitan, urban, and rural police also differed in numerical strength. A. D. Balashov, a onetime St. Petersburg Police Commissioner and Minister of Police under Alexander I, once described his goal as the creation of a vast police system that stretched from the humblest peasant hut to the imperial palaces. A fantasy in Balashov’s day, this goal remained far out of reach decades later and the police presence was largely limited to the cities. In St. Petersburg, the breakdown of the city into 12 districts and 56 wards and the large guard force—1,883 men strong in 1858—allowed the maintenance of 777 permanently manned guard booths, each only about 150 steps from those on either side. The law required—and the size of their units allowed—the district inspectors and ward commanders to be in daily contact with their supervisors and subordinates. A police support unit of 300–400 men was also available for escorting prisoners and carrying messages. By international standards, St. Petersburg had a large police presence. In a city 494,700 strong there was one guardsman for every 263 residents. At about the same time Paris had one policeman for every 363 residents and London had one for every 460.

[Notes]

27 2nd PSZ, 12 (1837): no. 10505.
30 Vysotskii and Frish, S-Peterburgskaia stolichnaia politsiia i gradonachal’stvo, 118–19.
31 Vysotskii and Frish, S-Peterburgskaia stolichnaia politsiia i gradonachal’stvo, 197.
Table 1: Number and Distribution of Municipal Guardsmen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Municipality</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Number Prescribed by 1853 law</th>
<th>Actual Number</th>
<th>Guardsman per Inhabitant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provincial capitals</td>
<td>1,207,460</td>
<td>2,424</td>
<td>3,227</td>
<td>1/374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County capitals</td>
<td>2,240,870</td>
<td>4,730</td>
<td>3,567</td>
<td>1/628</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other towns</td>
<td>160,947</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>1/732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All cities and towns</td>
<td>3,609,277</td>
<td>7,554</td>
<td>7,014</td>
<td>1/515</td>
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</table>


Table 2: Rural Police Districts by Average Size and Population, 1847

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>No. of Districts</th>
<th>Avg. District Area</th>
<th>Province</th>
<th>No. of Districts</th>
<th>Avg. District Area</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Largest</td>
<td>Smallest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkhangel</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20,624 mi²</td>
<td>Kaluzha</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>508 mi²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astrakhan</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7,602 mi²</td>
<td>Kiev</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>498 mi²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vologda</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7,407 mi²</td>
<td>Vitebsk</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>478 mi²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olonets</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3,945 mi²</td>
<td>Chernigov</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>472 mi²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perm</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3,913 mi²</td>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>464 mi²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orenburg</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3,000 mi²</td>
<td>Podolia</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>457 mi²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saratov</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2,883 mi²</td>
<td>Tula</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>454 mi²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viatka</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1,969 mi²</td>
<td>Poltava</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>423 mi²</td>
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<tr>
<td>Novgorod</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1,681 mi²</td>
<td>Grodno</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>387 mi²</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kherson</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1,574 mi²</td>
<td>Kursk</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>290 mi²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>No. of Districts</th>
<th>Avg. District Population</th>
<th>Province</th>
<th>No. of Districts</th>
<th>Avg. District Population</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Most Populous</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saratov</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>67,181</td>
<td>Kursk</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>29,563</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kharkov</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>66,113</td>
<td>Volhynia</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>29,448</td>
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(Continued)
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Population</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tambov</td>
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<td>61,099</td>
<td>Kovno</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29,423</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simbirsk</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60,072</td>
<td>Vilno</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27,327</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tver</td>
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<td>59,786</td>
<td>Novgorod</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25,428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viatka</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>57,974</td>
<td>Mogilev</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>55,651</td>
<td>Grodno</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>23,006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voronezh</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>55,290</td>
<td>Vitebsk</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>21,099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazan</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>54,815</td>
<td>Olonets</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17,033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kherson</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>53,740</td>
<td>Arkhangel</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14,793</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Moscow was second only to St. Petersburg in the size of its police force as it was in the number of inhabitants. At the start of Alexander II’s reign, it had about 1,000 city guards. In Russia’s other 461 cities and towns, under the terms of an 1853 statute, the number of guardsmen was to vary—in a narrow range—with their population and status. In practice, however, the provincial capitals had much larger guard forces than other urban areas, which fell well short of their prescribed strength (see Table 1).

In the rural areas, the uniformed police presence was minuscule. The 1837 law on the rural police provided for 456 county sheriffs, each with a permanent assessor, and 1,208 district inspectors to cover 42 provinces and one oblast. Despite the creation of a new province (Kovno) and extensive redrawing of boundaries, these numbers were about the same 10 years later when statistics on the size and population of the provinces were first available. Converted to rough estimates of the average size and population of the police districts (Table 2), these numbers give some sense of the enormity of the rural police’s task. Leaving aside Alaska-like Arkhangel province, which

35 2nd PSZ, 28 (1853): no. 27372.
36 2nd PSZ, 12 (1837): no. 10305, shtaty i tabeli.
was in a class by itself, the amount of territory that a single district commissioner had to cover and the number of people for whom he was responsible generally made for a staggering burden. The differences among the provinces in the size and population of the districts also defied easy explanation. In Kursk, the most populous Russian province at mid-century, population density may have accounted for the government’s establishment of 60 districts, the largest number of any province. This, in turn, gave the province districts of moderate size. Overall, however, the differences from province to province reflected the government’s lack of a consistent approach to the sizing of police units, its perception of the political reliability of the populace, and the provinces’ economic and political importance. Whatever the reason for such differences, it was in the districts that the work of executing the law and investigating crimes was supposed to occur. In his report for 1855, the Minister of Internal Affairs complained that the districts were too large and too populous. The result, he argued, was to make it a “physical impossibility” for the district inspectors to perform a quarter of their assignments even if working 24 hours a day.

Also, with a few exceptions such as the three southwestern provinces of Kiev, Podolia, and Volhynia, which had a combined total of 350 mounted guards to patrol the large Polish, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian populace, the district police had only peasant wardens and deputy wardens to assist them. Governors and other officials repeatedly complained that the peasant wardens were not real police. Unlike city guardsmen they did not wear uniforms or work regular tours of duty. Instead, service in the position was an obligation either imposed on serfs by their landlords or—if left to the peasant villages—fulfilled in different ways. Some elected the wardens; others rotated the duty among their adult males; and some—individuals as well as communities—hired impoverished individuals to take on their obligation.

38 RGIA, fond 1284, opis’ 66, delo 21, 27.
39 MSVUK: OP, part 1, sect. 3 (1870): 489.
40 See the examples in Tarasov, Politiia v epokhu reform, 24–27.
Lanskoi also noted that the 1837 law creating the rural districts had not provided the district inspectors with assistants or clerical staffs. In the inspectors’ absence from their offices, therefore, there was no one on duty to receive orders or instructions from above or respond to people’s requests.⁴² Provincial governors echoed these complaints in their own annual reports.⁴³

In theory other resources were available to help the rural police. Cooperation with the town police, for example, might have helped the understaffed rural forces. According to a government commission, however, jurisdictional disputes between the two were common.⁴⁴ The military’s Corps of Gendarmes was another potential source of assistance. In the middle years of Nicholas I’s reign, it numbered about 4,300 men.⁴⁵ Three of its eight regional commands, however, were in Poland, the Caucasus, and Siberia, where the statutes on the local police were not in force. Elements of another command were in the Baltic provinces and Finland, where the same was true. Still, the Corps maintained divisions of 500 men in St. Petersburg and in Moscow and 34-man commands in the other provincial capitals.⁴⁶ The 1836 statute laying out the organization and duties of the gendarmes specified that police commissioners and heads of police could call on them for assistance.⁴⁷ The gendarmes also took on duties such as policing the railroads that the undermanned local police were ill equipped to fulfill and that eventually would become a major claimant on manpower.⁴⁸ Relations between the local police and gendarmes were poor, however, and competition between them was fierce. Although not officially part of the Third Section, the gendarmes were

⁴² RGIA, fond 1284, opis’ 66, delo 21, 26.
⁴³ See, for example, RGIA, fond 1281, Sovet Ministerstva vnutrennikh del, opis’ 6 (697—numbering is inconsistent), delo 46, “Po otchetu o sostoianii s-peterburgskoi gubernii za 1856 g.” 54; delo 52, “Po otchetu o sostoianii iaroslavskoi gubernii za 1856 g.” 59; delo 55, “Po otchetu nachal’nika iaroslavskoi gubernii za 1857 g.” 55–56.
⁴⁴ MSVUK: OP, part 1, sect. 2, l. 19.
⁴⁵ Squire, The Third Department, 95.
⁴⁶ The 1836 law on the organization and duties of the Corps of Gendarmes—2nd PSZ, 11 (1836): no. 9355—created seven regional commands in place of the five introduced in 1827 under 2nd PSZ, 1 (1827): no. 1062. A year later, under 2nd PSZ, 12 (1837): no. 10779, an eighth was added. The First Region was responsible for the Baltic provinces and Finland as well as several Russian provinces. The Third Region, which was responsible for Poland, was the subject of a separate statute—2nd PSZ, 18 (1843): no. 17038.
⁴⁷ 2nd PSZ, 11 (1836): no. 9355, arts. 56–58.
⁴⁸ In 1846 a small “temporary” squadron of gendarmes was established to protect the St. Petersburg–Moscow railroad per 2nd PSZ, 21 (1846): no. 19979. According to P. A. Zaionchkovskii, the number of gendarmes policing the railroads was about 2,500 by the end of Alexander II’s reign, Krizis samoderzhaviia na rubezhe 1870–1880-kh godov (Moscow: Moscow University, 1964), 174.
under the command of its Chief and were, in effect, political police.\textsuperscript{49} As such, they were widely feared and resented inside and outside government, including by the local police. Competition between the two police forces began at the top. According to Alexander Herzen, Russia’s most influential writer and publisher, in the late 1840s the Minister of Internal Affairs withheld evidence of the existence of the Petrashevtsy, a secret society of Russian socialists, to embarrass the political police.\textsuperscript{50} The Third Section’s responsibility for overseeing the bureaucracy also made the local police unlikely to divulge their problems to gendarmes who reported to the Third Section’s Chief.

Several remote provinces such as Astrakhan and Orenburg that were subject to the police statute of 1837 had populations of Cossacks who were potential sources of support for the local police. For the most part, however, the Cossacks lived in areas not subject to the 1837 statute and served as border troops. Elsewhere—as with the Astrakhan and Orenburg Cossacks—their police role consisted largely of providing security for large trading fairs.\textsuperscript{51} According to historian Robert McNeal, their heavy use as police did not come until the twentieth century. Under Alexander II the central government focused on subjecting the Cossacks to the authority of the local police, not on using them for police purposes.\textsuperscript{52}

Differences in the strength of the urban and rural police aside, the number and breadth of their responsibilities challenged all the local police. As often the Tsar’s only representatives at the grass-roots level, the police were responsible for implementing the vast number of laws and regulations that successive Russian rulers had imposed to control and uplift the populace. The 1837 law on the rural police detailed 54 areas of responsibility.\textsuperscript{53} Typical

\textsuperscript{49} Hingley, \textit{The Russian Secret Police}, 31; Squire, \textit{The Third Department}, 97–99.
\textsuperscript{51} The Orenburg Cossacks provided security at the large Nizhnii Novgorod Fair; the Astrakhan Cossacks at fairs in Tsaritsyn. \textit{2nd PSZ}, 14 (1839): no. 12449; 10 (1845): no. 18600, art. 45. Also see Anne Lincoln Fitzpatrick, \textit{The Great Russian Fair: Nizhnii Novgorod, 1840–90} (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 189.
\textsuperscript{53} \textit{2nd PSZ}, 12 (1837): no. 10305, chapter II.
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handbooks of police duties numbered hundreds of pages. In the words of a journalist in the *Russian Messenger*, there was “no area of human activity in which at the first departure from normal behavior” the police do not become involved. An official history commissioned by the Ministry of Internal Affairs identified the greatest problem of the rural police in the late 1850s as the “extraordinary burden of their diverse work load.” While the urban police were more numerous and their physical turf was much more compact, their forces consisted primarily of guards who did little more than their name suggested. Their workload was also so complex as to challenge even their supervisors’ ability to handle it. Looking back on this period, the Russian legal scholar Ivan Tarasov observed that the law required the police to be architects, chemists, censors, judges, prosecutors, sanitary inspectors, tax collectors, and other occupations as well as defenders of the security of persons, property, and public morality. The breadth of their duties made them important but also increased the costs of poor performance.

The police’s responsibility for documenting the disposition of the tasks assigned to them and for record keeping in general added to their already heavy burden. In St. Petersburg, for example, each of the three police chiefs had to maintain 23 sets of records to account for matters as diverse as arrests; incoming and outgoing business; the distribution of uniforms and weapons; the costs of heating and lighting sentry boxes; citizens’ plans for the design of new building; and births, marriages, and deaths. The 1837 law on the composition and mission of the rural police included examples of 31 different logs, journals, and daybooks the police had to maintain.

Historically, even by the standards of a uniform-obsessed society, the central authorities had paid particular attention to the outfitting of the police. Peter the Great’s new capital police had worn cornflower blue coats

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54 See, for example, Vasilii Lukin, ed. *Pamiatnaia kniga politeisiskikh zakonov dla chinov gorodskoi politii* (St. Petersburg: E. Prats, 1856); and *Pamiatnaia kniga politeisiskikh zakonov dla zemskoi politii, pomeshchikov i voobshche sel’skikh obyvatel’* (St. Petersburg: Eduard Pratts, 1857) and Petr Guliaev, *Prava i obiasannosti gradskoi i zemskoi politii i vsekh voobshche ci rossiiskogo gosudarstva, po ikh sostoyaniam v ot noshenii k politii*, 3rd ed. (St. Petersburg: Departament vneshei torgovli, 1832).


58 Vysotskii and Frish, *S-Peterburgskaiia stolichnaiia politiisa i gradonachal’stvo*, 118–19.

59 2nd PSZ, 12 (1837): no. 10305, shtaty i tabeli.
of European style to highlight their Westernizing mission. Peter’s successors, most definitely including Alexander II, lavished attention on even minor details of police uniforms. Their goal, as an official in Alexander II’s Department of Executive Police explained, was to make the police instantly recognizable as agents of the state and to give them prestige. In St. Petersburg and Moscow (see Figure 2) city guards wore dark green coats with scarlet collars. In other cities and towns watchmen assigned to booths had gray uniform coats and those assigned to messenger duty, districts, or wards

Figure 2: St. Petersburg City Guard Uniforms circa 1855

Source: Picture is from Vysotskii and Frish, *S-Peterburgskaia stolichnaia politsia i gradonachal’sivo*, 172.

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60 Shubinskii, “Pervyi peterburgskii general-politsimeister,” 430.
wore dark green. Both had brass buttons with the coat of arms of the province and headgear with badges. In St. Petersburg after 1859 the badges had numbers that identified the holder. Pants were the same color as the coats except in summer when white was worn. Non-commissioned officers carried short swords and before 1856 booth guards carried halberds—a practice so reminiscent of an earlier century that it reportedly startled foreign visitors. In 1856 the halberds were replaced with short swords. Several hundred members of the St. Petersburg force had flintlock firearms until 1859, when they were replaced with revolvers designed by French gunsmith Casimir Lefaucheux.62 Police chiefs, district inspectors, and other supervisory personnel in both cities and rural areas wore uniforms prescribed in an 1834 statute that applied to all civilian officials and the gentry and that distinguished ten different uniform categories.63

For all the government’s attention to the police’s appearance, it struggled to recruit officers capable of winning the public’s respect. Rather, the local police were notoriously incompetent and corrupt. Low police salaries were largely at fault. While the police chiefs, sheriffs, and district officers received lodging and travel expenses, with a few exceptions in the most senior posts, they were poorly paid. Rural district police inspectors made about 225 silver rubles per year64—about as much as some unskilled factory workers.65 Police chiefs in large cities such as Kiev or in rural counties made better salaries—500 silver rubles and 422 silver rubles, respectively—but a government commission still described these as too low to attract people with the needed skills and character. Their assistants earned only about 50 rubles a month more than the district inspectors did; city guards, who were drawn largely from military non-commissioned officers and privates, received even smaller salaries; and village wardens went unpaid in all but very few instances.66

The police’s positions in the 14-level Table of Ranks, a key determinant of social standing since its introduction by Peter the Great, reflected their

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63 2nd PSZ, 9 (1814): no. 6860.
64 MSVUK: OP, part 1, sect. 2, 218.
lowly status. Under the terms of the 1837 statute on rural police, rural sheriffs held class VIII positions and district inspectors held class X ones. At the time, the former gave the incumbents hereditary nobility and the latter gave them non-hereditary noble status. By 1836, however, the criteria for hereditary nobility had changed. The rural sheriffs now were entitled only to personal nobility and their district inspectors just barely qualified for such status. City police chiefs, who were not under the 1837 law, sometimes had higher ranks. Kiev’s, for example, was a class VII in 1854. They too, however, were several levels below the threshold for hereditary nobility.

Police officials with positions in the Table of Ranks also were entitled to pensions under the terms of an 1827 decree on military and civilian pensions. The amount received depended on into which of the nine pension tiers an official fell and on his years of service. Thirty-five years of service were required to collect the full amounts. The tiers in which police positions fell roughly paralleled their levels in the Table of Ranks. Members of the municipal guard, mostly military detailers by the mid-1850s, received meager military pensions. Village wardens, who were unpaid to begin with, had no pension rights. Overall, there was nothing in the pension system that might have attracted people to serve in the police rather than in other government positions.

The government’s reliance on the military to staff the municipal police forces was another source of personnel problems. In cities other than St. Petersburg and Moscow senior police positions generally were reserved for retired officers. The hero of Filippov’s satirical story, Police Chief Bubenchikov, explained his choice of career by remarking that service at the front had worn him out. Filippov, a distinguished jurist, was intimately familiar with the police’s problems. Readers with even a slight acquaintance with the police, however, would have had no trouble getting his point. Almost all positions of municipal police chief were filled on recommendation from

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67 For an introduction to the Table of Ranks and a list of equivalent positions in the civil, military, naval, and court services, see Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’ (B&E), s. v. “Tabel’ o rangakh.”
68 2nd PSZ, 12 (1837): no. 10105, shirty i tabeli.
70 2nd PSZ, 29 (1854): no.18685, shirty i tabeli.
73 Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’ (B&E), s. v. “Filippov, Mikhail Araamovich.”
the Committee on Wounded Soldiers. Injuries serious enough to disqualify men from further military service must also have reduced their ability to perform as police.

At lower levels, the 1853 law on the transfer of non-commissioned officers and privates to the municipal guards enabled commanders to rid their units of chronic troublemakers and incompetents. An official history of the Ministry of Internal Affairs described the 1853 law as worsening the municipal force. According to Alexander Beklemishev, the Governor of Mogilev, this law had recruited the “dregs” of the army into the police. In 1859, legislation directed military commanders to stop transferring troublemakers and incompetents to the police.

In the countryside, where police at the top and bottom levels were elected, the quality of the police was as bad or worse. In his account of his travels in Russia, Baron Haxthausen was told:

Whenever a rural police chief is to be elected, a miserable and somewhat cunning property owner with official rank in the district applies. He used to obtain the votes of the small property owners in return for small gifts. Now he turns to one or a few of the richest landowners who actually reside in the district and who are often persons of dubious character. He flatters them and promises them full compliance and official favor. They then invite the electors to dinner, propose the candidate, and secure the votes for him through their influence. Once elected, the police chief uses his position to procure money and other advantages, knowing that he will lose his office after six years . . . and that he hardly stands a chance of being re-elected. His patrons and their peasants are shown consideration, but he torments, tricks, and fleeces his peers . . .

The election of village wardens, a common way of filling these positions, reportedly yielded worse results. By many accounts, industrious peasants

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74 2nd PSZ, 31 (1856): no. 30098.
75 Anuchin, Istoriitcheskii obzor razvitiia administrativno-politeiskikh uchrezhdennyi, 201.
76 As quoted by Tarasov, Politsiia v epokhu reform, 24.
77 2nd PSZ, 34 (1859): no. 34401.
79 Anuchin, Istoriitcheskii obzor razvitiia administrativno-politeiskikh uchrezhdennyi, 195.
dreaded such service and often imposed it on disreputable members of the community.\textsuperscript{80} As late as 1863, after the implementation of reforms, the Governor of Moscow Province reported that serving as warden was sometimes a penalty for non-payment of taxes.\textsuperscript{81} The same governor who had described the municipal watchmen as the “dregs of the army,” described the wardens as the “dregs of the entire populace.”\textsuperscript{82} Such descriptions doubtless were at least partly reflective of Russian elites’ perception of the peasantry as a semi-savage mass in need of their direction.\textsuperscript{83} They may also have reflected their frustration at what was, to some degree, effective passive resistance to the state on the villagers’ part. Whatever their origin, the criticisms of the peasant wardens by the higher authorities reflected a recognition of the enormous gap between their expectations of what the police were supposed to do and their ability to do so.

Ill qualified to begin with, police officials generally did not stay in their positions long enough to develop expertise. The Department of Executive Police was an exception (see Table 3). The long tenure of its directors, however, had costs as well as benefits. These officials—all civilians—generally advanced to their posts after years of service. Often—as with Pokrovskii and Orzhevskii, Directors under Nicholas I—this service was spent in the Department itself. Their virtues were attention to detail and loyalty to their ministers and sovereign, not imagination or leadership. Pokrovskii, the son of a priest, was legendary for never taking leave in 43 years and for his extraordinary attention to detail. Once, when he took responsibility for the loss of an important document, Nicholas I reportedly said this was “impossible” and insisted that Pokrovskii was covering for a subordinate.\textsuperscript{84} Orzhevskii, another son of a priest, served in the Ministry of Internal Affairs for 13 years before becoming Director of Executive Police and had headed one of its sections. His biographer praised him for his attentiveness to orders, his hard work, accuracy, and mastery of bureaucratic procedures.\textsuperscript{85} In St. Petersburg,
The commissioners were all military officers and generally had shorter tenures. A. S. Shulgin⁶ and K. F. Dershau,⁷ however, had prior police experience before heading the St. Petersburg force.

**Table 3:** Tenure of Senior Police Officials under Nicholas I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Director of Executive Police</th>
<th>Years in Position</th>
<th>St. Petersburg Police Commissioner</th>
<th>Years in Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M. P. Stehr</td>
<td>1819–1828</td>
<td>A. S. Shulgin</td>
<td>1825–1826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. S. Pokrovskii</td>
<td>1828–1833</td>
<td>B. Y. Knyazhnin</td>
<td>1826–1828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Zhmakin</td>
<td>1833–1837</td>
<td>A. S. Shkurin</td>
<td>1828–1829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. V. Orzhevskii</td>
<td>1833–1857</td>
<td>K. F. Dershau</td>
<td>1829–1830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>S.A. Kokoshkin</td>
<td>1830–47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>A.P. Galakhov</td>
<td>1847–56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Outside the imperial capitals, the rural sheriffs were elected for six years. Also, the town police chiefs and district inspectors, unlike the active duty officers who served in the capitals, were not subject to transfer. The statistics in Table 4 suggest, however, that as Haxthausen reported, turnover in police positions was high. In Kherson Province, all the positions of sheriff changed hands in a three-year period. Elsewhere, with the single—and unexplained—exception of Minsk Province, the figures imply that none of the sheriffs lasted more than a single term. The turnover for non-elected officials was not as extreme but still high. And for officials who stayed in their positions, promotion through the ranks was extremely rare.

In anticipation of early departures from their posts, many police used their time in service to enrich themselves through bribery and extortion. Bribery was near universal in both town and rural forces. As the Governor of Moscow noted in an annual report to the Minister of Internal Affairs, salaries for the municipal police were so low that it was impossible for them to make do without illicit income.⁸⁸ A government commission in the late

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⁶ *Russkii biograficheskii slovar’,* s. v. “Shul’gin, Aleksandr Sergeevich.”
⁷ *Russkii biograficheskii,* s. v. “Dershau, Karl Fedorovich.”
⁸⁸ *RGIA, fond 1281, opis’ 6, delo 73, 87.”
1850s concluded that of the roughly 1,200 district inspectors it would be hard to find more than 10 or 20 who were not taking bribes. 89 Writing from Mologa in 1850, the Slavophil Ivan Aksakov reported that the wives of the town and county police chiefs, whom he described as “very attractive” and “charming,” respectively, were also the recipients of bribes. 90 Looking back on the reign of Nicholas I, a memoirist recalled that in Penza Province the rural sheriffs and district inspectors were on the payroll of horse thieves. 91

Table 4: Turnover of Police Personnel, 1858/1855
(percentages of total positions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>St. Petersburg</th>
<th>Minsk</th>
<th>Novgorod</th>
<th>Vladimir</th>
<th>Kherson</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Rural Sheriffs</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Rural District Inspectors</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Municipal Police Chiefs</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. All of Above Positions</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turnover</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Compiled by comparing the names in directories of provincial officials for 1855 and 1858. Adres-kalendar. Obshchaia rospis’ nachal’stvuiushchikh i pro-chikh dolzhnostnykh lits po vsem upravleniiam v imperii i po glavnym upravleniiam v tsarstve pol’skom i v velikom kniazhestve finliandskom na . . . god (St. Petersburg: Senat, 1855, 1858). Turnover is defined as disappearance from the police rosters and replacement by new officials with no previous record of service within the province.

89 MSVUK: OP, part 1, sect. 2, 118.
Bribery of police by the tax farmers, who purchased exclusive rights to retail trade in drink in specific regions, was particularly common. David Christian, the leading historian of the Russian vodka industry, has shown that bribery associated with the vodka trade involved, “regular, semi-formal payments to whole layers of officialdom.” According to estimates by Russian government officials that he cited, in the early 1850s rural police routinely received bribes equal to twice their salary. He concluded that bribery was so extensive and the size of bribes so large as to challenge the government’s control over the recipients.\textsuperscript{92} Minister of Internal Affairs Lanskoi would have concurred. In one annual report, he told the Tsar that the tax farming system was the major cause of the “moral powerlessness” of the police.\textsuperscript{93} The lowest ranking members of the police had less authority than their supervisors and probably less opportunity for bribes. Perhaps because of such disadvantages, they often resorted to other illegal means of enriching themselves, including simple robbery and theft. In his annual report for 1857, for example, the Governor of Nizhni Novgorod said that the introduction of a municipal guard force had increased crime in his province. His explanation was that the guardsmen were often criminals.\textsuperscript{94} Alexander Herzen was exiled in 1840 for repeating rumors in a letter to his father that a policeman had murdered and robbed a St. Petersburg family. Herzen noted that even if this was simply gossip it indicated what the police were like.\textsuperscript{95}

The heavy-handedness and brutality of the police may have resulted in part from their predominantly military backgrounds. Despite recurring attempts to avoid mistreatment of soldiers, discipline was harsh in the Russian military of the mid-nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{96} Like Makarov, the sheriff in The Brothers Karamazov, real-life police often had “the heart of a soldier rather than that of a civilian.”\textsuperscript{97} Particularly for Russians of humble means,
this made contact with the police unpleasant and sometimes painful. “Slow to help, quick to torment,” was how one foreign visitor described the police in his account of an 1839 visit. Later, members of the gentry and senior officials of varying political views would echo his judgment. Writer and publisher Prince Meshcherskii, for example, was a reactionary disinclined to criticize the old regime. Having served in the St. Petersburg police in the 1860s, however, he acknowledged that even in Russia’s most civilized city, torture of suspects was widespread.

At times even members of the gentry suffered from police heavy-handedness. Count Dmitrii N. Tolstoi, later Director of the Executive Police, complained in his memoirs about the cruelty of a local police official who had frightened and insulted his family by forcibly removing servants from his aged father’s home to meet a military recruitment quota. Tolstoi recalled that this had led him to boycott the coronation of the “despot” Nicholas I, who, he acknowledged, had probably been unaware of his protest.

**Particular Performance Problems**

Deeply critical of the police in general, contemporaries were particularly dismayed by the police’s poor performance of several specific duties. Their enforcement of local non-monetary obligations and collection of taxes in arrears were among the most frequent targets of complaints. Responsible for enlisting peasants to maintain bridges and roads, for example, they did so unevenly, largely because of differences in villages’ ability to pay bribes to avoid this. Unsurprisingly, internal transportation was grossly underdeveloped. In the 1850s Russia had only about 5,500 miles of first-class roads.

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99 Vladimir Petrovich Meshcherskii (1839–1914), was the grandson of Nikolai Karamzin, the famous historian, writer, poet, and critic. For many years the publisher of *The Citizen* (*Grazhdanin*), a right-wing paper subsidized by the authorities under the last three tsars, he was exceptionally well-connected and, according to his critics, widely despised. See his obituary in the *New York Times*, 24 July, 1914 or, for a blander view, *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’* (B&E), s. v. “Meshcherskii, Kniaz Vladimir Petrovich.”
102 For a list and discussion of these local obligations, see *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’* (B&E), s.v. “Zemskie fi-nansy;” and Boris Veselovskii, *Istoriia zemstva za sorok let* (St. Petersbourg: O. N. Popovoi, 1909), 1: 4–6.
103 See, for example, V. V. Shompulev, “Provintsial’nye tipy sorokovykh godov,” *Russkaia starina*, 95 (1898): 312.
The Local Police at Mid-Century

in its entire Empire. The police’s responsibility for collecting arrears in the soul tax was another abysmally executed duty. This tax was levied on communities on the basis of the number of adult male peasants and members of the lower urban estates. A government survey in 1861 reported that overdue payments exceeded one million rubles in several of the provinces and were large in all of them. Relative to total soul tax revenues, which reached 26,646,92 rubles in 1859, this amounted to a major revenue loss. V. A. Artsimovich, of Kaluga—by reputation one of Russia’s best governors—blamed the growth of arrears on the poor performance of the local police. His explanation was simple police inattention to the task. Minister of Internal Affairs Lanskoï blamed the problem on the excessive burden of police duties. Others argued that the responsibility of the police for tax collection was one of their major sources of illegal income. One police official, for example, treated the visiting Frenchman Alexandre Dumas to a humorous account of how villages faced with the prospect of paying a large amount of arrears would settle with the local police officer for a fraction of that sum. In instances such as this the laughter involved was at the expense of the government, not the police or the villagers. The former received a badly needed supplement to their salary and the latter got off with a lower tax payment.

Preparing criminal and civil cases for trial was another police duty that attracted wide criticism. In the cities a division of the police board took on this responsibility. In the countryside a division of the rural police court handled the most important cases, but the rest fell to the district inspectors. By many accounts, even in the best of circumstances police investigators lacked the education required for this task. Russian contacts also told French scholar Leroy-Beaulieu that in the pre-reform era, preliminary inves-

104 Jerome Blum, Lord and Peasant in Russia from the Ninth to the Nineteenth Century (New York: Atheneum, 1964), 283.
106 Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’ (B&É), s. v. ”Podushnaia podat’ v Rossii.”
107 RGIA, fond 1281, opis’ 6, delo. 80, ”Po otchetu o sostoianii kaluzhskoi gubernii za 1861 god,” 58.
108 RGIA, fond 1284, opis’ 66, delo 21, 28.
111 See, for example, N. Polozov, ”Neskol’ko slov ob ugolovnykh sledstviakh,” Russkii vestnik 31 (February 1861): 752.
tigations were doubly profitable to the police. They could get bribes from the guilty and extort the innocent.\textsuperscript{112} The police also reportedly were preoccupied with other responsibilities.\textsuperscript{113} The results were long delays in prosecution, dismissal of cases at the whim of the investigators, torture and intimidation of suspects, and frequent falsification of evidence.\textsuperscript{114}

As emancipation of the serfs approached, the police’s failings as protectors of public order were a greater public and official concern. In 1848, when other European capitals faced revolutions, Russia had remained calm. It was not, however immune from contemporary states’ concern with creating a police that could control popular unrest.\textsuperscript{115} The violent protests against tavern operators in small towns and larger villages in 1859, for example, illustrated the Russian police’s inability to deal with such problems.\textsuperscript{116} In rural areas where no mounted guards were available, the police often had to call on the army or gendarmes to put down violent protests. The distances involved precluded timely responses.

Simple crime was a more prosaic threat to public order, but the police were also unable to deal with it. In the countryside the police had neither the time nor the manpower to devote to tracking down criminals. Viatka’s Governor also told Alexander Herzen that when dealing with armed gangs the police were often intimidated. The governor attributed this to police cowardice, but the rural police were at an extreme numerical disadvantage in situations of this sort.\textsuperscript{117} In his annual report for 1857, Lanskoi told the Tsar

\begin{itemize}
\item Dobrov, \textit{Otkrovennoe slovo}, 62. Also see the quotes from contemporary jurists in Wortman, \textit{The Development of Russian Legal Consciousness}, 217 and Kucherov, \textit{Courts, Lawyers, and Trials Under the Last Three Tsars}, 4–6; and the comments of Polozov about the frequent failure to punish the guilty “Neskol’ko slov ob ugolovnykh sledstviakh,” \textit{Russkii vestnik} 31 (February 1861): 752.
\end{itemize}
that any success the police might achieve against crime was probably accidental. In Nizhnii Novgorod Province, he reported, 80 percent of all crimes went unsolved; in Tver Province 76 percent went unpunished. The provincial governors’ reports to Lanskoï told similar stories. In 1856–60, for example, private losses from theft totaled 996,800 rubles, according to Iaroslavl’s Governor, of which the police recovered only 29,980 rubles. These figures were for reported crimes. As Lanskoï observed in his 1855 report, in Russia instead of reporting a crime to the police most Russians were more likely to conceal it from them. A grotesque story told to Alexandre Dumas gives some sense why the police were so hated and feared. A district inspector told the Frenchman how he had once found the dead body of an infant near a peasant village. Believing that anyone so poor as to abandon a child would be unable to afford a bribe, the inspector moved the dead body to the outskirts of a wealthier village, where families were willing to pay generously to avoid his threatened physical inspection of all the women of childbearing age. The use of dead bodies as extortion tools was reportedly particularly common in provinces with cold climates. In his account of his exile to Viatka Province, Herzen reported that the local police had moved a frozen body from village to village to extract bribes from the inhabitants eager to avoid an inquest.

In the cities, where hot pursuit of criminals was possible, the fight against crime should have gone better but did not. Unlike the English and American police, their counterparts in Russian cities did not walk beats. Rather, Russian municipal guards were stationary and depended on citizens to report crimes to them. In 1843, one year after the creation of London’s detective division, Russian authorities had considered creating a similar force in St. Petersburg only to decide that they lacked the resources to do so. As a result, by mid-century, when detectives were becoming famil-

118 RGIA, fond 1284, opis’ 66, delo 11, 11.
119 RGIA, fond 1281, opis’ 6, delo 41, “Po otchetu o sostoianii iaroslavskoi gubernii za 1861 god,” 32.
120 RGIA, fond 1284, opis’ 66, delo 21, 27.
121 Dumas, Adventures in Czarist Russia, 84.
iar figures in other European capitals, Russia had none. In an 1858 issue of the *Journal of the Ministry of Internal Affairs*, the government acknowledged that criminal investigative services of any kind were virtually nonexistent. At times, the police’s incompetence in investigating crime could be almost farcical. Both the expatriate writer Ivan Golovin and Prince Meshcherskii reported incidents in which the St. Petersburg police used their own funds to purchase duplicates of property that had been reported stolen. In one instance the owner had already recovered the original property, to the embarrassment of the police. These cases involved crimes against the wealthy. Crimes against people of humble means typically went uninvestigated. Worse still, like the hero of Gogol’s *The Overcoat*, ordinary citizens who reported crimes to the police ran the risk of being treated as criminals. An English visitor reported that the police’s unwillingness to investigate crimes against members of the lower classes even extended to murders. Exceptions to such neglect were so rare that they attracted high-level attention. In 1843 Nicholas I awarded a special decoration to a St. Petersburg policeman who apprehended the murderer of two prostitutes. Meshcherskii reported that as late as 1859 the lucky policeman was still an honored figure in St. Petersburg. He was doubtless still an exceptional one and in the rural areas would have been even more so. Together, the state peasants and the landlords’ serfs accounted for about two-thirds of Russia’s populace and peasant-on-peasant and serf-on-serf crimes were doubtless the most common criminal offenses. In the case of horse thieving, a widespread occurrence that was often the work of organized criminal groups, such crimes were also among the most destructive, given the peasants’ dependence on horsepower to farm their land and transport their crops. By numerous accounts, however, the police often failed to investigate the offenses or include them in crime statistics.

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125 On the history of detectives in Russia, see *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’ russkogo biograficheskogo instituta Granat*, hereafter *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’* (Granat), s. v. “Sysknaia politsiia.”
126 *Zhurnal ministerstva vnutrennikh del*, 31 (1858), 11–12.
Obstacles to Reform and Improving Prospects

For all the recognition of the police’s problems, numerous plans for reform had foundered for lack of needed resources and in the face of bureaucratic and gentry resistance.131 By virtue of his years as a governor and a member of the central bureaucracy, Minister of Internal Affairs Lanskoï was intimately familiar with this history.132 While stressing the need for police reform to the Tsar, he faced several major obstacles to accomplishing this.

Russia’s underdeveloped economy and backward society were at the top of the list of such obstacles. Whether measured in per capita wealth, literacy rates, education, or other attributes at the start of Alexander II’s reign, Russia ranked well behind the West European states that its leaders viewed as its peers. Only about 10 percent of Russia’s populace, for example, could read and write. This was about one-sixth the literacy rate in Great Britain and, one-fifth the rate in France, and ranked well below the rates of Spain and Italy.133 With basic literacy in such short supply and concentrated in major cities and well-off provinces, recruiting qualified police would have been a difficult task even given higher salaries and better working conditions.

Inadequate funding compounded the recruiting challenge. In the late 1850s, this obstacle reflected the government’s genuinely dire financial state. During 1853–1856, driven by outlays for the Crimean War, government expenses exceeded revenues by almost 700 million rubles—a deficit of 60 percent. Reducing expenditures became the order of the day.134 The inability of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to obtain more spending made a bad situation worse. Until 1863, in

Until 1863, in addition to receiving funds from the Treasury, ministries and agencies had other revenue sources that were, in effect, their money. These were sometimes as large as Treasury allocations.135 In the case of the

132 Russkii biograficheskii slovar’, s.v. “Lanskoi, Sergei Stepanovich.”
Chapter 1

Ministry of Internal Affairs, for example, these included insurance fees and other local taxes. Such sources must, therefore, be taken into account when reporting a ministry’s spending. Even when this is done, however, as in Table 5, in 1858 spending for the local police excluding those in the two capitals and the outdoor police amounted to less than one percent of spending by all government ministries and agencies. The biggest claimant on state funds in the late 1850s was the military. In 1852 before the Crimean War, its expenditures were seven and a half times greater than those of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and by the end of 1854 its expenditures were almost 20 times as great. While other nonmilitary ministries also fared poorly in the competition for funds, the Ministry of Internal Affairs had particular grounds for arguing that it needed and could make better use of resources under the Ministry of War’s control. At mid-century, for example, the Army maintained a 145,000-man Internal Defense Corps that consumed budget resources the police must have coveted. By all accounts the Corps was inefficient, poorly trained, and manned by the type of poorly performing troops the military had transferred to the police during 1853–1859. According to historian John Shelton Curtiss, the Internal Defense troops often had to call on regular troops to deal with peasant resistance. In the 1860s, the reforming Minister of War Dmitrii Miliutin would make reduc-

136 The exclusion of spending for the two capitals and for the municipal guard can be seen in the detailed breakdowns of proposed and authorized spending reported, respectively, in MSVUK: OP, part 1, sect. 1, 6–11 and 2nd PSZ, 37 (1862): no. 39087, shtaty i tabeli. Spending figures for the St. Petersburg and Moscow forces, including the outdoor police, were reported, respectively, in 2nd PSZ, 42 (1867): no. 44772, shtaty i tabeli and 3rd PSZ, 1 (1881): no. 131, shtaty i tabeli. Under the 1853 statute (no. 27372), except in exceptional cases, expenditures for the city municipal guards were to come from city revenues not from provincial or central government sources. They were sometimes reported in 2nd PSZ, for example, in 50 (1875): no. 54433, shtaty i tabeli.
137 According to Ministerstvo finansov, 1802–1902, 1: 636–37, total government spending for 1858 was 561, 366,000 rubles.
138 This had been true since the time of Peter the Great and would remain so until the collapse of tsarism. See Walter M. Pintner, “The Burden of Defense in Imperial Russia, 1725–1914,” Russian Review 43 (1984): 231–59.
140 Curtiss, The Russian Army, 42.
141 See, for example, M. I. Bogdanovich, Istoriiceskii ocherk deiatel’nosti voennogo upravlenia v Rossii v pervoe dvadtsatipiatiletie blagopoluchnogo tsarstvovania gosudar’ia Imperatora Aleksandra Nikolaevicha (St. Petersburg: M. M. Stasiulevich, 1879), 2: 41–42.
142 Curtiss, The Russian Army, 42.
The Local Police at Mid-Century

ing such large expensive noncombatant forces a major policy goal.\textsuperscript{143} In the 1850s, in contrast, the continued existence of the Internal Defense Corps enabled the Ministry of War to cite its domestic peacekeeping role to justify its large claim on the state budget.

**Table 5:** Level, Distribution, and Sources of Local Police Spending, 1858

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Fire Department</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Treasury</td>
<td>88,203</td>
<td>123,533</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>212,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Duties</td>
<td>1,744,299</td>
<td>7,695</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1,751,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Revenues</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>762,603</td>
<td>437,751</td>
<td>1,200,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance Tax</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>44,778</td>
<td>79,743</td>
<td>124,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other sources</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>31,800</td>
<td>2,704</td>
<td>35,455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>1,833,453</td>
<td>970,409</td>
<td>520,866</td>
<td>3,324,728</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Corps of Gendarmes and the Ministry of State Domains were also competitors of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in its search for additional police funding. As a Russian police historian noted, the establishment of the Third Section and Corps of Gendarmes reflected Nicholas I’s judgment that the regular police had failed to do their job.\textsuperscript{144} As long as this view persisted, the regular police were denied the additional funding that the elite police received. The Ministry of State Domains, which supervised the peasants on state-owned lands, had argued successfully that rural police districts were unnecessary in such areas. In theory, this might have eased the burden of the rural police. In practice, the rural police consistently attempted to assert control and jurisdictional disputes were common.\textsuperscript{145}

More generally, considerations of bureaucratic politics often made even ministries and agencies with no police roles of their own reluctant to increase

\textsuperscript{143} Forrest A. Miller, *Dmitrii Miliutin and the Reform Era in Russia* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968), 25–34.

\textsuperscript{144} Tarasov, *Politsiia v epokhu reform*, 6.

\textsuperscript{145} Anuchin, *Istoricheskii obzor razvitiiia administrativno-politseiskikh uchrezhdenii v Rossii*, 129.
spending for police.\textsuperscript{146} Resentment of the police’s actual or potential power within the high bureaucracy had a long history in Russia. The foreign-born Anton Divier, St. Petersburg’s first Police Commissioner, had been widely resented by other officials for his closeness to Peter the Great, whose children he tutored. After the death of Peter’s wife, the Empress Catherine I, his arch rival had him exiled for life, but Peter’s daughter Elizabeth, his former pupil, recalled him to his post after ascending the throne in 1741.\textsuperscript{147} Later, during his six-month reign in 1762, Tsar Peter III authorized the appointment of police chiefs in selected towns and cities who were to report to his favorite, Baron Nicholas Korf.\textsuperscript{148} Historian Marc Raeff described this move as one of the policies that antagonized Korf’s rivals and led them to support the coup by Peter’s wife, Catherine the Great.\textsuperscript{149} The creation of the Ministry of Police in 1811 was met with hostility by other ministries and provincial governors and Alexander I himself complained that Balashov, his chosen Minister aspired to limit his power. While retaining his rank and title, Balashov was removed from control of the ministry in 1812 and spent the next several years in other assignments. The Ministry of Police was abolished in 1819, but other ministers remained wary of creating a strong police agency.\textsuperscript{150} The gentry’s hostility or indifference to police reform was another obstacle to increasing police spending. Gentry disdain for service in the police aside, the landlords had a stake in the weakness of the police. The small size of the rural police was both a result of—and a reason for—the persistence of serfdom into the 1850s. The inclusion of landlords (\textit{pomeshchiki}) in the title of Lukin’s handbook of rural police laws reflected their police power.\textsuperscript{151} In the countryside outside the lands of the state peasants, gentry landlords were the real police. The law allowed them to sentence their serfs to punishments ranging from caning to two months in their private jails to exile to Siberia.

\textsuperscript{148} \textit{1st PSZ} 15 (1762): nos. 11477, 11478.
\textsuperscript{150} Monas, \textit{The Third Section}, 41–44; Squire, \textit{The Third Department}, 32–41.
\textsuperscript{151} \textit{Pamiatnaja kniga politseiskikh zakonov dlia zemskoi politssii, pomeshchikov i voobshche sel’skikh obyvatelei}. 
for major offenses. Exiled serfs were included in the count of recruits the serf-owner had to provide for the army, protecting landlords from permanent losses in their labor force.\textsuperscript{152} Powers of this sort were crucial to the continued existence of serfdom.

By the late 1850s, however, the link between serfdom and the police system was becoming a sword that cut two ways, improving the prospects for police reform as well as highlighting the challenges. With its paternalistic conception of its responsibilities, gentry staffing, and ultimate reliance on landlords and backward peasant wardens, the police system was the political equivalent of serfdom. As a result, the moral and practical arguments for opposing both systems were largely the same. In those years, the progress of liberal sympathies in society, fear of violence, and the desire to overcome the backwardness that had led to Crimean defeat were all on the rise. These forces were to lead Alexander II in November 1857 to announce his intention to emancipate the serfs.\textsuperscript{153} A few months later, in February 1858, he asked Lanskoï and three other officials to prepare a plan to reform the local police.\textsuperscript{154}

\textsuperscript{152} Blum, \textit{Lord and Peasant}, 429.
\textsuperscript{154} MSVUK: OP, part 1, sect 2, 140.