

**The impact of military duties in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century on urban commoners in Russia: recruit and militia levies and billeting in the communes of St. Petersburg province**

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## **Abstract 1**

This thesis examines the impact of increased military duties on the social and political evolution of urban commoners of the Russian Northwest in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The impact of increased recruit and militia levies and billeting duty in the 1800s-1820s is examined in relation to the communes of three district capitals: Novaia Ladoga, Sofia-Tsarskoe Selo, and Gdov. The focus is on the practices, actions, and motivations of individuals, communes of merchants and *meshchane*, and town councils.

These increased duties led to the modernization of social relationships and political culture.

Increased conscription revealed the limits of the communal process of nomination for service: with the first mass militia levy announced in 1806, communes failed to supply enough soldiers on time. The government had therefore to revise the system of nomination. The practice of nomination for dissolute behaviour was put on a stable legal footing and family recruit groups were introduced, reducing conflict, delays, and disputes within communes.

Local merchant elites were crucial to the performance of military duties: the richest families controlled the town council, organizing fundraising during the recruit and especially the militia levies of 1806-07 and 1812. The merchants themselves made additional contributions. But those in district towns were heavily impacted by the upheavals of war, the growth of taxation, and other financial demands: the local elites significantly contracted from 1807, and especially after 1812.

Relationships between councils and the Chief of Police and Civil Governor were likewise crucial to the performance of military duties. Effective cooperation with urban

police on the ground helped in the supply of recruits, money, and equipment during levies. The Governor played a role as mediator whenever disputes and conflicts arose between commoners and police or army officers, most of which were solved by negotiation: commoners and councils were not as powerless as often imagined.

Following the war, there was a growing demand for the equalization of duties and tax burdens among commoners in the 1820s; dissatisfaction with officialdom grew, which manifested itself in cholera riots, e.g., in Staraiia Rusa in 1831.

## **Abstract 2**

This thesis examines the impact of increased military duties on the social and political evolution of urban commoners of the Russian Northwest in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The impact of three increased duties is considered – regular recruit levies, militia levies, and billeting duty – in the 1800s-1820s, on communes of three district capital of St. Petersburg province: Novaia Ladoga, Sofia-Tsarskoe Selo, and Gdov (with some towns such as Kronstadt and Staraiia Rusa used for the purpose of comparison). The study is a combination of social history, microhistory, the history of everyday life, with broader economic, social, and, partly, cultural analysis. The focus is on the study of practices, actions, and motivations of individuals, communes of merchants and *meshchane* (low- and middle-income families – that is, most families of the town), and town councils; it examines how practices changed due to increased duties, and how growing demands impacted the evolution of social relationships and political traditions among commoners in provincial Russian towns.

Increased military duties to a great extent led to the modernization of social life and political culture in provincial towns. In particular, increased conscription during the Napoleonic Wars revealed the limitations of the system of communal nomination for service, which provided recruits during annual autumn levies. With the first mass mobilization of militia announced in 1806 (so far largely unexplored), communes of *meshchane* failed to supply enough soldiers on time. In the 1780s-early 1800s, *meshchane* would send recruits for a 25-year term, largely nominating them – by verdict of the commune – from among those who were poor, single, or recent newcomers to the town: a tradition inherited from rural political culture. Often men would be sent throughout the year, in advance of the recruit levy – many accused of ‘dissolute behaviour’. The priority of the commune, bound by collective responsibility, was to secure stable families while cleansing the town of undesirables; in the process the *meshchane* elites often resorted to abuse and pressure. There were complaints, too, about the age of recruits from towns (on average 30) and their low moral qualities. But, as numbers required for the first militia were raised several times in 1806, this led to procrastination, conflict, and even violence in certain communes; as a result, supplies of recruits were much delayed. The government had thus to revise the system in 1808-1810. The practice of nomination for dissolute behaviour was put on a stable legal footing, and family recruit groups were introduced, which lessened conflict, procrastination, and disputes within communes. By the time of the 1810-1812 levies, the nomination of men was proceeding much more quickly, particularly in the case of the 1812 militia levy. By the 1810s-1820s nomination looked increasingly well regulated: the age of recruits came down to 18-25; the burden on families was equalized; there were fewer opportunities for abuse (the rich now could pay off the duty officially): during the levy a family would supply one of their young men; the following year the next

family did. The increased conscription thus had a pacifying, modernizing effect on social relationships and political culture within the *meshchane* communes.

Merchant communes, freed from conscription in 1775, were still crucial to the town's performance of its military duties. As a local elite, rich merchant families controlled the town council for years, organizing fundraising during recruit levies, and especially during the militia levies of 1806-07 and 1812. Donations by merchants during the latter assumed great importance: it was the responsibility of the local elite – council members and the town head drawn from merchant families – not the authorities, to determine the amount of the communal donation that the town was to offer to the Civil Governor. Equal shares were then raised from all males in merchant families. The elite families themselves contributed additionally – with money and clothes – especially during mobilization of the first militia. But for the 1812 militia, merchant contributions were often smaller than in 1806-1807. Merchants in district towns had been heavily impacted by the war – with the disruption of trade due to the blockade; the growth of taxation; and increased financial demands from the government. As a result, their communes contracted significantly from 1807, and especially after 1812. The losses in local elites were particularly visible; many families, registered to a guild from the 1780s, who for decades had played the most important role in fundraising, by the 1810s had debts or arrears, and had to re-register as *meshchane*. This crisis of merchant capital was observed in many parts of Russia in 1807-1824.

Although recruit (and militia) levies were a burdensome duty, there were always volunteers ready to join up, from the time of the 1788-1790 Russo-Swedish War (when a form of temporary voluntary service was first introduced for *meshchane* and free peasants of St. Petersburg province, for the duration of the war only), to the years of war with

Napoleonic France. Most volunteers came from among the poor, drawn by the prospect of reducing debt, or securing some award from the commune; many came as a substitute for another family. A significant number of volunteers were recent newcomers. Some merchants also volunteered: being literate, they found better careers in the army, usually beginning service as sergeants in the infantry. The system of state support for retirees, ex-soldiers and those who returned to towns in 1814 from the second militia, was still to develop; but those militiamen found, on examination, unfit to earn their living, would be sent to regular army invalid squads, considered a form of pension care.

The role of town councils was very important. Councils effectively represented the town commonalty before other authorities – in the town, the district, or the provincial capital (St. Petersburg). Commoners and councils were not as powerless as they have often been represented in the past. They were known to turn down excessive requests (for soldiers of money) from civil governors, even during the 1812 militia. Councils oversaw the nomination of men and fundraising in communes; but their abilities were limited insofar as communes and councils lacked means to enforce verdicts. In this regard, relationships between councils and the Chief of Police were crucial for performing military duties. It was councils who financed the urban police, and frequent disputes could result between the council and the Chief of Police. But on the ground, there was always effective cooperation between councils and the urban police, which helped communes to supply the recruits, money, and equipment required during regular and militia levies. However, the ability of councils to coordinate efforts with various authorities outside the town was very limited; there seems to have been little cooperation at this period between various institutions at district and provincial level. And with help from district or provincial police being difficult to access, it often proved hard to trace evaders – those avoiding military service or failing

to pay taxes – in the district or St. Petersburg. The problem was caused in part by the fact that migration had intensified in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> c.: many *meshchane* and merchants were consequently living in the capital, other district centres, or the port towns – a fact borne in on the authorities during the first militia levy.

The role of mediator in disputes and conflicts between commoners and the police or army officers was played by the Governor – most disputes being resolved through negotiation. Problems of billeting were often the focus of correspondence. However, billeting did not apply to all towns, nor in every year, so this duty was less burdensome than that of the levies. The regiments' Colonels would require councils to provide houses of commoners for the officers and rank and file, as well as find accommodation for various regimental facilities (infirmary, stables, workshops); monthly supplies for the everyday needs of the regiment could also be requested, as also the construction of buildings, such as barracks, warehouses, or a regimental hospital, if no private houses were available. In most cases councils, often by appeal to the Governor, sought to protect the interests of commoner families. Most disputes with the regiments were resolved by negotiation, often through collaborative effort: e.g., council and commoners would raise money and provide materials for military buildings, whilst the regiment provided the workforce (builders, carpenters). Councils often secured at least partial compensation for this. In the 1800s the construction of barracks and military infrastructure began even in the smaller district towns of the Northwest, correlating with the experience of towns in other European countries, where separation of the military, together with their buildings, from civilian life, became an acute problem.

In the 1820s, a growing demand for the equalization of duties and taxation among commoners and their magistrates became apparent: town councils began to submit

proposals to governors for equalizing the billeting duty, suggesting that it should apply as well to noble property owners and the educated professions; or suggesting the introduction of equal land taxation in the town. It can be argued that the contributions made by commoners and their communes in the 1800s-1810s, together with the hardships of war and the burden of increased military and civil duties, stimulated a new level of consciousness, a new self-awareness among provincial commoners.

In this regard there were also signs of growing dissatisfaction with officialdom, which manifested itself, e.g., in cholera riots, such as the two violent upheavals in Staraia Rusa (in Novgorod province) in 1831. Many merchants and *meshchane*, including those of the local elite, the council, were involved in the violent events of July 1831. The participation of commoners in these two riots has not been studied before now, the focus having been on the actions of soldiers of the military colonies who began the riot in the town. The riots, poorly organized though they were, were occasioned by the unpopular anti-cholera measures of the authorities of the military colonies who were stationed in the town. But the special commission later investigated the actions of 139 commoners, and established that there were deeper grounds of dissatisfaction among merchants and *meshchane* – with the local police, government officers, and the hardships accompanying billeting duty in the town. There were, moreover, other underlying concerns among commoners, revealed by the case of some commoners caught reading out to the people decrees supposedly from the central authorities, ordering them to riot and kill their superiors. Similar cases were reported in other provinces in the 1820s-early 1830s. Evidently, there were growing concerns and disaffection among urban commoners in the post-war period, much of it derived from the losses experienced in the 1800s-1810s, for which the people expected compensation, or at least recognition of equal rights with more privileged groups.

## I. Introduction

### I.1. The problem. The research question.

The thesis deals with one of the important problems for the social, political and cultural history of Europe when considering the emergence of the state, the town, and urban society of the modern era in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is the impact of increased military duties in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century for the evolution of urban commoners' groups, and the formation of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century urban society of Russia, a distinctively different society in terms of social and political culture, practices, and norms from the 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>-century urban communes: more homogeneous, regulated, and lawful – when compared to 18<sup>th</sup>-century urban communes, built on the basis of Early Modern commoners' social groups of craftsmen and merchants.

The thesis explores the role of increased conscription, the collection of money and various supplies, and billeting in the 1800s–1820s – in the transformation of the social relationships, political culture, and traditions of the commoners of several provincial towns of the Russian Northwest, most of which belonged to St. Petersburg province.

Annual recruit levies and billeting dramatically increased in Russia in the 1800s–1820s, supplemented in 1806–1807 and 1812 by two extraordinary militia levies – raising of temporary mass armies, *opolchenie* (militia) – which had not happened before. How did this increased demand influence the main social groups in Russian towns: the families and communes of craftsmen, small traders, and labourers, called *meshchane* (the low- and middle-income families), and the local elites – the merchants? (See the next section 'The Object'.) How did it change the economic positions, social relationships, practices, and political traditions of the communes and families of merchants and *meshchane*, and of urban self-government – the town councils? The thesis examines this central question in a

comparative manner, looking at several towns – district capitals of St. Petersburg province of small and medium size, and of different economic background – Novaia Ladoga, Sofia-Tsarskoe Selo and Gdov – in the 1790s – 1820s (with communes of several other provincial towns analysed in lesser detail, for the purpose of comparison).

The years under review represent a part of what R. Koselleck called *Sattelzeit*,<sup>1</sup> a period which marks the transition from the Early Modern period to modernity. These were the formative decades of radical social, political and institutional transformation, as well as economic changes.<sup>2</sup> But in particular the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are considered to be the key period of further centralization, ‘regularization’ and modernization of the European state, the expansion of the fiscal-, military- and police state (together with the newer concept of the ‘Contractor State’).<sup>3</sup> It was the first period of mass wars, the hallmarks of which included the militarization, mobilization and increasing permeation of the state into the economic, social, political, and cultural life of society. The impact of this war period on the formation of the state and modern society in European countries has always been an important theme, with interest focusing mainly on particular

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<sup>1</sup> R. Koselleck, ‘Über die Theoriebedürftigkeit der Geschichtswissenschaft’, in W. Conze (ed.), *Theorie der Geschichtswissenschaft und Praxis des Geschichtsunterrichts* (Stuttgart: Der Ernst Klett Verlag, 1972), pp. 10-28; E. Décultot and D. Fulda (eds), *Sattelzeit. Historiographiegeschichtliche Revisionen* (Berlin: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution. Europe, 1789-1848* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1962); M. Mann, *The Sources of Social Power V.2: The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Ch. Tilly, *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); Ch. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States AD 990–1990* (Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> J. Brewer, *The Sinews of Power. War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989); M. Raeff, *The Well-Ordered Police State. Social and Institutional Change through Law in the Germanies and Russia, 1600–1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); J. Greenfield, *The Making of a Fiscal-Military State in Post-Revolutionary France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022); R. T. Sánchez, *Military Entrepreneurs and the Spanish Contractor State in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); R. Harding and S. Solbes Ferri (eds), *The Contractor State and its Implications (1659-1815)* (Gran Canaria: Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 2012).

aspects such as the emergence of the idea of the nation or European nationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup>

The influence of increased recruitment, militia call-ups, and billeting on various parts of society in the 18<sup>th</sup> – early 19<sup>th</sup> century has been investigated, but not in all its complexity, at least not for urban social groups, and certainly not in the case of the countries of Eastern Europe, with Russia remaining perhaps the least studied case.<sup>5</sup> Among the debates to be named in this field is, for example, the discussion surrounding O. Büsch's concept of the social militarization of Prussian-German society, which has suggested the connection between the military system and social contexts.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> K. Hagemann, 'Männlicher Muth und Teutsche Ehre'. Nation, Militär und Geschlecht zur Zeit der Antinapoleonischen Kriege in Deutschland (Paderborn, München, Wien, Zürich: Der Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 2002); K. Hagemann, *Revisiting Prussia's Wars Against Napoleon: History, Culture, and Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); U. Planert, 'Wessen Krieg? Welche Erfahrung? Oder wie national war der 'Nationalkrieg' gegen Napoleon?', in D. Beyrau (ed), *Der Krieg in religiösen und nationalen Deutungen der Neuzeit* (Tübingen: Edition Diskord, 2001), pp. 111–139; U. Planert, 'Wann beginnt der "moderne" deutsche Nationalismus? Plädoyer für eine nationale Sattelzeit', in J. Echternkamp and S. O. Müller (eds), *Die Politik der Nation. Deutscher Nationalismus in Krieg und Krisen 1760–1960* (München: Oldenbourg, 2002), pp. 25–60; U. Planert, *Der Mythos vom Befreiungskrieg. Frankreichs Kriege und der deutsche Süden: Alltag — Wahrnehmung — Deutung, 1792-1841* (Paderborn: der Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 2007); T. Baycroft and M. Hewitson (eds), *What is a Nation? Europe, 1789-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); D. Hopkin, *Soldier and Peasant in French Popular Culture, 1766-1870* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2002); J. Ferejohn and F. M. Rosenbluth, *Forged through Fire: War, Peace and the Democratic Bargain* (New York: Liveright, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> A. Forrest, *Conscripts and deserters: The army and French society during the Revolution and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); A. Forrest, *The legacy of the French Revolutionary Wars: The nation-in-arms in French Republican memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); O. Heintz, *Heerwesen und Volksbewaffnung in Vorderösterreich im Zeitalter Josefs II. Und der Revolutionskriege* (Freiburg: Albert, 1941); T. Hippler, *Commoners, Soldiers and National Armies: Military Service in France and Germany, 1789–1830* (New York: Routledge, 2008); D. Stoker, F. C. Schneid, H. D. Blanton (eds), *Conscription in the Napoleonic era: A revolution in military affairs?* (London: Routledge, 2014). E.-J. Zürcher (ed.), *Fighting for a living. A comparative history of military labour* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014); P. Paret, 'Conscription and the end of the old regime in France and Prussia', in W. Treue (ed.), *Geschichte als Aufgabe* (Berlin, 1988), pp. 159-182; R. Bergien and R. Pröve (eds), *Spießler, Patrioten, Revolutionär: Militärische Mobilisierung und Gesellschaftliche Ordnung in der Neuzeit* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2010); R. Schmid Keeling and R. Philippe (eds), *Miliz oder Söldner? Wehrpflicht und Solddienst in Stadt, Republik und Fürstenstaat (15.-18. Jh.)* (Paderborn: Brill Academic Publishers, Ferdinand Schöningh 2019).

<sup>6</sup> O. Büsch, *Militärsystem und Sozialleben im alten Preußen 1713–1807* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1962); P. H. Wilson, 'Social Militarization in Eighteenth-Century Germany', *German History*, Vol. 18/1 (2000), pp. 1-39.

The role of increased military demand as a factor transforming the urban communes of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, their social relationships, and political culture, is a key problem, the study of which helps to explain the emergence of urban society of the modern period in early 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia and in some other countries of Eastern Europe, helping us to understand better its further development, as well as the evolution of public opinion and civil society in provincial towns in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**I.2. The object: families, communes of merchants and *meshchane*, and councils of district towns of St. Petersburg province at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> – early 19<sup>th</sup> cc.**

The Russian town in the 18<sup>th</sup> – early 19<sup>th</sup> cc., its people, social, and political institutions, has often been viewed as something very different from its counterparts in central and western Europe. In terms of legal categories, institutions, and style of social and political organisation, the model of the pre-reformed Russian town developed at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> c. during the reforms of Catherine II in the 1770s and especially the 1780s. This model existed with little change up to the 1860s, the era of the Great Reform. Catherine's urban reforms were part of a profound reorganisation of administration of Russia in the second half of her reign, largely undertaken in the aftermath of the devastating Pugachev Rebellion of 1773–1775. To an extent, this series of reforms can be viewed as an attempt at gradual modernisation of social and political institutions, aimed at trying to combine progressive ideas with Russian realities. Special emphasis was placed on revision of local administration: a new administrative network of districts and provinces, headed by governors' offices, was introduced in 1775, while in 1785 limited self-

government was granted to district and provincial noble assemblies and to almost all towns.

The urban reforms of the 1770s-1780s revised the taxonomy of towns (1775), systematised the roles that towns performed, modernised urban functions by introducing regular planning, improved security, fire safety, sanity, and urban schools. But most important were the reforms of urban social groups and self-government undertaken with the 1775 merchant reform, and especially the Charter to the Towns of 1785. The latter revised the entire social and political organisation of all Russian towns: from small provincial centres, now called district capitals, to larger cities, capitals of newly introduced provinces, including Moscow and St. Petersburg.

A brief introduction of the object of this study – the merchant and *meshchane* communes and town councils introduced by the 1785 Charter – is needed to outline the chief aspects of the Russian town of the Northwest and its people: their situation was quite distinctive, especially when compared to towns in western and central Europe, although there were many common features. Chapter 1 will offer a detailed survey of the Russian town by the early 19th c., urban social groups (especially commoners), problems such as the correlation between legal status and economic activity, and will outline the main areas of historiographical discussion.

The legal, social, and political aspects of Catherine's reforms of towns and urban estates, especially in the Charter to the Towns, were inextricably intertwined. The Russian town was presented with revised social categories and political institutions. From 1785, in each town the reforms aimed to introduce six communes consisting of six legal categories of residents. Each of the six categories was in theory related to a certain economic activity. The division, membership of one of the six categories, implied legal status – certain duties

and privileges – which applied to all families of this category registered to that commune. In creating those six categories, the reformers were taking into consideration older, already existing urban social groups, the economic activities of the townspeople, and the existing system of Russian estates (divided into the privileged, such as nobles and clergy, and commoners – families and communes which were liable to taxation, including the poll tax, and also to recruit levies and billeting). The six categories included nobles, property-owners and clergy (1), merchants of three guilds (2), ‘guests’ (3), craftsmen (4), educated professionals (5), and ‘other commoner families’ (*posad*), who may be called smaller burgers or *meshchane* (6) – the latter word eventually became dominant (see below) and will be used here. (The 1785 Charter referred to all six categories together as ‘citizens’ – but later this word was practically never used.) The practice of small, neighbourhood communes and communal meetings dated back to the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> cc.: but now, from 1785, six new communes were supposed to encompass all families, officially registered in the town. And each of the six communes was to meet regularly to deal with its own business, based on elections and voting procedures introduced in 1785, with only richer families normally enfranchised. Thus, each commune managed the business of all families of the town belonging to its category: raised taxes from families in the commune, elected collectors and smaller officials, usually from richer families, and supplied recruits (the latter duty applying only to *meshchane* and craftsmen communes). But in fact communes of commoners – merchants, craftsmen, and *meshchane* – encompassed almost all families of the town: these communes met when needed, separately, to appoint communal officials, such as collectors, and take decisions on fundraising or recruitment. The decisions of meetings were called verdicts, and were signed by all attendees. Leaders of merchant and *meshchane* communes dominated at these meetings.

But there was a second very important novelty of the 1785 Charter: towns also received limited urban-level self-government, with authority over six communes. The Charter introduced elected town councils (*duma*) and town heads (mayor), who were to control the communes, appoint days for meetings, supervise collections of taxes, recruits, billeting, and receive orders and send reports to the provincial authorities (usually the Governor; see Chapter 1). In theory, councils were to be elected by representative of all six categories and were to include representatives of all six communes; but in reality only merchants and *meshchane* – the two main commoner communes of the district town – took part in urban business and elections (see below). Also, a higher qualification applied to vote and to be elected to the council than was required to vote and be elected in communes – and thus wealthy local families, usually those of the merchant elite, controlled the councils of district towns.

### **Legal theory and reality**

The object of this study will be limited to the families and communes of merchants, *meshchane*, and town councils for several reasons. First, the legal theory of the reforms could be far from reality. In the Northwest, at least in St. Petersburg province, whose towns – several small- and middle-sized district capitals – will be reviewed here, a complicated system of communes of various categories only developed in the provincial capital, St. Petersburg. But even in St. Petersburg, there existed only three communes of commoner estates: merchants, craftsmen, and *meshchane*. Nobles, clergy, educated professionals, and other ‘non-commoner’ social groups did not in practice form communes anywhere in Russia, and from the beginning chose to distance themselves from local, ‘town’ business. After 1785, therefore, town councils consisted almost exclusively of

merchants – the wealthiest commoner families. Furthermore, in all the district capitals reviewed, in the 1780s-1790s only two communes formed – that of merchants, of upper-class commoners, and a bigger commune consisting of families of smaller traders, craftsmen, and day labourers – which soon became known as a *meshchane* commune, supposedly from the Polish-Belarusian word *mesto*, meaning ‘a place’: according to the Charter, the *meshchane* was the last of the six communes, consisting of less privileged commoner families, but in the district capitals reviewed almost all commoner families belonged to this group. Lastly, the third category of commoners specified by the Charter – craftsmen – only formed separate communes in St. Petersburg and Kronstadt, where several hundred highly skilled workers’ families lived, forming communes known as guilds (including such professionals as gunpowder- and gun-makers, apothecaries, mechanics). But in the district towns of the province, which will be reviewed, even if several families of ‘craftsmen’ were mentioned in the tax registers, those families would always be registered with the *meshchane* commune.

It is notable also that merchant communes in all district towns of St. Petersburg province consisted almost exclusively of families of the lower, third guild. (The reform of 1775 had introduced three guilds, based on the size of the family capital declared every year.)

Finally, it may be noted that the councils of all the district capitals observed included in reality no more than a few persons: 3-4 men only in Novaia Ladoga, for example, the second largest town of St. Petersburg province after the capital. In theory, from 1785 there were to be both a common town council (*obshchaia gradskaia дума*) and a higher, six-member council, consisting of one representative of all six groups (*shestiglasnaia дума*),

but in fact in the district towns of St. Petersburg province only one council was formed in each town, usually consisting of 2-3 elite merchants and 1 *meshchanin*.

Thus, the object of this study is the commonalty of several towns of the Russian Northwest – district capitals of St. Petersburg province – and the *meshchane* and merchant families, communes, and town councils which they comprised. Other commoners, such as trading peasants and other migrants, were not numerous in this region (there were only few small factories in these towns, and trade was less developed than in the towns of the Central Economic Region around Moscow).

Attention will be paid to the distinction between merchants and *meshchane*, and the correlation between legal status and economic activity (see Chapter 1). But when analysing families and communes, we will use the legal criteria that existed, the division into *meshchane* and merchants of three guilds – as, at least for the less developed towns of the Northwest, the district capitals of St. Petersburg province, they convey the reality: *meshchane* families and communes will be considered as lower- and middle-income urban commoners, who paid poll tax and provided recruits; and merchants will be analysed as an urban upper class, excused levies and paying the so-called family capital fee; both were subject to billeting. The merchants of the upper third guild and, if present, several families of the first and second guilds, will be analysed as the dominant political power, as it was invariably they who constituted the town council.

### I.3. The research

The question under research is how the increased military demand in the 1800s – 1820s changed the practices, positions, social, and political traditions of urban commoners in Russia – the families of *meshchane* and merchants, their communes, and town councils.

The aim of this thesis is to examine how the increased levies (the regular recruit levies and the two militia call-ups) and billeting in the 1800s-1820s changed the commoners of several provincial towns of St. Petersburg province – their communes and the families of merchants and *meshchane*, and government by the town councils.

The thesis represents a combination of social history, everyday history, and microhistory.<sup>7</sup> It examines the everyday life of the commoners in three towns during the levies: the actions and motivations of families and communes of merchants and *meshchane*, and of the town councils, as well as those of the state officials during regular recruit levies of the peace years, the war years, the two militia levies, and during billeting.

The focus of the analysis is on the actors and practices.<sup>8</sup>

The actors of the three basic social and political structures, which represent the entire urban commoners' society of the Russian town, are at the centre of the analysis: 1. selected individuals and families of merchants and *meshchane*; 2. their communes; and 3. the town councils.

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<sup>7</sup> A. Lüdtkke, „Gemeinwohl“, *Polizei und „Festungspraxis“*. *Innere Verwaltung und staatliche Gewaltsamkeit in Preußen, 1815-50 (Überarb. Diss.)* (Göttingen, 1982); A. Lüdtkke (ed.), *Alltagsgeschichte. Zur Rekonstruktion historischer Erfahrungen und Lebensweisen* (Frankfurt, N.Y.: Campus, 1989); H. Medik, *Weben und Überleben in Laichingen 1650–1900. Lokalgeschichte als allgemeine Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1996); H. Medik, *Der Dreißigjährige Krieg. Zeugnisse vom Leben mit Gewalt* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2018); Ch. Phythian-Adams, *Rethinking English Local History* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1987); Ch. Phythian-Adams, *Societies, cultures, and kinship, 1580–1850: cultural provinces and English local history* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> A. Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

The thesis examines the practices of the selection of recruits and militiamen, and those of the collection of money, clothing, provisions, and weapons, as well as of housing the regiment (officers, rank and file, regimental facilities) in the town; discussing the roles of the families and communes, the councils and the crown officials, and their interests; it explores the motives behind the actions and practices; and examines how the increased demand during the 1800s-1810s changed the positions and practices of the commoners' families, communes, and councils – and how social relationships, traditions, and political life in the provincial urban communes changed.

The focus – the object – of this study are the families and communes of merchants and *meshchane*, and the town councils of three towns of St. Petersburg province during the regular military levies of the 1790s-1810s, during two mobilizational militia call-ups of 1806-1807 and 1812, and when resolving billeting issues.

The subject is the practices which families, communes, and town councils resorted to when nominating men for army and militia service, collecting money, provisions, clothes, weapons for recruits and militiamen, resolving billeting issues, and the motivations behind them.

The hypothesis is that one of the consequences of increased military demand in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century for Russian urban commoners was that it had a modernising effect on the social relationships, practices, political life, and traditions of the commoners – at least in the small and medium-sized towns of the Russian Northwest.

The intermediate objectives are:

- 1) To outline how the recruit and militia levies were organized: what practices the families, communes, and councils used to nominate the men, and how those practices changed during the period under review.

2) To explain the practices of the material side of the levies – that is, how the families, communes, and councils collected money, clothing, provisions, weapons for their recruits.

3) to explore the nomination and collection process in the periods of total mobilization of the Russian town – that is during the militia levies of 1806-1807 and 1812.

4) To investigate those volunteering for the army and militia: their identity, motives, and privileges, and the attitude of communes, families, and councils, as well as state officials to them.

5) To examine the influence of the intensified recruit and militia levies on the economic and financial position of the families and communes of merchants and *meshchane*, and those of the town councils (town budget, urban credit options).

6) To explore the relationships between the families, communes, and councils, and the crown authorities – the governor of the province and his office, officers of the army, and the urban police (the Chief of Police) during billeting of troops – looking at negotiation, cooperation, and conflict – and how they changed during this period of increased demand.

The thesis offers a topical structure and consists of six chapters.

The first chapter ‘The Russian provincial town by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.’ introduces the context. It outlines the historical development of urban communes in the provincial towns of Russia, especially in the Northwest; outlines major debates on social, political, and cultural developments of the communes of merchants and *meshchane*, and the practices of urban administration after Catherine II’s reforms in the 1770s-1780s. In addition, economic and demographic statistics of the three cities in the 1790s-1810s are presented.

The second chapter ‘Conscription: the impact of military duty on urban communes’ is dedicated to the practices of nomination for army and militia: the focus is on the tradition

of nominating men for service by decision (the verdict) of the meeting of the *meshchane* commune – during the regular, increasingly intensified levies of the 1790s-1810s, and during the two militia call-ups. The focus is on the practices used, and the motives behind the nomination of recruits: the chapter explores the relationships between the families and communes, councils, and the crown officials. The chapter discusses the role and motivations of the families, communes, and councils in various situations – and how they evolved; it examines how the process of nomination changed during the period under review – especially after the first mobilizational militia call-up of 1806-1807 – and how it correlated with the transformation of social and political life of urban commoners in provincial centres.

The third chapter ‘Material contributions of the urban communes’ outlines the material aspects of regular levies and the militia call-ups: it examines how the families, communes, and also the councils collected money, provisions and clothing for recruits during the regular levies of peacetime and the war years; how they contributed during the two militia levies; it explores what rules governed collections, what practices were used, and how they help to explain the correlation between the interests of various groups of commoners in the town – between the town councils and the communes of merchants and *meshchane*, between the commune elites and individual families. The chapter analyses how the size of contribution increased, explains why it happened – and how it changed the financial position of commoners’ families and communes, and the finances of town councils.

The fourth chapter ‘Volunteers and militiamen from the towns of St. Petersburg province and their service’ explores the volunteers: their motives and practices during the regular levies, in wartime, and during the militia call-ups – including the role of debts,

penalties. Based on two case-studies of the service of volunteers – in particular, of militiamen who joined the army in 1812 and were discharged in 1814 – the chapter analyses many important and previously unexplored problems, such as the circumstances of the service of these men, their demobilization, return to their hometowns, and the privileges they could receive. Special attention is paid to the provision of state care for ‘invalids’.

The later chapters examine the degree of independence of the commoners and their institutions from the crown officials, urban police, and military commanders in the peace years, during wartime and militia mobilizations, and when resolving billeting issues.

The fifth chapter ‘Commoners and the Chief of Police’ outlines the relationships between the communes, the families, and the town councils on the one hand and the Chief of Police on the other – during levies and when it came to billeting. The focus is on the cooperation, negotiation, and conflict.

The focus of the sixth chapter is on the complicated interrelationship between the commoners – the town councils, the communes, and the families – and officers of the army and militia, in various situations. The chapter explores the cases of cooperation, negotiation, and conflict (especially disputes relating to billeting) – and how these could be settled.

The thesis draws significant conclusions about the impact of increased military duty on the commoners of the provincial towns of the Russian Northwest, and will enrich the debates on the influence of the increased military demand on towns in Eastern Europe.

#### I.4. The sources

The basis for the study is formed by previously unexplored primary sources in the St. Petersburg archives. The focus is on administrative documents of various levels – as they enable us to examine the daily life of the town, and the practices employed. These sources are derived largely from the TsGIIASPb (Central State Historical Archive of St. Petersburg) and the RGIA (Russian State Historical Archive) in St. Petersburg; sources pertaining to the War Ministry of the Russian Empire – largely statistical documents – come from the RGVIA (Russian Military Historical State Archive) in Moscow.

I. The focus is on documents from the archives of the town administration – that is of the three town councils studied. These are: 1. the daily, weekly, and monthly protocols and journals of the councils; 2. the verdicts of the meetings of the *meshchane* and merchant communes during the levies, retained by the councils; 3. the correspondence of the councils with crown officials and officers (the Civil Governor and his office – the State Chamber – the War Ministry, the Militia Committee) during the recruit and militia levies or regarding billeting: decrees and orders to the councils, reports of the councils, including lists of recruits and militiamen prepared by the communes – with their names, ages, professions – or with the lists demonstrating the collection of money from families; appeals and suggestions related to various billeting disputes; 4. individual documents (case-studies) from the councils' archives regarding particular recruits, militiamen, and volunteers; the collection of money, provisions, and weapons by the communes; or billeting of officers, rank and file, and regimental facilities.

II. Documents from the archives of the relevant offices and crown authorities' collections regarding levies and billeting in the towns cited are also used. These are 1. orders, accounts, lists, and correspondence with the councils from the archive of the

governor of St. Petersburg province and the State Chamber; 2. documents of the War Ministry of Russia – these are largely statistical reports, extracts, lists with calculations regarding recruits, and supplies sent from the towns of St. Petersburg province; and lastly, 3. the corresponding sources from the archive of the 1812 Militia committee of St. Petersburg province – largely also statistics relating to militiamen from the urban communes of St. Petersburg province.

The most frequently used sources are the verdicts of the meetings of the merchants and *meshchane* communes, the minutes of the local councils of Novaia Ladoga, Gdov, Sofia-Tsarskoe Selo, and their correspondence with the governor and his office – the orders received from the governor, and the reports, lists sent to his office.

Some additional sources have been used, such as the decrees of the Emperor, those of the Governing Senate of the Russian Empire, and the appeals and pamphlets to the Russian people from the Synod – the highest administrative office of the Russian Church: especially those dated 1806-1807 and 1812. Most of them can be found in ‘The complete code of laws of the Russian empire’ (PSZ).<sup>9</sup>

Printed ‘Bulletins of Russian manufactures’ have also been used, as they provide meticulous lists of industrial enterprises in all provincial Russian towns in the early 1810s, with the number of ‘machines’, hired labourers employed, turnover of every enterprise – and demonstrate the impact of the war in 1812.<sup>10</sup>

Lastly, personal printed sources – such as the memoirs, correspondence, and diaries of Russian merchants and *meshchane* – have been used, if to a limited extent: they are not

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<sup>9</sup> Complete code of laws of the Russian empire (PSZ), the First Edition, V. 28-32. St. Petersburg, 1830.

<sup>10</sup> *Vedomost' o manufakturakh v Rossii za 1812 god* (St. Petersburg: Izd.-vo MVD, 1814); *Vedomost' o manufakturakh v Rossii za 1813 i 1814 gody* (St. Petersburg: Izd.-vo MVD, 1816).

numerous for the period under review,<sup>11</sup> and very few of these documents mention military duties; most of their pages being dedicated purely to minor local, family, and church business.

### **I.5. The historiography**

With most studies devoted to the period after the Great Reform (the 1860s), the scholarship on the Russian town and its people in the 18<sup>th</sup> – early 19<sup>th</sup> century is not as extensive as the scholarship on its agricultural social groups – the aristocracy, nobility, and peasants – but is still diverse, especially in Russian.

From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the legal school of Russian historiography developed and Russian legislation on towns and their people in the 17<sup>th</sup> – early 19<sup>th</sup> century was extensively studied with the focus on commoners' social groups and local communal organization, and the institutions and traditions of self-government, such as magistrates (*magistraty*) and town councils. I. I. Ditiatin, A. A. Kizevetter, Iu. V. Got'e, P. M. Milukov<sup>12</sup> perceived the Russian town of the 18<sup>th</sup> century largely as an administrative and legal entity. They began to emphasize the disproportionately greater role of the central authority in the urbanization process in Russia, which differentiated Russian towns from their counterparts in Western and Central Europe: the towns in Russia since the Muscovy period were often created, 'chartered', by the central authority. Many of them were never centres of

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<sup>11</sup> *Epistoliarnoe nasledie ust'iuzhskoi kupecheskoi sem'i Buldakovykh kontsa XVIII – pervoi chetverti XIX veka: teksty i issledovaniia*, F. Ia. Konovalov, Ju. S. Egorova, V. A. Konoplev (eds) (Vologda: Drevnosti Severa, 2018); *Iz nasledii krasnoiarskikh kuptsov Larionovykh. Vyp. 1: Pisma kontsa XVIII – pervoi treti XIX v.*, E. V. Komleva (ed.) (Novosibirsk: Akademizdat, 2016); *Kupecheskii dnevniki i memuary kontsa XVIII – pervoi poloviny XIX veka*, A. V. Semenova (ed.) (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007); I. A. Tolchenov, *Zhurnal ili Zapiska zhizni i prikl'uchenii Ivana Alekseevicha Tolchenova* (Moscow: RAS History Institute, 1974).

<sup>12</sup> I. I. Ditiatin, *Ustroistvo i upravlenie gorodov Rossii* (St. Petersburg: tip. P.P.-Merkul'eva, 1875); A. A. Kizevetter, *Gorodovoe polozhenie Ekateriny II: opyt ist. Kommentariia* (Moscow: Tip. Imp. Mosk. Un-ta, 1909); Idem., *Posadskaia obshine v Rossii v 18 veke* (Moscow: Tip. Imp. Mosk. Un-ta, 1903).

economic activity, but performed largely administrative, political, and military functions. It was typical of pre-revolutionary historians to blame the central authority for constant intervention, as they believed this to have been responsible for the backwardness of Russian towns in the 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century. As a result of that economic backwardness, the urban ‘middle class’ or ‘civil society’ in Russia, so it was claimed, had not formed even by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the social groups of urban commoners remaining stratified and disintegrated; legal consciousness, a sense of unity, and political ambition were still at a nascent stage even after the period of the Great Reform of the 1860s–1870s.<sup>13</sup> Many historians in the decades prior to 1917 were liberals, critical of the monarchy: with most studies devoted to the period after the Great Reform, Catherine II’s legislation on towns and the accompanying reforms were viewed as incomplete and controversial. Notably, the limited urban self-government based on town councils introduced in 1785 by Catherine II’s ‘Charter to the Towns’ (which remained in effect until 1870; see Ch. 1.) was perceived as almost wholly ineffectual and subject to the crown, with its functions restricted to maintaining the town’s amenities such as markets, sanitation, education, fire safety. At the same time a cultural tradition developed among Russian commentators and journalists, officials and litterateurs,<sup>14</sup> purveying the image of Russian provincial towns as bleak centres, with undeveloped economies, and a population exhibiting almost no tradition of self-organization, municipal self-government, or political ambition, and with legal consciousness in its infancy.<sup>15</sup> The families of merchants and *meshchane*, the communal and council officials, and magistrates in provincial Russian towns (most of which in the first

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<sup>13</sup> The situation was different only in Moscow and St. Petersburg.

<sup>14</sup> N. V. Gogol, M. E. Saltykov–Shedrin, I. S. Turgenev, I. A. Goncharov, M. M. Kustodiev, et. al.

<sup>15</sup> A. Lionsberry, *Life Is Elsewhere: Symbolic Geography in the Russian Provinces, 1800–1917* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020).

half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century remained small and middle-sized centres) were portrayed as conservative, traditional groups, with backward social, business, and political practices.

But already pre-revolutionary historians were beginning to stress an important problem: the correlation between the legal theory – ‘rhetoric’<sup>16</sup> – and reality: the everyday practices and traditions that accompanied the business, social, and political life of towns. Occupation often did not match legal status; the social weight and political ambitions of various groups, and the range of actions of commoners and their institutions could differ markedly from what was officially, legally prescribed.

In the Soviet period the focus shifted towards studying the social and economic aspects of the Russian urbanization process, with more global topics remaining the centre of interest – such as the development of various industries in Russian pre-reformed towns, trade, the formation of regional and national markets.<sup>17</sup>

With regard to the population of the Russian town, statistical studies were actively developed,<sup>18</sup> outlining the demographical and migration processes and trends in the 18<sup>th</sup> – first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the most important contributions being made by V. K. Kabuzan, Yu. R. Klokman, and P. G. Ryndziunskii. In 1990 B. Mironov offered a comprehensive global survey<sup>19</sup> of migration, and geographical and social mobility in the towns of the European provinces of Russia during the 1740s–1860s, largely built on

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<sup>16</sup> A. Martin, *Enlightened Metropolis: Constructing Imperial Moscow, 1762–1855* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> To name a few of the most noteworthy studies: W. L. Blackwell, *The Beginnings of Russian Industrialization, 1800–1860* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968); N. I. Pavlenko, *Istoria metallurgii v Rossii XVIII v.: Zavody i zavodovladeltsy* (Moscow: RAS History Institute, 1962); L. V. Milov, *Velikorusskii pakhar': osobennosti Russkogo istoricheskogo progressa* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1998).

<sup>18</sup> A. G. Rashin, *Naselenie Rossii za 100 let (1811–1913 gg.)* (Moscow: Gosstatizdat, 1956); V. K. Kabuzan, *Narodonaselenie Rossii v XVIII — pervoj polovine XIX v.: (Po materialam revizij)* (Moscow: RAS History Institute, 1962); P. G. Ryndziunskii, *Gorodskoe grazhdanstvo doreformennoi Rossii* (Moscow: RAS History Institute, 1958).

<sup>19</sup> B. N. Mironov, *Russkii gorod v 1740–kh – 1860–kh gg.* (Leningrad: Academy of Sciences, 1990).

quantitative analysis. The same scholar later introduced a global theory showing the evolution of the entire social system of Imperial Russia.<sup>20</sup>

Pre-reformed towns were often studied by local historians; before 1917, these would be provincial officials or intellectuals, often employed in statistical works or surveying: they became the first professional archivists.<sup>21</sup> Since the 1920s, both in the Soviet and modern Russia, an extensive tradition of local historiography has developed.

In the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both traditional and new areas of study in the history of the Russian town and its people have actively developed, both in Russian and in European languages,<sup>22</sup> with new avenues for research opening after 1991 to historians studying everyday life in the Russian town in the 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century. (In particular, A. B. Kamenskii.<sup>23</sup>) Among the new fields are the history of-urban healthcare institutions, of education, sanitation, and the urban police, consumer habits, and the nightlife of Moscow, St. Petersburg, and provincial capitals.

A. V. Belov has recently offered a comprehensive new analysis of the emergence of the modern urban network in central Russia (provinces around Moscow) during Catherine II's reforms at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, emphasizing that the reforms introduced to the European provinces of Russia an entirely new concept of the modern town, with new

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<sup>20</sup> B. N. Mironov, *Sotsial'naia istoriia Rossii perioda imperii (XVIII – nachalo XX v.)* in 2 Vols. (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> V. R. Apukhtin, *Narodnaia Voennaia Sila. Dvorianskie Opolcheniia v Otechestvennuu Voinu* (Moscow: T-vo Pechatnia S.P. Iakovleva, 1912).

<sup>22</sup> The journal on the Russian town appeared only in the 1970s and existed up to the early 1990s. *Russkii gorod*. It was more focused on the 'feudal' period of the Russian town.

<sup>23</sup> A. B. Kamenskii, *Povsednevnost' Russkikh Gorodskikh Obyvatelei. Istoricheskie Anekdoty iz Provintsial'noi Zhizni XVIII Veka* (Moscow: RGGU, 2006); V. A. Chernichkina, 'Povsednevnaia zhizn' gubernskogo goroda Vladimira v poslednei treti XVIII – pervoi polovine XIX veka' (CSc thesis, Vladimir Gos. Ped. Un-tet., 2008); N. A. Minenko, E. Iu. Apkarimova, S. V. Golikova, *Povsednevnaia zhizn' ural'skogo goroda v XVIII – nachale XX v.* (Moscow: Nauka, 2006).

administrative institutions, renewed functionality, improved infrastructure, and more modern conditions of living for its residents.<sup>24</sup>

With regard to the history of the Russian town and the commoners' social groups – merchants, *meshchane*, and craftsmen – the communes of Moscow and St. Petersburg, and those of large provincial centres, have always been the chief focus of interest, with the towns in the central provinces – around Moscow, along the Volga, and in Southern Russia – being similarly well examined.<sup>25</sup> But as M. Hittle has noted, the towns in the northern part of Russia, which (with the exception of St. Petersburg) remain far less examined, could often develop as more balanced, 'organic' centres – that is, that they evolved historically evolving both as both centres of trade and industry, and political activity, and not primarily as administrative and military centres – as was often the case with many provincial towns in Central Russia, and especially those in the eastern and southern – borderland – provinces.<sup>26</sup>

Within the Russian town certain groups have always received a disproportionate amount of attention: above all, the merchants, along with their traditions and culture. In particular, attention has been paid to communes of the Old Believers, who were especially numerous in the Russian North-West, and whose specific 'communal' business techniques, system of communal trust and credit have been closely examined.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile the

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<sup>24</sup> A. V. Belov, *Reforma goroda Ekateriny II (po materialam gubernii tsentralnoi Rossii)* (Moscow: RAS History Institute Tsentr Gumanitarnykh Initsiativ, 2019).

<sup>25</sup> G. E. Munro, *The Most Intentional City: St. Petersburg in the Reign of Catherine the Great* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008); C. Evtuhov, *Portrait of a Russian province: Economy, Society, and Civilization in the XIX c. Nizhnii Novgorod* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011); Martin, *Enlightened Metropolis*; A. Smith, *For the Common Good and Their Own Well-Being: Social Estates in Imperial Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>26</sup> M. J. Hittle, *The Service City. State and Townsmen in Russia, 1600–1800* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979).

<sup>27</sup> W. L. Blackwell, 'The Old Believers and the Rise of Private Industrial Enterprise in Early Nineteenth-Century Moscow', *Slavic Review*, V. 24, no. 3 (1965), pp. 407-424.

scholarship devoted to the *meshchane*, who constituted most of the urban population of Russia, remains very limited.

The social history of the urban commoners – the families, communes, and councils of the urban groups – is particularly important because it is inextricably intertwined with many important aspects of the economic, social, and financial development of Russia in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> – mid-19<sup>th</sup> centuries which have been actively studied and remain relevant today: such as the emergence of the financial system of Russia before the Great Reform, the development of state and private credit institutions, the evolution of domestic and foreign trade, and of customs and taxation systems in the 18<sup>th</sup> – early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>28</sup>

Altogether, the social history of the provincial Russian town and of its urban commoners in the 18<sup>th</sup> – mid-19<sup>th</sup> century remains an important field, now actively explored by historians of various schools, both in Russian and in Western languages. It remains, however, far less explored than the history of the landed social groups, with certain areas and problems receiving more attention than others – among them, the problems of the correlation of legal status and occupation, mobility and migration, cultural life, merchants' groups, and (in recent times) the history of everyday life, consumer culture.

The involvement of urban commoners and their institutions – in the way they were shaped by the reforms of the 1770s-1780s – in the recruit and militia levies, and other military duties (e.g., billeting), is one of the least studied topics. Meanwhile, the role of the

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<sup>28</sup> A. Kahan, *The Plow, the Hammer, and the Knout: An Economic History of Eighteenth-Century Russia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); H. H. Kaplan, *Russian overseas commerce with Great Britain during the reign of Catherine II* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1995); V. V. Morozan, *Istoriia bankovskogo dela v Rossii (vtoraia polovina XVIII – pervaiia polovina XIX v.)* (St. Petersburg: Kruga, 2004); L. P. Marnei, *D. A. Gur'ev i finansovaia politika Rossii v nachale XIX v.* (Moscow: Indrik, 2009); G. E. Munro, 'Finance and Credit in the Eighteenth-Century Russian Economy', *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, Vol. 45 (4) (1997), pp. 552–560; S. A. Kozlov, Z. V. Dmitrieva, *Nalogi v Rossii do XIX v.* (St. Petersburg: Ist. Lit., 1999); E. S. Korchmina, 'Peer Pressure: The Puzzle of Tax Compliance in the Early Nineteenth-Century Russia', *The Economic History Review*, V. 75 N. 3 (2022), pp. 779-800.

wars and military duties – especially of recruitment (conscription, levying of recruits, and other contributions) – for society and the state in various countries of Europe at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> – early 19<sup>th</sup> century is a very important theme for historians.

The historiography on the military history of Russia is vast. Some general works should be mentioned here, such as L. Beskrovnyi's research on the Russian army in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, based on the great amount of statistical material collected: it offers meticulous and holistic analysis of the composition and size of the Russian army, military reforms, evolution of recruit levies. The works of J. L. H. Keep, F. W. Kahan, J. S. Curtiss also remain relevant.<sup>29</sup>

The problem of the relationship between the army and the communes, as well as the fate of commoners in the army, has been researched by E. K. Wirtshafter.<sup>30</sup> Recently J. F. Hartley has offered the most holistic and profound examination of various interrelationships between the military system of Russia and Russian society – from the elites to the commoners in the towns and villages. She has examined the impact of rising military demand in 1762–1815 – including that of the increased recruit levies – on industry, the financial system, and trade, as well as its implications in the social, cultural, and educational spheres.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> L. G. Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armii i flot v XIX veke* (Moscow: Nauka, 1973); L. G. Beskrovnyi, *Russkaja armija i flot v XVIII veke. (Očerki)* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1958); J. L. H. Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar: Army and society in Russia, 1461–1874* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); W. M. Pintner, 'The Burden of Defense in Imperial Russia, 1725–1914', *Russian Review*, V. 43 (1984), pp. 238–39; F. W. Kagan, *The Military Reforms of Nicholas I. The Origins of the Modern Russian Army* (N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1999); J. S. Curtiss, *The Russian Army under Nicholas I 1825–1855*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1965); A. Bitis, 'Reserves under Serfdom? Nicholas I's Attempt to Solve the Russian Army's Manpower Crisis of 1831–1832', *Jahrbücher für Geshchichte Osteuropas*, 51 (2003), pp. 185–193.

<sup>30</sup> E. K. Wirtshafter, *From Serf to Russian Soldier* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); E. K. Wirtshafter, 'The Lower Ranks in the Peacetime Regimental Economy of the Russian Army, 1796–1855', *Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 64 No. 1 (1986), pp. 40–65.

<sup>31</sup> J. M. Hartley, *Russia, 1762–1825: Military Power, the State, and the People* (Westport: Praeger, 2008), p. 6; J. M. Hartley, 'Patriotism in the Provinces in 1812: Volunteers and Donations', in J. M. Hartley, P. Keenan, D. Lieven (eds), *Russia and the Napoleonic Wars (War, Culture and Society, 1750–1850)* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 148–162.

The militia levies are a topic of particular importance, especially for Russian historiography. However, the coverage of the scholarship is uneven. V. Babkin's study of the 1812 militia offers a detailed analysis of the organization of the militia armies, the contribution of various social groups, and the role played by this national force. But it is only recently that the researchers have turned their attention to the contribution of the urban communes – the supply of recruits, money, and other resources from the merchants and *meshchane* communes. More attention has always been paid to the contribution of the Moscow and St. Petersburg communes in 1812: but the recent research of I. Lapina has also offered an extensive examination of the contribution of the communes of district capitals, especially those of St. Petersburg province.<sup>32</sup> However, invariably only general totals are given – number of recruits supplied or money 'donated for the organization of militia' by the merchant communes and families – and only the contribution of the largest communes is usually listed.<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, almost no research has been done on the first militia – the levy of the 1806-1807 – partly owing to the fact that the first militia has always been considered no more than an episode of 'the war of the kings'.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> V. I. Babkin, *Narodnoe opolchenie v otechestvennoj vojne 1812 goda* (Moscow: Sotsekgiz, 1962). Among modern works on militia see: I. Iu. Lapina, 'Zemskoe opolchenie Rossii 1812–1814 gg.: issledovanie prichin vzniknoveniia gubernskikh voinskikh formirovanii i analiz osnovnykh etapov ikh uchastiia v vojne s Napoleonom' (DSc thesis, St. Petersburg State University, 2008).

<sup>33</sup> S. V. Belousov, 'Kupechestvo srednego Povolzh'ia', *Vestnik Samarskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta*, №3 (2010), p. 59-63; V. A. Bessonov, *Kaluzhskii krai v Otechestvennoi vojne 1812 g.* (Kaluga: Zolotaia all'eia, 2011).

<sup>34</sup> I. A. Gornovskii, 'Sto let nazad. Militsiia 1806 – 1807 godov i pozhertvovaniia na nee', *Russkii arkhiv*, №. 8 (1904), pp. 534-554; S. A. Gulevich, *Istoriia Leib-gvardii Finliandskogo polka*, Vol. 1. (St. Petersburg: Ekonomicheskaja tipograf., 1906).

It is also necessary to expand historiographical framing comparatively to take in more of the debate around the transition from 'ancien regime' forms of warfare and recruitment to 'revolutionary war' and the *levee en masse*.<sup>35</sup>

Another relevant area of historiography to be considered is the scholarship on state- and nation-building, and the role of military demands in this process. Here several important concepts should be mentioned: among them the fiscal-military state, the police state, and the contractor state; also relevant are the works of the sociologists Charles Tilly and Michael Mann – who have studied, among other topics, the role of the military sphere in the formation of the state, nation, and the town of the modern period, in various countries and regions (see references on page 2).

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<sup>35</sup> I. Berkovich, *Motivation in War: The Experience of Common Soldiers in Old-regime Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); A. Forrest, *Soldiers of the French Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990); A. Forrest, *Napoleon's men: soldiers of the Revolution and Empire* (London/N.Y.: Continuum, 2002); K. Hagemann, 'Occupation, Mobilization, and Politics: The Anti-Napoleonic Wars in Prussian Experience, Memory, and Historiography', *Central European History*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (2006), pp. 580-610; M. Hewitson, *Absolute War: Violence and Mass Warfare in the German Lands, 1792-1820* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); D. Moran, A. Waldron (eds), *The People in Arms. Military Myth and National Mobilization since the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

## **Chapter 1.**

### **The Russian provincial town by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century**

As described in the introduction, historical debate continues over the uniqueness of urban development in the Russian Empire: the focus of interest up to now has often been on the functions of the Russian towns – particularly their economic, administrative, and military roles. Meanwhile, the history of urban self-government, its capacities, and limits; and of the urban commoners themselves – the specificities of their status, occupations, social and political organization, their practices, political culture, and traditions – should not be neglected. A detailed picture of the Russian provincial town must therefore be presented at this stage.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter first introduces the social and political organization of the Russian provincial town at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as it emerged during the reforms of Catherine II; second, it provides a detailed survey of three towns and their communes in St. Petersburg province, based on hitherto unexplored archival documents; and then it outlines the military duties owed by urban commoners in the 1780s-1820s: at the centre are the regular recruit levies and militia call-ups, and billeting, which are explained in detail.

#### **1.1. The urban reforms of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century: the new social and political configuration of the Russian town**

This section introduces the new legislation which defined the major social and political structures of the Russian provincial town after 1785: both how they were

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<sup>1</sup> Evtuhov, *Portrait of a Russian province*, pp. 45-46.

envisaged, and how the practice in provincial Russian towns could differ from the legal theory.

The urban reforms during Catherine II's reign changed the trajectory of Russia's urban development. The administrative reform, commissioned in 1775, established a more rational taxonomy of the urban centres. The 1785 Charter to the Towns introduced an entirely new system of social and political organization to the Russian town: the Charter radically revised the urban administration, which from now on would be based on urban self-government represented by the town council (*duma*). The new social and political organization of the Russian town, gradually implemented in almost all urban centres during the 1780s–1790s, remained in effect until the era of the Great Reform, being revised only in 1870. Also, during Catherine's reign, the functions and spatial organization of the towns were revised and standardized: regular planning was introduced, urban schools, orphanages, and fire stations opened, markets and state-owned salt and bread warehouses (*magazeiny*) were rebuilt, and the urban infrastructure, sanitary, and living conditions significantly improved.

It needs to be added, that certain structures of the Russian town, such as urban communes, as well as urban institutions such as magistrates (*magistrat*), existed long before Catherine II's reform. Some practices of the commoners' communes (who were often collectively called the '*posad* population') – for instance, electing tax collectors, street, and neighbourhood elders – were inherited from 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>– century municipal traditions. During the reign of Peter I and his successors, there were several attempts at reforming the Russian town and introducing limited self-government, namely during the magistrates' reform of 1721-24, but these attempts were not always successful. The legislation of the 1770s-1780s completely revised the existing urban structures and

introduced new ones. Catherine II's reforms finally put the Russian town on a stable footing: they defined it as a legal entity, organized the townspeople in logical structures, and firmly established the political life of towns of any size on the basis of elected self-government. In this regard, A. Belov justly argues that it would be right to call this enterprise of Catherine's reign not simply 'an urban reform', but rather a global, holistic 'reform of the Russian town'.<sup>2</sup>

In the existing historiography, a great deal of attention has always been paid to the Russian town's social and political organization, both before and after Catherine II's reforms. But from the 1840s-1850s, when Russian statesmen, publicists, and historians began to show interest in the problems of the Russian town, the theme of urban self-government remained the primary focus of attention. 'Liberal' Russian historiography of the late 19<sup>th</sup>– early 20<sup>th</sup> century developed a largely critical view of the Russian town. The system of local self-government – based on the communal tradition and after 1785 on the town councils – was depicted as lacking in authority, and subject to the crown, with a very limited sphere of operation, restricted purely to local activities such as collecting taxes and maintaining the town's amenities and infrastructure (urban schools, police, markets, fire safety). The commoners of Russian towns in the 17<sup>th</sup>– early 19<sup>th</sup> century were portrayed as lacking initiative, apathetic, and reluctant to take part in local, let alone national political life. This critical view, of a pre-reformed Russian town and its people, their social and political structures, practices, and traditions, as something inferior to their counterparts in Western and Central Europe, has become a regular trope of Russian historiography; often

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<sup>2</sup> Belov, *Reforma Goroda Ekateriny Vtoroi*, p. 8.

replicated in the works of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Soviet and Western scholars, it still largely dominates today.

Such views correlate with the discourse on the roles and functions of the Russian town: as mentioned above, 19<sup>th</sup>-century commentators and critics, like later historians, were already maintaining that Russian towns developed for the most part not as centres of economic activity, but rather as urban centres 'serving' various needs of the state. In the 1980s M. Hittle's research demonstrated how many functions the towns and urban commoners performed 'serving state needs' in the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> In his more recent study A. Belov argues that up to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century the primary role performed by the Russian town was to serve as a fortress.<sup>4</sup> At the same time C. Evtuhov has suggested differentiating Russian towns, according to the correlation of economic and administrative functions, into three groups:

- 1) organic, or historical – towns with a strong economic background (more numerous in Central Russia);
- 2) planned, or created – towns that performed largely administrative roles;
- 3) mixed – towns with both an economic and administrative background.<sup>5</sup>

The historical backgrounds of the towns could differ, but it remains true that the administrative function of the Russian town was long far more important than in the case of towns in Central and Western Europe. A strong administrative background was apparent in many small- and middle-sized Russian towns before the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – including in the northern part of Russia. In the towns of the Northwest urban industries and trades were often underdeveloped, and in the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries towns in this part of

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<sup>3</sup> Hittle, *The Service City*.

<sup>4</sup> Belov, *Reforma Goroda Ekateriny Vtoroi*, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Evtuhov, *Portrait of a Russian province*, pp. 45-46.

Russia could not hope to rival the more developed economies of towns of the Central Economic region – that is, in the provinces around Moscow.

In this regard, the first important step was the administrative reform of 1775, which chartered many new towns, uniting the administrative, demographic, and economic criteria. This reform finally established a clear and unambiguous legal definition of the Russian town, and introduced the taxonomy of urban centres. From now on, almost all towns belonged to two official categories: either to provincial capitals – that is, administrative centres of provinces: regions which embraced 300-400,00 and townspeople – or to district capitals: centres of a district (*uezd*), a lower administrative unit the size of a county, which encompassed 20-30,000 males of the taxed population. Most Russian towns belonged to the lower category of district capitals. As B. Mironov notes, the size of district centres could differ widely: by the 1800s most towns normally encompassed about 1,000-3,000 males from commoner families, officially registered in tax lists, renewed every year.<sup>6</sup>

The towns in the Northwest – the object of this research – were smaller than those in the provinces around Moscow or along the Volga. In the 1800s the district capitals of St. Petersburg province had up to 1,000-1,500 male residents (Russian officialdom counted only the males). Besides officially registered townspeople ascribed to one of the urban communes (see below), in every town there were always migrant labourers, largely from the provincial peasantry, retired soldiers, and various marginal categories of people present. Many of these men would be employed in the town's factories (manufactories) or mills; rented small patches of land belonging to the town; or worked as coachmen, day labourers. Many of them were not properly registered to one of the urban communes, and

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<sup>6</sup> Mironov, *Russkii Gorod*, pp. 40-55.

therefore represent a difficulty for the researcher. However, there were fewer such men in the towns of St. Petersburg or Novgorod provinces than in the towns of the Central Economic region. Thus, in the following chapters only officially registered townspeople will be studied: that is, those families that paid taxes and performed military duties officially, as members of one of the two main urban communes – those of the merchants and *meshchane*.

The second of these important developments was introduced by the 1785 Charter to the Towns, which created a new social and political organization of the town. The idea of the reform was that the Charter to the Towns, together with the Charter to the Nobles, also from 1785, would delegate many of the responsibilities of the crown administration to a newly constituted system of local self-government – in the form of provincial assemblies of nobles and their police (*nizhnii zemskii sud*) in the districts, and town councils in the urban centres. It was a logical move: one of the key problems of Imperial Russia was always a chronic lack of crown officials at the lower and middle levels (for instance, the state police, *stanovye pristavy*, was only introduced in the districts in the 1840s).<sup>7</sup> In conditions of the often complete absence of state administration, local self-government 'on the spot' was vital for collecting taxes, performing duties, and maintaining social order. Historically there was a strong primary organization in the Russian countryside – the peasant commune (*obshchina*) – based on the principle of mutual responsibility for taxes and duties, known as *krugovaia poruka*; in the towns also there was a long-established tradition of neighbourhood communities, which gathered to elect their own minor officials, raise taxes, and manage local affairs. In the 18<sup>th</sup>–early 19<sup>th</sup> century the shortage of

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<sup>7</sup> Smith, *For the common good*, p. 82.

administrators was especially apparent: even in the towns it was difficult to find educated people, and retired officers and the rank and file would often be employed as secretaries and clerks in the state, municipal, and private offices.<sup>8</sup> The chronic lack of educated people, and of money in the state treasury for local administration, taxation, and police functions, together with the absence of organizational experience, made local self-government structures in towns and countryside desirable for improving the functions of the state, taxation, and safety in the provinces (these considerations weighed especially heavily after the devastating rebellion of E. Pugachev in 1773-1775). The reformers thus thought that delegating municipal government (raising taxes, overseeing schools, infrastructure, the police) to people in the towns, and nobles in the countryside, would serve several purposes.

The Charter instituted two levels of self-government in the towns. The lower level was represented by communes of various categories of residents. The upper one was municipal self-government, from now on represented by the elected town council – now the highest organ of the town – and not the governor or *voevoda* appointed by the higher authorities, as it used to be in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and during most of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The political and social contexts of the reform were intertwined. The Charter instituted six legal categories of urban residents: it was envisaged that these six groups would now encompass almost all residents of the Russian town. The communities – called the communes – of each of the six categories were supposed to manage their own affairs, including raising taxes. Acting jointly, all six communes of residents were expected to take part in the municipal government; every three years those who qualified, from all

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<sup>8</sup> Hartley, *Russia, 1762–1825*, p. 4.

categories, were to elect their representatives to the town council and also elect the town head (mayor, *gradskoi glava*), who presided over the council, and the town headman (*gorodskoi starosta*), who often played the role of deputy to the town head. The council was from now on the highest institution in the town's self-government. The office of magistrate, carried over from before, survived the reforms and became the secondary municipal institution after the council: it consisted of several burgomasters and *ratmany*, also elected from the richest families, but these officials were now made subordinate to the council and the town head. The relationships between the council and the magistrate could be complicated, and some functions overlapped, but in most towns after 1785 the duties of the magistrate and his officials were reduced to accepting and sending to the treasury the taxes raised in the town, registering the capital amounts of merchant families every January, and running various accounts. From 1775 magistrates also played the role of a court of justice of first instance for urban residents, largely judging smaller legal cases which involved the commoners' families.

In reality, almost the entire population of every Russian town consisted of commoners – a vast variety of families of non-noble origin, considered by the authorities as 'uneducated' and 'unprivileged' 'classes', akin to state peasants. And among the six categories of urban residents envisaged by the Charter, only three represented commoners' groups: merchants, *meshchane*, and artisans. As mentioned above, in every town they were now to be organized in separate communes. Every year each commune elected their own communal magistrates from the most respected members – chief among them, the tax collectors (*sborschiki*), of whom there were usually two in the *meshchane* commune and two in the merchant commune. Also, the richest families in the *meshchane* commune would normally provide *raskladchiki* – the men who determined how much

money had to be raised at each levy. It seems that merchant communes did not need *raskladchiki* – from 1775 their families contributed taxes separately – but on some occasions, such as for extraordinary levies of money for recruits or for militia needs, merchants also elected several *raskladchiki*.

The other three categories of urban residents were property owners, including nobles, clergy, and government officials; foreigners and 'guests' from other towns; and the so-called honorary commoners. The latter were the richest commoners, usually from the merchant elite, to whom very high qualifications applied: but in most provincial towns there were only one or two families from this category, such as the town head of Dimitrov in the 1780s-1790s Ivan Tolchenov.<sup>9</sup> With regard to property owners and guests, they were not numerous in provincial towns, especially in the district capitals: the provincial landowners, who lived in the countryside, would only spend a few months in the town. Thus, after 1785 the families of nobles, officials, clerks, retired officers, teachers, doctors, architects, or clergymen never really took part in the city's affairs, not even in the larger cities. This left the management of the Russian town entirely to the commoners.

As noted above, once every three years the communes of merchants, *meshchane*, and artisans elected the officers who formed the town council: but due to the high property qualification, the members of the council and the town head were almost always from the rich merchant families of the local elite. As the sources in the three council archives examined confirm, it was rare to find a single honorary citizen family in the district town of St. Petersburg province; most merchants of the town belonged to the lower guilds (see

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<sup>9</sup> D. Ransel, *A Russian Merchant's Tale. The Life and Adventures of Ivan Alekseevich Tolchënov, Based on His Diary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), p. 250.

below), and the council and the town head were almost exclusively recruited from the richest merchant families of the town.

The commune's and the town council's duties were separated, though they sometimes overlapped. In general, the commune and communal officials were made responsible for raising taxes and performing military duties, such as nominating and delivering men for army service. The council received orders from the provincial Civil Governor and his office, and the State Chamber (which was largely concerned with tax matters, while the governor supervised more important business, such as the supply of recruits during the levies); it scheduled meetings of communes, oversaw the collections, controlled other communal business, and send reports and accounts to the governor. Last but not least, the council and the town head, the merchant elite, controlled the city budget: the commoner families contributed both state and local, city taxes. The former were sent to the district treasury, or directly to the provincial State Chamber – such as in the towns of St. Petersburg province; while the local taxes were used for paying the municipal magistrates, maintaining the city amenities – urban police, lighting, sanitation, schools, markets, and government warehousing (*magazeiny*).

Sources such as annual tax registers of the councils of the district capitals demonstrate that at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the common people in the towns of St. Petersburg province, which were mostly small, often semi- administrative centres, belonged only to two communes: that of the merchants, the upper urban class, and to *meshchane* – the larger urban commune of the families of lower and middle income, who did not declare the minimum capital required for registration as merchants. Artisans' (or craftsmen's) communes developed separately from *meshchane* communes only in the largest centres – usually in provincial capitals. In St. Petersburg province artisan communes

existed in the capital and in Kronstadt, where industry was far more developed, and there were a lot of craftsmen families, including foreigners, largely of German origin (employed as mechanics, gunpowder makers, apothecaries). But in the district centres there were usually only a few artisan households registered with the *meshchane* commune: the taxes they paid, and the military duties they performed (providing recruits and money during the levies) were similar to those of the *meshchane*.

Most commoner families in the towns reviewed thus belonged to the *meshchane* commune: they were employed in small trades and crafts, and in the tertiary sector, where they worked as clerks, coachmen, builders, and day labourers. The *meshchane* commune collected a poll tax from adult males in each household, for which the entire commune was responsible. During regular military levies, announced almost each autumn, this commune was also responsible for the nomination of conscripts, 'recruits', who would serve in the army. As B. Mironov has demonstrated, collective responsibility meant that the political culture of the *meshchane* by the 1800s was still very close to that of the peasant commune.<sup>10</sup>

The communes of the urban upper class, the merchants, were more compact and individualistic. From 1775, there were three guilds, depending on the size of the capital declared, but in most provincial towns almost none but merchants of the 3<sup>rd</sup> guild were registered.<sup>11</sup> It needs to be added that the correlation between estate status and occupation could be complicated: some provincial merchants were closer to the middling sort, whereas some *meshchane* families could be actively involved in trade on a smaller scale, and even had their shops in the shopping arcade in the city centre. From the tax

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<sup>10</sup> Mironov, *Sotsial'naiia istoriia Rossii*, 1 vol., pp. 496–499.

<sup>11</sup> Ryndziunskii, *Gorodskoe grazhdanstvo*, pp. 48-49.

registers it can be concluded that there were only a handful of merchant families of the 2<sup>nd</sup> (and – very rarely – one or two of the 1<sup>st</sup> guild) in the district capitals of St. Petersburg province: and the overall tendency in the 1790s-1800s was for many of the 2<sup>nd</sup> guild families to reregister into the 3<sup>rd</sup> guild. But these were the first families of the city, and they continued to hold almost all elected posts, including in the town council and in the reformed magistracy (*magistrat*). And the town head was almost always an influential and respected individual of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or the upper 3<sup>rd</sup> guild.<sup>12</sup>

It is also necessary to briefly explore the other institutions, with which the urban commoners, their communes, and the town council, would come into contact. First of all, there was the Chief of Police (*gorodnichii*): according to the new Police Manual of 1782, this was the main, and often the sole representative of the crown administration with enforcement functions in the district town. The Chief of Police was subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and to a limited extent to the Civil Governor (hereafter – the governor) of the province: normally Chiefs of Police were recruited from retired or wounded officers of middle rank, frequently that of army major. However, the Chief of Police was largely financed by the town council. Each year the council allocated a certain sum of money to pay the Chief, his squad of bailiffs (*chastnye pristavy, kvartalnye nadzirateli*) and minor policemen (such as *desiatskie, budochniki*), and to maintain guardrooms, turnpikes, and the prison, if the city was large. The relationships between the Chief of Police and the town council, communes, and families could be complicated: they are explored in detail in Chapter 5.

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<sup>12</sup> Ransel, *A Russian Merchant's Tale*, p. 56-70.

The town council, when necessary – for instance, to search for evaders or non-payers across the province – could also contact the noble police of the district (*Nizhnii Zemskii sud*), or resort to the help of the Head of Police in the capital, *Oberpolitsmeister*, and his office, the provincial police (*Uprava Blagochinia*).

Apart from the Chief and the town police, and the governor in the provincial capital, the communes of townspeople and the town council often had to deal with the officers who arrived, e.g., to conscript recruits or collect the contribution of the commoners (provisions, clothes, weapons – especially during times of war and militia call-ups) – or with the military commanders of army units who could be billeted in the town (Chapter 6).

The council sources show how the system of communal and council self-government functioned during the years both of peace and war. Let us explore the procedures using an example of money ordered to be raised for various state and military needs – such as for artillery horses in 1812. Normally in such cases the town councils would receive concrete instructions from the governor stating how much money was needed to be raised from each male among the merchant or *meshchane* families in the province. Over the next few days, the council scheduled meetings of the communes of merchants or *meshchane*. Many families would attend such meetings – though many ignored their civic duty, only appearing when the most important matters of business such as nomination of recruits were discussed. But the rich and influential households usually dominated when taking decisions. At the end of the meeting, the commune issued a verdict containing its decision – in this case stating how much money was to be raised in total, and how much from each family male. The verdict was signed by the attendees, and the first to sign were the commune's elders: the headmen, collectors, and richest families. They largely determined how the amount of money needed was to be apportioned between families.

Then the commune began to raise the money, resorting to the help of the town council and the Chief of Police if some men refused to pay, sought to evade, or were absent. The headmen of the commune or the collectors kept the council regularly informed about results, and the council, in turn, sent regular reports to the governor.

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Charter to the Towns largely turned the Russian town into a self-administering legal entity. The Russian town, before and after Catherine II's reforms, had many specific social and political characteristics, which distinguished Russian provincial centres and urban communes from their counterparts in Central and Western Europe. But there were many common features as well, and even more of them after Catherine II's reforms – which have led many researchers to view the late Romanov Russian town as a subtype of European urban development.<sup>13</sup>

## **1.2. The three towns of St. Petersburg province and their communes**

The Russian Northwest was an important historical part of the Russian hinterland – especially St. Petersburg, Novgorod, and Pskov provinces. As emphasised by M. Hittle, from the Middle Ages the towns in this region have often been at the forefront of urban development,<sup>14</sup> but have been less extensively studied<sup>14</sup> than towns around Moscow, along the Volga, or in the south.<sup>15</sup> At the centre of this study are three district capitals of St. Petersburg province of differing size and economic background.

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<sup>13</sup> B. M. Hildermeier, 'Die russische Stadt: Subtyp europäischer Entwicklungen', in F. Lenger, K. Tenfelde (eds), *Die europäische Stadt im 20. Jahrhundert: Wahrnehmung - Entwicklung - Erosion* (Wien/Köln/Weimar: Bohlau Verlag, 2006), pp. 45-60.

<sup>14</sup> Hittle, *The Service City*, p. 26.

<sup>15</sup> Evtuhov, *Portrait of a Russian province*; M. Abeßer, 'Prosperity and Conflict in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Rostov-on-Don: Russian, Cossack, and Armenian Economic Cultures on the Northern Black Sea Coast', in A. E. Balistreri and B. Belge (eds), *Exchange and Non-Exchange. Confronting Borders in the History of the Black Sea. Euxeinos - Culture and Governance in the Black Sea Region*, Vol. 11, №. 32 (2021), pp. 56-

All these towns belonged to what A. Belov defines as an 'integral historical-economic region', which extended beyond the administrative borders of St. Petersburg province.<sup>16</sup> The towns in this area, the Northwest of Russia, were located within the network of important waterways connecting the Volga, Central, and Southern Russia with the Baltic Sea ports, and the capital St. Petersburg, which by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was Russia's major entrepot (see picture). Grain, the-timber trade, and the transportation of goods played an important role in the lives of the urban communes of this region. Russian commodities – especially grain, building timber, hemp, flax, tar, wax, leather, and furs – were transported to the Baltic for export. Imported goods, such as sugar, wine, spices, tea, wallpaper, and various luxury products – furniture, jewellery – were carried to St. Petersburg, and to a lesser extent to Riga and other ports, and were then transported via canals and rivers into the Russian hinterland, reaching Moscow and the inner provinces. Though known as one of the main industrial areas of Russia, the Northwest was less important than the Central Economic region. Industries were more developed in St. Petersburg and its province, where military production played a big role, due to the proximity of natural resources such as those of the Olonetsk mining region; brickmaking, paper production, glassmaking, textile, and other industries also developed here. In the Northwest also traditional industries remained developed, such as salt production – especially in the towns of Novgorod province. The towns of the Northwest were also known for leather, timber processing, and wax production.

Picture: Waterways and canal systems in the Russian northwest by the 1810s (Museum of the history of Shlisselburg city).

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71; B. Belge, 'Pest und Profite. Eine Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Quarantäne im Hafen von Odessa', *Traverse*, No. 26(3) (2019), pp. 97–115.

<sup>16</sup> A. V. Belov, *1812 god v sud'be russkogo goroda* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2018), p. 238.



Novaia Ladoga was a district capital located on the Ladoga canal, an important link connecting the Volga to the Neva, St. Petersburg, and the Baltic Sea. Though considered the second town in the province after St. Petersburg, it was nonetheless far smaller. During the fourth census in the early 1780s,<sup>17</sup> there were no more than 373 residential houses reported here, almost all wooden, and half of them described as dilapidated.<sup>18</sup> There were four stone churches, and one wooden regimental church here at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. 558 men were registered in the *meshchane* commune in 1782 and by the end of the 1780s the commune reached 750. There were more than 800 *meshchane* men here in the early 1800s, and about 900 in 1810-1815.<sup>19</sup> Within this commune there were only a small number of families officially registered as 'craftsmen'.

The merchant commune of Novaia Ladoga was quite large and prosperous: there were 296 merchant males in the town in 1782, and 212 – in 80 families – in 1789: almost

<sup>17</sup> *Revisions* – a form of a census – took place approximately every 10 years in the period under review: in the early 1780s, in the mid-1790s, in 1811 and after 1815.

<sup>18</sup> The description of the town Novaia Ladoga, ca. 1782. RGVA (Russian State Military–Historical Archive). F. 846. Op. 16. D. 18999. Topographical description of St. Petersburg province, ca. 1782. L. 97v-99.

<sup>19</sup> The correspondence of the Novaia Ladoga council with the Governor on the number of men in the town's communes, Aug. 1812. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. On militia from Novaia Ladoga, 1812. L. 108–132.

all except for a few households were registered to the 3<sup>rd</sup> guild.<sup>20</sup> By the mid-1800s the commune had reached 300 or more male merchants, but the number dropped once again to slightly over 200 men in 1807-1812. The families here were buying and selling timber, Russian and German textiles, oats, leather, hemp, candles, and provisions. Some owned small vessels and transported goods and passengers along the canal. Already at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century there were two fairs held each year in Novaia Ladoga, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August, and the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, which attracted merchants from as far as Kargopol, Novgorod, Vologda, Yaroslavl', and Bezhetsk.<sup>21</sup> There were only two factories: the brick- and ropemaking enterprises (manufactories) of the merchant family Sharovy, each with up to 20 workers.<sup>22</sup>

Gdov was a small but ancient town in the south-west of the St. Petersburg province. The town was located on the road from Pskov to Narva. It was a district centre with a largely agrarian hinterland. The merchants and *meshchane* here dealt mostly in the sale of provisions from the district. There were no fairs in Gdov. There were about 150 residential houses, with two stone and three wooden churches in the early 1780s: 137 *meshchane* and 72 merchants males were registered here in 1782 – and also a post station with up to 70 coachmen (*iamshchiki*).<sup>23</sup> In 1806 in Gdov there were 139 *meshchane* and 123 merchants, and about 200 *meshchane* and 84 merchants in 1812.<sup>24</sup> There was no industry reported in the town at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>20</sup> Tax registers of Novaia Ladoga merchants for 1789-90, 11.04.1790. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 44. Novaia Ladoga town ex-headman P. Voronkov's report. L. 5-6v.

<sup>21</sup> The description of Novaia Ladoga, ca. 1782. RGVA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 18999. L. 97-99v.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, L. 99.

<sup>23</sup> The description of the town of Gdov, ca. 1782. RGVA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 18999. L. 87-88v.

<sup>24</sup> Gdov council on receiving orders of the Governor to supply militiamen from 139 men of the town, 01.04.1807. TSGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 215. The book of donations for militia, Gdov, 1806-1807. L. 34; Gdov council's report to the government on the merchant commune's (123 men belonging to 3<sup>rd</sup> guild families) fundraising for militia, 16.01.1807. *Ibid.*, L. 24-24v.

Sofia, from 1808 known as Tsarskoe Selo, was a commune of craftsmen and merchants, largely serving the Tsar's residence nearby. It was constructed as a planned town, adjacent to the residence, by order of Catherine II in 1780: there were 256 merchants and 76 *meshchane* in Sofia in 1782.<sup>25</sup> But after the Empress's death in 1796, Sofia decayed. As the size of the community shrank, Alexander I in 1808 ordered town's organization to be simplified: Sofia was renamed Tsarskoe Selo, and most families were resettled closer to the Tsar's residence. Instead of the town council, the community was now to be governed from the town hall – a form of simplified self-government, often introduced in smaller towns. There were 768 *meshchane* here in 1806 and only 550 in 1812 – or 883 with Gatchina and Pavlovsk, urban communes near smaller imperial residences in this district, whose communities were annexed to Tsarskoe Selo in 1811.<sup>26</sup> The commune of merchants in Sofia-Tsarskoe Selo during the 1790s-1810s was small and volatile. In 1812 there were 28 merchant families in Tsarskoe Selo, Gatchina, and Pavlovsk: several merchants of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> guilds would be registered there, and even foreigners appeared in the merchants' lists.<sup>27</sup> In the 1780s attempts were made to introduce three model factories in Sofia producing cloths, linen, and silk; but manufacturing in Sofia, as well as in Gatchina and Pavlovsk, failed to develop. Most families here were employed at the royal residence and in supplies, selling provisions, clothes, luxury imports, performing construction and repair work.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> The description of the town of Gdov, 1782. RGVA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 18999. L. 87-88v.

<sup>26</sup> Sofia council to college advisor F. F. Bel' on militiamen, 20.12.1806, RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 907. On Militia in Sofia, 1806-07. L. 21. The headman Marasinov to Tsarskoe Selo townhall on the men tax registers, 31.08.1812. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1060. On Militia in Tsarskoe Selo, 1812. L. 84-85v.; The governor to the Tsarskoe Selo townhall on the men tax registers in three towns, and militiamen required, 13.10.1812. Ibid., L. 121A.

<sup>27</sup> List of contributions of merchants for militia in Tsarskoe Selo, Gatchina, and Pavlovsk during 1812, sent to the governor M. Bakunin, 23.07.1812. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1060. L. 35.

<sup>28</sup> The description of the town Sofia, 1782. RGVA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 18999. L. 7-12v.

Lastly, for some of these chapters, sources related to the military levies in other towns have been used to a limited extent: such as documents from the council archives of other district towns of St. Petersburg province – of Schlisselburg (the town on the opposite end of the Ladoga canal, closer to St. Petersburg); Kronstadt – largely a naval military base and also a community of foreign and Russian merchants and professionals, involved in the export- and import-trade, and in military supplies, contracts, and works; Staraia Rusa (it was a district capital of Novgorod province; see Chapter 6); and, for the purpose of comparison, of Serpukhov – a larger district capital near Moscow, where in the period under review textile industries were actively developing.

### **1.3. The regular and militia levies and billeting**

Apart from paying state and city taxes, the townspeople of the Russian town – the communes and families of *meshchane*, merchants, and the municipal government – were obliged to perform various military duties. The last section of this chapter introduces their main duties during the late 18<sup>th</sup>–early 19<sup>th</sup> century. As noted above, the commoners living in towns were considered to be unprivileged estates, akin to peasants. There were various military duties, regular and occasional, that their communes and the councils had to organize: conscription; billeting of troops; raising money and various donations for military needs; supplying the army – mostly in war years – with horses, oxen, carts, provisions, and money; paying for the uniforms of new regiments, caring for the wounded, helping to escort and guard POWs.

But conscription, in the form of the military levies – providing recruits and raising money and various supplies for them during the levies – was the major duty for the

*meshchane* and merchants of provincial towns. The following two sections will explore in detail the organization of this duty.

Providing men, money, and other supplies during recruit and militia levies was the most burdensome, and certainly most important duty of urban commoners. In addition to this, the second major military duty of the families, communes, and councils of district towns was the obligation to offer billets to regular army troops: section 3 below examines the organisation of billeting in district towns.

### **1.3.1 Regular recruit levies**

Many of these military duties were burdensome, but the most difficult and onerous duty was the supply of conscripts – recruits. In the Russian Empire conscription took the form of recruit levies. To man the army during the Great Northern War, Peter I had introduced regular recruit levies in 1703. Levies were announced almost every year in the autumn, after the harvest. During the levy, the communes of unprivileged estates (serfs, free peasants, urban commoners) were responsible for providing a certain number of conscripts called recruits, who would serve at first for life, and from 1793 for a term of 25 years. Only in 1831 was this shortened to a term of 20 years of active service (15 years in the standing army, 5 in reserve battalions) and 5 on stand-by, which allowed for creating at least a small trained reserve. Further reductions of the period of active service followed from 1855, but levies were replaced by universal conscription only in 1874.<sup>29</sup>

In towns, the communes of *meshchane* nominated men for the service. The *meshchane* communes were also responsible for equipping and delivering the recruits, for

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<sup>29</sup> Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armiiia i flot v XIX veke*, pp. 74–80.

which they needed to raise money during every levy – that is almost every autumn. The upper urban social group – the merchant families and communes – from 1775 only provided ‘recruit money’ during annual recruit levies: but as we shall see, they contributed in other ways as well – such as by collecting ‘donations’ for the organization of provincial militia armies.

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century levies occurred almost every year, and the normal proportion had remained almost unchanged since Peter I’s reign: 1 man in every 500-man ‘district’ – that is, with 500 male *meshchane* or peasants recorded in the tax registers. In the 1780s–early 1800s levies during the years of peace remained at this low level, but in time of war demands grew. Wartime levies reached 5 per 500 men in 1787-1791 (*see Table 1*) and likewise occasionally in the 1790s: Russia’s military engagements intensified as Catherine II and Paul I conducted wars with Turkey, Sweden, Poland, and Revolutionary France. After 1801, even in peacetime 2 men for every 500 became the norm.

Table 1. Recruit levies №54–97, 1780–1831, figures are given in recruits per 500 men.<sup>30</sup>

|                 |      |      |      |                     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |              |      |              |              |
|-----------------|------|------|------|---------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|--------------|------|--------------|--------------|
| Year            | 1780 | 1781 | 1782 | 1783                | 1784 | 1785 | 1786 | 1787 | 1788 | 1789 | 1790 | 1791<br>1792 | 1793 | 1794         | 1795         |
| levy №          | 54   | 55   | 56   | 57                  | 58   | 59   | 60   | 61   | 62   | 63   | 64   |              | 65   | 67           | 68           |
| From 500        | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1                   | 1    | 2    | 1    | 5    | 5    | 5    | 4    | none         | 1    | 5            | 1            |
| 1796            | 1797 | 1798 | 1799 | 1800–<br>1801       | 1802 | 1803 | 1804 | 1805 | 1806 | 1808 | 1809 | 1810         | 1811 | 1812<br>Mar. | 1812<br>Aug. |
| 69              | 70   | 71   | 72   |                     | 73   | 74   | 75   | 76   | 77   | 78   | 79   | 80           | 81   | 82           | 83           |
| 5/<br>cancelled | 2    | 1    | 1,5  | none                | 2    | 2    | 1    | 5    | 5    | 5    | 5    | 3            | 4    | 2            | 10           |
| 1812<br>Dec.    | 1813 | 1814 | 1815 | 1816–<br>1817       | 1818 | 1819 | 1820 | 1824 | 1827 | 1828 | 1828 | 1829         | 1830 | 1831         | 1831         |
| 84              | 85   |      | 86   |                     | 87   | 88   | 89   | 90   | 91   | 92   | 93   | 94           | 95   | 96           | 97           |
| 8               | 8    | none | 1    | equalising<br>levy* | 2    | 2    | 4    | 2    | 2    | 2    | 4    | 3            | 2    | 3            | 4            |

<sup>30</sup> Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armiiia i flot v XIX veke*, pp. 70–80.

\* Provinces which contributed militiamen in 1812 were excused 3 levies in 1812–1813. At the end of 1815, during the so-called equalising levy these communes were required to provide the recruits they had been supposed to contribute during levies 83-85 – this number was reduced by the number of non-returned militiamen, who were counted for recruits.

From the mid-1800s and up to the mid-1810s the burden of conscription far outstripped the numbers required in previous decades. Military supplies demanded of the population grew rapidly from 1805, when Russia became involved in the War of the Third Coalition, and a decade-long period of incessant hostilities began: Alexander I's wars with Napoleonic France, Turkey, Sweden, and Persia. Requirements for men increased exponentially, reaching a peak in the 1812–1813 campaigns, unequalled in scope and in destructive capacity. L. Beskrovnyi estimates that the army and navy received 2 million recruits drafted during the 28 levies of Alexander I's reign: equal to the number of recruits conscripted over the period 1703–1801.<sup>31</sup> And this number does not include men conscripted for temporary service – to provincial militia armies – in 1806-1807 and 1812.

It was only in the last decade of Alexander I's reign that the levels of demand normalised: levies were lowered from 1814–1815. The army was largely up to strength by 1820, and from the 1820s until the Crimean War recruit levies remained low, only increasing temporarily in the late 1820s–early 1830s: in this period Russia conducted wars with Turkey and Persia, as well as fighting against Polish rebels. In the early 1830s the organization of levies was slightly modified.<sup>32</sup>

Recruit levies remain inadequately studied. Apart from general works and the global statistics on levies, there is little knowledge of how levies were organized on the ground: how the mechanisms of recruitment worked, especially in its most important aspect – nomination of men by verdict of the commune, along with the collection of money, clothes,

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<sup>31</sup> Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armiiia i flot v XIX veke*, p. 74.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

and provisions by the communes for recruits. The social and political background of nomination and collection in rural and especially urban communes remains little researched. There is next to no scholarship on recruit levies in towns, even in Russian. The present study offers a local and partly regional analysis of the practices, actions, and motivations of all main actors, at various levels, during the nomination and collection processes, based on the materials relating to three urban communes, which will help to clarify many aspects of the subject.

Levies were a hard and burdensome duty which was difficult to organize: every year they would put a great strain, especially on the families of low- and middle-income commoners, their communes, and local government. Town councils would usually receive the Emperor's decree and the governor's orders in October-November, with recruits normally required by January – February at the latest. The town council and the town head scheduled *meshchane* community meetings to nominate recruits and raise money required for their equipment (merchants, who were excused recruits, met to collect the so-called recruit money – the money they were required to pay during every levy; See Chapter 3). The commune of *meshchane* nominated men for the service, or appointed families that were to select a recruit from their males. At each levy the commune would raise money to buy the clothes, provisions, and equipment prescribed for recruits. The commune was also required to assemble, guard, and deliver recruits to the provincial governor's office in the provincial capital (St. Petersburg). For these purposes communes nominated and paid investigators, recruiting agents, and guardsmen. At the provincial governor's office there existed a special recruiting office (*rekrutskoe prisutstvie*), where commissions were organized to examine and accept men. Commissions, presided over by the governor, included the governor's officials, doctors, and officers. Recruits were accepted together

with clothes and the money for 3 months' provisions, and the communes' agents were provided with receipts for the men, and for the money, clothes handed over. During the levies, the town council and the town head, as well as the Chief of Police and his bailiffs were supposed to help the *meshchane* commune to find, apprehend, and send those nominated, as well as to collect the money from the *meshchane* and merchant families: but the means at the disposal of the communes, town council, and the Chief of Police were limited.

Recruit levies made the autumn months a period of great distress for Russian society. As Major-General A. I. Tutomlin noted in 1806, 'One has to live a secluded life not to notice the despair of families, the sufferings of the people, the burdens of problems and eventually the complete interruption of any business and any industry during the levy. The way the levy is organized now makes the time of the levy always a time of popular distress, and the arbitrariness of the levies in our time produces violent shocks among the people'.<sup>33</sup> The adjutant-general F. P. Uvarov in 1807 wrote: 'Everyone knows what the recruit levy means: what cries, lamentation, and gloom it produces in the households which are contributing men'. Families who supplied recruits indeed mourned the loss of their men – sons, brothers, fathers – as if they were sentenced to death: a soldier's service, even shortened to 25 years, was a burdensome fate, especially in this war period. 'What can be more terrible than the organization of recruit levies in Russia? A man who committed no crime is handed over for service like a criminal. He and his family would have been incomparably more indifferent had the death been determined for him by nature. The recruit levy itself is a degrading sight for humanity: the forehead of a man, who is found fit,

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<sup>33</sup> *Stoletie voennogo ministerstva*, G. G. Skorichenko and D. A. Skalon (eds), Vol. IX, Ch. 1. (St. Petersburg: Sinodalnaia Tipografiia, Tov-vo M.O. Volf, 1902), Appendix 2.

is shaved'.<sup>34</sup> Still, the service was not a death sentence, as often considered by contemporaries and by many writers up to the present day. As we shall see, many survived their service, and some could also be released earlier on health grounds. There was always a place for volunteers, whose motivations will be explored in detail (Ch. 4). The service also meant mobility; it could open new prospects, including for some a career in the military or civil service – particularly for more literate townspeople. The truth is that soldiers rarely returned to their families and communes: retirees gravitated towards larger towns – St. Petersburg and provincial capitals, ports.

There are few surviving memoirs written by Russian soldiers and only two narratives from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> – early 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of them, *'Zapiski Pamfila Nazarova'*, shows in detail how dramatic was the process of choosing men inside the community and within the family. Pamfil, conscripted in 1812 at the age of 20, described in 1839 how the family had been expecting the community meeting's decision: 'My face was soaked with miserable tears, awaiting the sad news. Grandpa came...and began weeping saying to family, mother and brothers, that our family was selected to be the fourth household [to contribute]; with that the entire family burst into tears... Overcome with tears I went to my comrade Fedor Ivanovich whose family was selected the fifth, we embraced each other, weeping, and I said: «Well, brother, it seems the last time we will be hosted in our parents' houses!»'.<sup>35</sup> Pamfil had a mother and three brothers, of whom the eldest had family, another had poor health and the last one was too young. The entire family, except for the mother, pleaded with Pamfil to go and save his brothers: 'When I returned, at the gate all my relatives met me weeping with tears, and in the house all fell to their knees – brothers,

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<sup>34</sup> P. P. Evstaf'ev, *Vosstanie voennykh posel'ian Novgorodskoi gubernii v 1831 godu* (Moscow: Izd-vo Vsesoiuznogo o-va politkatorzhan i ssyl'noposelentsev, 1935), p. 16.

<sup>35</sup> P. Nazarov, '«Zapiski» Pamfila Nazarova', *Russkaja starina*, №8 vol. 22 (1878), pp. 529–530.

sisters-in-law, and elderly grandfather, who begged me to volunteer in place of my brothers, and my little two-year-old godson, instructed by his parents, fell at my feet'. In Tver, the provincial centre, where they travelled the next day, Pamfil himself resolved to go: 'My brothers and grandfather fell at my feet...I myself was bathed in tears and made my way to the State Chamber', where 'the governor was standing with registers in his hand'. The medical examination of Pamfil, as of other men, was short, and the governor soon commanded: 'Forehead! (*Lob!!*)'.<sup>36</sup> Pamfil was taken, shaved, and joined the other recruits. Throughout the farewell in Tver the whole family mourned him like someone who had died.<sup>37</sup> During his service Pamfil took part in many wars, received wounds, and was recognised by his commanders as a brave and skilful soldier. By the end of his term, he was finally transferred to a less demanding service – an internal guards corps (local watch battalions, also known as 'invalids' squads'), and a couple of years later was released. Pamfil chose not to rejoin his family, but to pursue the life of a priest.

Recruits conscripted via the levies served almost their entire life: in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Russia had a large professional standing army. But there were many drawbacks inherent in the system, obvious by the end of the century. A large proportion of the male population, about 20%, did not take part in levies: including those from the privileged and half-privileged estates of nobles, clergymen, and *raznochintsy* (educated men, sons of clergy). The average age of the Russian soldier was higher than in Europe.<sup>38</sup> But levies also did not allow for the creation of a trained reserve to be mobilized for peak war periods – a problem which became acute during the wars with Napoleonic France in 1805-14.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> 'Shave this one!' (meaning the recruit has been accepted).

<sup>37</sup> Nazarov, '«Zapiski» Pamfila Nazarova', p. 532.

<sup>38</sup> Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armiiia i flot v XIX veke*, p. 70.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

### 1.3.2. The militia levies (1806-7, 1812-14)

From the 1790s the involvement of Russian society in wars increased, as the scope and nature of war changed from 'cabinet wars' to long and resource-demanding national conflicts:<sup>40</sup> many governments, seeking to mobilize manpower resources more efficiently, experimented with creating auxiliary or irregular military forces distinct from a country's national military forces, or with temporary mobilizations. Arming of the commoners could take various forms: the British had their militia, summoned in case of any war threat to the British Isles; Prussia its ad hoc national militias such as those of 1813–1814 (*Landwehr*); or permanent units of commoners such as the National Guard in France. Irregular military service, especially if it became customary, had important implications for social relationships, practices, and political traditions within the commonalty. For instance, H. Sabato considers militia, the 'citizen in arms' tradition, to be one of three factors that determined socio-cultural and political evolution in Latin America during and after the wars of independence of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>41</sup>

The manpower aspect – arming the commoners – was the central element in Russia, with its peculiar social order and relationship between government and people. Various co-adjutors had been employed historically at the southern borders: best known are the irregular forces – Cossacks, Bashkirs, and Kalmyks – who had their own organization; there were also *pushkari* and *odnodvortsy* (gunners and yeomen), although the latter were almost extinct by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>42</sup> These were the so-called half-privileged estates.

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<sup>40</sup> H. Spier, 'The Effect of War on the Social Order', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, v. 218(1) (2001), p. 88; M. Hewitson, 'Belligerence, Patriotism and Nationalism in the German Public Sphere, 1792-1815', *English Historical Review*, Vol. 128, (2013) pp. 839-876.

<sup>41</sup> H. Sabato, *Republics of the New World: The Revolutionary Political Experiment in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Princeton: PUP, 2018), pp. 89–131.

<sup>42</sup> Hartley, *Russia, 1762–1825*, p. 14.

There had also been occasional efforts in the 18<sup>th</sup> c. to introduce *landmilitsiia*, settlements of commoners ready for mobilization, to alleviate the burden of recruit levies. Prince A. D. Menshikov attempted to create *landmilitsiia* in St. Petersburg province as early as Peter I's reign, and later in the 18<sup>th</sup> century *landmilitsiia* existed on the southern borders. In 1797 a project arose to introduce territorial 'canton armies', such as existed in Prussia in 1733–1813:<sup>43</sup> young men of lower-middle income families in each district, known as cantons, were to be listed in special registers of cantonists. They were supposed to train for several weeks in the summer, and be conscripted during a war, to fortify the standing army if needed. Even so, by the 1800s Russia had no experience of the mass arming of people: in a rural country with a large proportion of serfs such ideas would face opposition from the nobility afraid of 'the new *Pugachevshina*' – that is, a repeat of the devastating Pugachev rebellion which had erupted on the Ural frontier in 1773.

But after Prussia's defeat in November 1806 the invasion of French armies across the Neman seemed inevitable: for the first time a massive threat was expected to the Russian heartland, which had not been endangered since Charles XII's campaigns in 1708–1709.<sup>44</sup> Demands for manpower increased exponentially (among other measures the government invited retired soldiers to rejoin the service, promising them various benefits<sup>45</sup>). Finally, at the end of November, a summons was issued calling on all estates to furnish a 'second wall', militia – *militsiia* or *zemskoe voisko* ('army of the land'). The idea was attributed to Emperor Alexander I, though some believe it was the dowager empress's, Maria Fedorovna.<sup>46</sup> Russia had a patriotic tradition to fall back on: in the early seventeenth

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<sup>43</sup> P. H. Wilson, 'Prussia as a Fiscal-Military State, 1640–1806'. In: *The Fiscal-Military State in Eighteenth-Century Europe: Essays in Honour of P.G.M. Dickson*, ed. Chr. Storrs (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 116-117.

<sup>44</sup> D. Lieven, *Russia against Napoleon: The Battle for Europe, 1807 to 1814* (London: Penguin, 2009), p. 251.

<sup>45</sup> Complete code of laws of the Russian empire. PSZ-1. V. 29. № 22449.

<sup>46</sup> Gulevich, *Istoriia Leib-gvardii Finliandskogo polka*, p. 3.

century it was a 'people's militia', organized by townspeople of the upper Volga, that had ended a turbulent political period of wars and occupation known as 'The time of troubles', establishing the new Romanov dynasty. Among recent examples of mobilization were the French *levée en masse* of 1793–94,<sup>47</sup> or the mobilization of the British militia<sup>48</sup> in 1803–1805, when up to 500,000 men were raised as part of preparations to repel invasion by the French.<sup>49</sup>

In his decrees of both November 1806 and July 1812<sup>50</sup> Alexander I, referring to heroic examples of the past, appealed to members of the brave, devoted Russian estates encouraging them each to contribute to creating militias of their own.<sup>51</sup> But the burdens of militia service fell largely on the unprivileged social groups. Militiamen were serfs chosen by their nobles, many of whom were reluctant to sacrifice their labourers, or state peasants and *meshchane* nominated by their communes (in 1812 state peasants were excluded from militia service). Merchants sacrificed money. The nobles' assemblies provided officers.

Militias, especially the militia of 1806–1807, remain inadequately studied. The participation of urban commoners in militias has never been properly examined, apart from the listing of merchants' donations from different towns.<sup>52</sup> 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian historians often implied that the *meshchane* did not supply men at all or volunteered,<sup>53</sup> whilst merchants just sent money donations. Soviet historiography established parallels between the 1812 militia and the militia of 1941: V. Babkin, the leading expert on the 1812

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<sup>47</sup> Lieven, *Russia and Napoleon*, p. 268.

<sup>48</sup> Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p. 26.

<sup>49</sup> P. A. Lloyd, *The French Are Coming! The Invasion Scare 1803–05* (Tunbridge Wells: Spellmount, 1991), p. 8.; L. Colley, *Britons: forging the nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

<sup>50</sup> PSZ-1. V. 29. №22374; V. 32. №25176, 25188. See translation (extracts): Lieven, *Russia and Napoleon*, p. 252.

<sup>51</sup> Lieven, *Russia against Napoleon*, p. 252.

<sup>52</sup> Gornovskii, 'Sto let nazad', pp. 534–554.

<sup>53</sup> Gulevich, *Istoriia Leib-gvardii Finliandskogo polka*, p. 14.

militia, assumed massive 'voluntary' involvement of all social groups in that militia and the subsequent guerrilla warfare.<sup>54</sup> But the manner in which militia levies were organized in towns has never been fully studied. Modern researchers (E. Lapina,<sup>55</sup> J. Hartley<sup>56</sup>) argue that many questions need to be answered: including to what degree the service of *meshchane* and the contributions of merchants were voluntary.

In fact, as in the case of recruit levies, peasants and *meshchane* communes were required to supply a certain proportion of militiamen from each 500 males: fully dressed, equipped with 3 months' provisions, and also armed with firearms or pikes by the community. Since militiamen, as the decrees stated, were entering temporary service only, they were allowed to wear informal dress and not to shave their heads and beards:<sup>57</sup> shaving was associated with being taken as a recruit and transferred to full-time military service for a term of 25 years. But as the numbers of men demanded were far larger than during recruit levies, the burdens of militia service were very high.

In each province the proportion for towns was set by the authorities: it was to equal the proportion of serfs that provincial noble assemblies promised (this could vary – e.g., in 1812 between 1 in 10 and 1 in 30 men). In early December 1806 town councils in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Novgorod provinces received the governors' orders: from *meshchane* 1 in every 16 men was demanded between the ages of 20–45 (later revised to 17–50).<sup>58</sup> While the militia was being organized the danger of invasion decreased, and in

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<sup>54</sup> Babkin, *Narodnoe opolchenie v Otechestvennoi voine 1812 goda*, pp. 37–51.

<sup>55</sup> Lapina, 'Zemskoe opolchenie Rossii 1812–1814', pp. 163, 175–182, 499.

<sup>56</sup> Hartley, 'Patriotism in the Provinces in 1812', pp. 148–150.

<sup>57</sup> PSZ-1. V. 29. №22374, 22385.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, №22385.

March 1807 the ratio was lowered to 1 in 57, and so of 612,000 men planned only 200,000 were raised.<sup>59</sup>

In 1812 French armies invaded Russia and the second 'People's militia', also of about 200,000 men, was raised. In St. Petersburg province it was decided to take 1 in every 25 men, but by end of July this figure had been set at 1 in 10, following the example of Moscow province:<sup>60</sup> the two provinces became the most mobilized, and a threat persisted that the enemy would march up to St. Petersburg.

Despite the first militia in 1806 being several times advertised as a temporary service, communes and families were right to see militia service as a burden to avoid: in September 1807 almost all militiamen were transferred to the regular army. Of 200,129 militiamen only 20,747 were released: such an act caused unrest among militiamen, but to reward communes for the great losses of men, no recruit levy took place at the end of 1807.<sup>61</sup> Trust in the government was challenged: in 1812 the author of decrees on militia, Secretary of State A. S. Shishkov, had to give assurances that the transfer would not be repeated.<sup>62</sup> The second militia was disbanded in early 1814,<sup>63</sup> but losses were great: in towns reviewed most men served in the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion; of these only about 60 per cent returned.<sup>64</sup>

The mobilization of Russia in 1812 served as an important example for the formation of the Prussian army and militia in 1813. But whilst the military reform of 1814 turned Landwehr and Landsturm into an army reserve,<sup>65</sup> Russia continued to rely on regular recruit levies until 1874. As a second line of support, the militia was summoned again in the middle

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., №22496. Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armiiia i flot v XIX veke*. pp. 72, 74.

<sup>60</sup> Novaia Ladoga council on militiamen, July 1812. TSGIA SPB SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. L. 18, 54.

<sup>61</sup> Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armiiia i flot v XIX veke*, p. 73.

<sup>62</sup> PSZ-1. V. 32. №25188.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., №22523, 22524.

<sup>64</sup> Table of militiamen conscripted from the towns of St. Petersburg province in 1812, with status in early 1815. RGVIA. F. 395. Op. 240. D. 17 Calculations (St. Petersburg province conscripts, 1812). L. 26.

<sup>65</sup> Lieven, *Russia against Napoleon*, p. 268.

of the Crimean War: in 1855 the so-called 'mobile' army and naval militia units were introduced.

### **1.3.3. Billeting of army troops in towns**

In certain years, an infantry or cavalry regiment would be stationed in the town and surrounding villages. Usually, the companies or squadrons were stationed in the villages, while the regiment's headquarters, offices, warehouses were located in the town. The Colonel and his senior officers were always present in the town; and a couple of companies or squadrons would arrive from villages to be billeted in the town for a shorter time, on a rolling basis. The entire regiment would usually only assemble in the summer months, to check the munitions and equipment, conduct drills and military games. The regiment could be billeted in the same place for many weeks, months, or even years (according to the billeting maps and plans of the War Ministry, which were regularly renewed). However, in the towns reviewed, the presence of the regiments was very limited: only for Novaia Ladoga, a relatively large town, are there records that infantry ('musketeers') regiments were stationed there for some years in the 1770s-1800s, with some cavalry regiments also being billeted in the town later. It seems that the billeting duty had become more burdensome for the town by the 1810s, as the size of the Russian army grew, despite the end of campaigning in 1814.

The council and the office of the Chief of Police would be responsible for the organization of such billeting in the town. The billeting duty was organized in the following way.

First, in 1808 a billeting commission was to be established in each town: it included the Chief of Police, and representatives of the commoner communes and the noble property-owners of the town, and would choose those families which were to provide part of their building as 'flats' (*pokoi*) for 1-2 officers or others of the rank and file. This 'direct' billeting duty was the most burdensome for the households of the commoners, *meshchane* and merchant families of the town.

The second part of the duty was the collection of the so-called billeting money from those commoner families who would not be accepting lodgers: if they could afford it, households of merchants and *meshchane* were allowed to pay the so-called billeting money instead of offering accommodation (with merchants choosing this option more frequently than *meshchane*). This second, monetary side of the billeting duty could also be quite burdensome, especially by the end of the period in question: more money would be requested from families in the late 1810s and the 1820s than in the 1780s-early 1800s. The council used this money to provide the regiment with various supplies, normally sent to the regiment on a monthly basis, and consisting usually of firewood, candles, paper, hay. As council records show, the colonel, major general or of the regiment would write each month to the council stating the amounts required (requests would increase in the winter months). From 1802, the regimental offices were supposed to pay the councils for these supplies, using the money allocated to regiments for this purpose by the War Ministry (this was supposed to make billeting better organized and less burdensome a duty for households), but very often these payments by the regimental office were subject to delay.

To conclude, the town – the commoner families and the council – were supposed to provide the regiment with lodgings for officers and the rank and file in the houses of the residents (with the allocation managed by the billeting commission; the council could not

directly influence the allocation process); to provide the regiment regularly with various supplies, bought with the money raised from the commoners' families who were not taking lodgers (see Chapter 5).

But in addition to this, the council and commoners was also supposed to provide (or to construct) various buildings and facilities for the entire regiment's establishment – to house regimental hospital, workshops, stables, warehouses.

Allocating private houses, raising the billeting money from families, and finding buildings and spaces for the regimental facilities was very often a source of dispute, negotiation, and conflict involving the council and the Chief of Police's office (see Chapter 5), as well as the council, local residents, and the officers of the regiment (see Chapter 6).

## **Conclusion**

The end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was an important formative period for the Russian town. Its social and political organization, let alone its appearance and infrastructure, were significantly altered during the implementation of the reforms of Catherine II's reign. The administrative role of the Russian town continued to be an important one, but on the whole the Russian town after 1780s-1790s began to take on the aspect of a more balanced, multifunctional, and more modern space: to some extent the Russian urban centres and their residents became closer to their counterparts in Central and Western Europe. It is important to note that the reforms of the Russian town encompassed all spheres of urban life; they were a part of the global project of Catherine II, which involved important social and political adjustments, and improvements to the Russian architecture of state – above

all, in the delegation of much of the authority in provinces and districts to the assemblies of nobles, and to townspeople's councils in towns.

The families of commoners – the upper, and low-middle income families involved in trades, smaller crafts, and the tertiary sector – constituted the majority of the Russian townspeople. Many of their practices and traditions of local, communal government dated back to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, and even to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. But the reforms of the 1770s-1780s, the Charter to the Towns (1785) in the first place, offered a radically new paradigm of urban development, which from now on would build on extensive local self-government, represented by two levels: the communes of merchants and *meshchane*, and the town council, controlled by the local urban elite. In theory, the functions of the local government, and the sphere of action of magistrates and families, were more limited in Russian towns than in the countries of Western Europe: but their real capacities and capabilities remain an important and poorly researched area, many aspects of which the study of the organization of levies in towns will help us to clarify.

By the 1800s, in most towns the new systems of government and social order were fully implemented – though the reality often differed from what was envisaged by the reformer. But by this time, the Russian state was entering into a more demanding epoch of mass wars: the demand from the state – for recruits and other resources – was already growing at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but especially difficult were the years of constant wars which marked the first half of Alexander I's reign, the years 1805-1814.

The most crucial part of the duties imposed on the unprivileged categories were direct supplies from the urban communes – above all, of conscripts for the army and militia. The military duty of the urban commoners, the levies – the ways the regular and extraordinary levies were organized in towns – represent a new and promising field of

research. The next chapters of this study will explore the components of this duty, the practices used, the actions and motivations of the families, communes, councils, and state officials. The analysis will help answer many questions about the real limits of the communes and the councils' self-government, reconstruct the interests of various groups of families in the communes and in the town, allow us to establish the nature of the relationship between urban commoners and state officials – and to establish the changes brought about by the increased demands made on the populace during the wars at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Chapter 2 explores in detail the process of nomination of men for service. The *meshchane* communes were also responsible for equipping and delivering the recruits, whilst merchants' communes collected the so-called recruit money during each regular levy, together with significant donations during militia levies: Chapter 3 examines the organization of these contributions. Chapter 4 focuses on the service of the volunteers from towns in the army and especially in the militias, exploring their motives, entry to the service, and return to their hometowns, as well as the privileges and benefits they could receive, and the future fate of these men. In Chapter 5 the everyday interaction is studied – between families, communes, and the councils – and the Chief of Police during the levies and when it came to billeting; negotiation and cases of conflict between commoners and officers of the army and militia, and rank and file in towns, and especially during billeting, are explored in detail in Chapter 6.

## Chapter 2.

### **Conscription: the impact of military duty on urban communes**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, during each levy a certain proportion (a 'take') of men called recruits was required. The *meshchane* commune was responsible for the supply of conscripts from district towns: recruits and militiamen would be nominated by the decision (verdict) of the meetings of the *meshchane* commune (other social groups of lower and middle-income families, such as craftsmen or labourers in district towns, performed this duty as part of the *meshchane* commune).

This chapter is largely based on the examination of files on recruit levies from the end of the 1790s up to the early 1820s, and on the documents relating to militia call-ups coming from the council archives of Novaia Ladoga, Gdov, Sofia-Tsarskoe Selo, and – for the purpose of comparison – Serpukhov in Moscow province. The files from the provincial governors' archives and the State Chamber relating to the recruit and militia levies in these towns have also been examined. Statistical documents on recruit and militia levies in the towns of St. Petersburg province coming from the Petersburg provincial Militia committee of 1812, and also from the War Ministry's Inspection Office, have also been consulted.

The subject of the study are proceedings at the communal and town levels related to nomination of men for service. At the centre is the process of nomination: the actions of various actors, the practices they resorted to, and the motivation behind them. The chapter examines how the practices changed during the period under review, what was the role of the increased demand for manpower, and how it correlated with the changes in social and political culture of the urban commoners.

The 'verdicts' of the *meshchane* commune's meetings nominating men or families to contribute recruits, and also 'sentencing' to service for various misdeeds, have been analysed in the first place. As a rule, such verdicts comprised lists of men nominated including their names (in the towns under review – usually 2 to 5 names), age, marital status, sometimes a short family history – and almost always stating reasons for nomination. Among other sources from the town councils' archives, which describe the nomination of recruits and militiamen, the following types of documents have been used: the correspondence of the councils with the governor and the State Chamber, and Chief of Police; orders received, reports sent – with the lists of men nominated, sent, and – as for the 1812 militia – with the names of those soldiers who returned. Such lists normally included names and ages of the men, but sometimes also stated the occupation and the literacy of the recruit or militiaman. Particular cases on recruits and militiamen have also been examined: many of the surviving cases from the archives of the councils are appeals from families to governors contesting the communes' verdicts.

The chapter aims: (1) to establish the problems that communal nomination created for all actors involved, at various levels: individuals and families; the *meshchane* commune and the town council; the provincial governor and the War Ministry; (2) to trace the reaction to these problems of crown officials and the central government; (3) to analyse how and why the attitudes of the central authority to nomination by the commune changed, and how the legislation relating to it evolved; (4) to examine how practices used in the communes adapted to growing demands and to new legislation; (5) to establish how, along with changes in nomination, the social relationships, communal, and municipal political traditions, and legal consciousness of the urban commoners in provincial towns changed.

## 2.1. The social basis of recruitment by the commune

In the 1790s–1800s, when the Emperor’s decree arrived, the townhall scheduled a meeting at which the *meshchane* commune drew up verdicts nominating men as recruits: usually for the number initially required (normally 3-5 men were requested), though additional verdicts could be issued later, comprising only 1–2 names. Some meetings also compiled a list of ‘substitutes’, when many men were needed: as during the demanding levies of wartime or militia call-ups. Men nominated were often required to give formal written promises that they would not leave the town and would turn up at the first call to the town council. Guarantors could also be required, with fathers or close friends usually signing. Even so, many appointees had to be kept under guard in one of the local council’s buildings, which was a considerable charge on the *meshchane* commune, as even a small recruit party could be formed for many weeks before being dispatched.

Communes of *meshchane* were swift to nominate men: but the problem proved to be finding nominees and keeping them from fleeing. The documents of all town councils record massive evasion. To understand why nomination of men by the verdict of the commune was a burdensome process, it is necessary to explore both how it was supposed to be organized at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and what practices were really employed by the communes and families: that is who and how communes nominated and dispatched. This allows for a better understanding of the collision of interests and the balance of power in the families and communes of *meshchane*, and across the entire provincial town.

In theory, the largest families ought to have provided nominees, with priority given to be those that had not contributed recruits in the recent past: the decisions of the commune were supposed to be ‘just’. But in a world of mutual responsibility those not making a stable financial contribution were deemed the most expendable. Communes

were keen to get rid of such undesirables: meetings could also 'sentence' men to service for various misdeeds. Communes, it has been rightly argued, were dominated by the richest, and usually larger families. J. Hartley has contended that the greater demand for recruits in this period must have fossilized patriarchal social relationships, at least in villages: the nomination of men by verdict of the commune fortified the authority of the commune's elders and heads of families, and the influence of the primary social organization (the communes) and the rule of the elders predominated throughout the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, both in the villages and in the urban communes of *meshchane*.<sup>1</sup>

In towns, the political culture was largely inherited from the countryside: most towns, including those chartered during Catherine II's reforms, remained small, semi-agrarian centres often recognized as towns to perform administrative roles for the district. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the life of the *meshchane* commune was still largely governed by traditional principles, inherited from the social and political culture of the peasant commune: B. Mironov emphasized that in *meshchane* communes 'rural political traditions' endured as they contributed taxes and performed duties collectively, while merchant families and communes, released in 1775 from collective responsibility for taxes, were growing increasingly more individualistic.<sup>2</sup> Qualifications applied to attending and voting at *meshchane* meetings. They were lower than in the case of the meeting electing the town councils (where only rich merchants and *meshchane* families could vote). *Meshchane* meetings nominating men seem to have been fairly representative: in the towns reviewed, some verdicts included dozens of signatures, and sometimes as many as a hundred as during the militia levy of 1812). But several major families would always dominate the

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<sup>1</sup> Hartley, *Russia, 1762–1825*, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Mironov, *Sotsial'naiia istoriia Rossii*, Vol. 1. pp. 497–498.

meetings of *meshchane* communes: in the towns studied, lists of signatures under verdicts are headed almost invariably by the same blocks of dominant families over many years, in some cases for more than a decade: the first to sign would always be the *meshchane* headman, followed by tax collectors, and then the most influential families of the commune.

The local documents on recruit levies and militias coming from the council archives unveil important features characterizing the nomination process in the *meshchane* communes of the small- and middle-sized district towns. These were largely related to two key problems, noticeable in the council documents on all levies in the 1790s-1800s: 1) accusations of dissolute behaviour; and 2) poorly regulated selection among families required to contribute, leading to conflicts between big and small, and rich and poor households.

The documents on levies reviewed confirm that, as stated above, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century communes would normally attempt to send ‘undesirables’ – the least needed members of the commune – before beginning to nominate men from families. The main way to expunge undesirables was by using accusations of ‘dissolute behaviour’: since the 1760s commune meetings in the countryside and in towns had been able to officially nominate for service those individuals who ‘could not be tolerated in the community for their vices’ without considering their family status (whether married or not, whether they had children or elderly parents, whether a family already contributed recruits). During the levy months, but though not necessarily then, the *meshchane* assembled to nominate such men for service, and the accusations were specified in the verdict signed by attendees of the meeting. The most frequent charge to emerge from the verdicts was non-payment of taxes. Also nominated

might be those accused of being drunkards, brawlers, 'men of lewd behaviour', or absentees – men spending months out of town without a passport from their community or with passport expired (*Meshchane* would be allowed to leave their town for work in other places, but only after a passport – usually for a year – had been issued by their commune.) Two or more 'dissolute' accusations were often combined: defaulting, heavy drinking, and absence from town.

The verdicts of six men sentenced in Novaia Ladoga during the 1810 levy illustrate the characteristics of the typical 'dissolute' man. Ermolay Kvasnikov was apprehended by men from his town in Shlisselburg, where he had long been working as a coachman while failing to present any papers from his commune.<sup>3</sup> Andrei Fedorov was accused of 'lewd and immoral' behaviour and defaulting – and he had also been sentenced as a recruit a year before. The same was said of the third man. The fourth *meshchanin*, Fedor Kirilov, was accused of lewd behaviour, idleness, chronic tax arrears and recent bankruptcy: he too had been sentenced as a recruit – as far back as 1796. The fifth nominee was a penniless man 'having no real estate and also from a family with two brothers'. Some men labelled as 'dissolute', mostly of a young age, could be riotous, and a danger to the social order: such was the last man, Ivan Vavilov. His mother asked that her unruly 19-year-old son, who 'always appeared drunk', 'beating his mother and sister half to death', be conscripted: in a recent incident murder had only been prevented by the neighbours of the Vavilovs and soldiers billeted with them, who rushed to the Vavilovs' house having heard the women

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<sup>3</sup> Novaia Ladoga council and commune on men nominated on grounds of dissolute behaviour, 2.11.1810. TSGIA SPB. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 428. On 1810 recruit levy in Novaia Ladoga, 1810. L. 9–10v.

screaming.<sup>4</sup> In 1809 Vavilov was taken into town custody after his mother's pleas. But he was sentenced as a recruit several times before being sent to the militia in 1812.<sup>5</sup>

Many 'dissolute' nominees were a burden, some even a danger to the commune: but such accusations should always be treated cautiously. Along with defaulters, drunkards, and absentees the commune's magistrates and wealthy families would often forge accusations to eliminate single men, those from among the poor or less fortunate members of the commune. Preserving stable families was always a priority: they ensured stability by contributing more taxes, with little or no delay, and periodically paying arrears for the poorest members, absentees, and defaulters. Such households would normally be large; but it should be noted that in the case of the *meshchane*, the 'large' and 'small' family could have various meanings in various provinces.<sup>6</sup> (For instance, tax registers show that in Novaia Ladoga most families of *meshchane* were small in number: already in the registers for 1790 families with 2–3 males predominated; there were fewer families with 4–5 males, and even fewer with 6–7 or more.<sup>7</sup>)

Recent newcomers would also feature invariably among undesirables nominated for service. There were objective reasons for this: as migration to towns intensified, inequality and pauperization grew. There was a long tradition in towns of limiting the entry of new men to the commune: after necessary checks had been conducted, the *meshchane* were allowed to refuse entry of any new men to the commune – what A. Smith called 'the right

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., L. 5–14v.

<sup>5</sup> Novaia Ladoga commune on nomination of Ivan Vavilov, 23.07.1812. TSGIA SPB SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. L. 8v, 12; On return of Vavilov, 31.12.1814. Ibid. L. 190.

<sup>6</sup> Tax registers of Novaia Ladoga for 1789–1790, 11.04.1790. TsGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 44. L. 7–12v. Further research is needed to establish average family sizes in towns of the Northwest, the correlation between the size and the income, trends, and local specifics.

<sup>7</sup> While, e.g, lists of recruit family groups for the towns of Moscow province in 1814 show that everywhere there remained a significant proportion of large (4–6) and very large families (7–9 males). TsGA g. Moskv. F. 17. The office of the Civil Governor of Moscow. Op. 1. D. 585. Books of recruit groups in the towns of Moscow province, 1814. L. 3–27.

to accept and right to refuse'.<sup>8</sup> But by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the interests of the state began to diverge more from the interests of towns: in the face of increasing demand and growing centralization it was in the interest of various authorities that men 'of uncertain rank' were ascribed to communes to pay taxes and perform duties – including taking part in recruit levies. Edicts appeared in the 1790s and then during Alexander I's reign demanding that men of 'no fixed abode' be registered with communes, threatening otherwise to send them to the army or to Siberia for settlement. Newcomers were often former deserters or runaway serfs returning under regular amnesties from abroad, usually from Sweden or the Polish lands: they strove to enter towns, especially larger ones, and were eager to join the *meshchane* communes there (joining the *meshchane* required far fewer checks, guarantors than joining merchant communes). From 1787 the authorities would also dispatch to provincial towns so-called 'labourers': men from big cities punished for minor crimes who from 1799 were assigned to *meshchane* communes in district towns. Such men were often not wanted by the commune: many newcomers indeed joined the lowest, marginal strata of the commune, and soon became known for tax arrears and other misdeeds –so many of them were refused entry. (Only in 1832 was the right of urban communes to refuse admission to new members fully removed.<sup>9</sup>) But even among those who were accepted, many might well be nominated for service during one of the upcoming levies – including on grounds of dissolute behaviour. To help integrate newcomers, various measures were taken by the government: in 1804 nomination of newcomers as recruits, even on grounds of dissolute behaviour, was prohibited if a man had lived less than 3 years in the commune.<sup>10</sup> But in the period under review *meshchane* of district towns still seemed

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<sup>8</sup> Smith, *For the Common Good*, p. 73.

<sup>9</sup> Mironov, *Russkii gorod*, pp. 68–69.

<sup>10</sup> PSZ-1. V. 28, №21442.

inclined to discriminate against the families of recent newcomers, with or without reason, such men being more often sent into service. For instance, there were many *meshchane* from the Romani people registered to the urban communes of St. Petersburg province: from 1809–1810 all Romani people were under strict orders to find communes to be ascribed to.<sup>11</sup> In Gdov in July 1812 10 men were appointed for service in the second militia by the first meeting of the commune: in this list at least 2 were from the former Romani people: these men, the Gorokhovskii brothers, and their father fled, and were chased by men sent by the commune across several districts in St. Petersburg and Novgorod provinces. Eventually the youngest Gorokhovskii was captured and sent to St. Petersburg as a recruit for the provincial militia army. His father approached the agent in the capital, attempting to exchange his son for someone else, but without success. Before long the commune had decided to send the father himself to the militia. The 65-year-old never returned.<sup>12</sup>

Almost all annual files on regular levies coming from the three council archives have been examined: they reveal that in the towns under review most men sent in the late 1780s–early 1800s would be from the above-mentioned undesirables. Demand for recruits at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century remained moderate. Yet the desire to defend the richer, more stable families, and the problem of evasion, made it difficult to find and send even 2-4 recruits during the levy.

It was thus customary to nominate and dispatch men as recruits in advance (*v schet budushchikh naborov*): and the ‘dissolute accusation’ happened to be a powerful tool for

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<sup>11</sup> Smith, *For the Common Good*, p. 89.

<sup>12</sup> Gdov council on the Gorokhovskii, 9-12.09.1812. TsGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 344. Minutes of Gdov council of the last third of 1812, Sep. – Dec. 1812 L. 4–6; Gdov council on the Gorokhovskii, Oct. 1812. Gdov. D. 345. Verdicts of Gdov’s communes, 1812. L. 27.

this purpose. From January onwards the *meshchane* communes would gather to nominate one, but more often several men accused as dissolute (usually 2-3, though some often managed to escape), and small groups of recruits were formed and sent to the provincial capital, St. Petersburg, all year round: the communes were anticipating future demands, and were ensuring that only undesirables served by identifying them ahead of the formal request. Receipts of acceptance issued by the recruiting office in the State Chamber when receiving recruits outside levy months were kept by the communes, and then presented and counted in the Autumn levy. The councils' archives show that such tactics allowed for the creation of 'reserves' of receipts, both short-term (for the next levy), but also long-term – helping communes to lessen the number of men sent 'live' (*naturoi*), when more demanding levies occurred, as with the outbreak of war. For instance, receipts received in Sofia for additional men who entered service during the Russo-Swedish War of 1788–1790, were periodically counted until at least the 1800 recruit levy.<sup>13</sup> (To regulate such practice the government at some points had to introduce quotas for the number of receipts that could be presented instead of men.)

Lastly, there would also always be a few men joining the service as volunteers, *okhotniki* – normally entering the service for another family in return for a reward. But such practices were not officially regulated in the 18<sup>th</sup>–early 19<sup>th</sup> century, being fully legalized only in 1831.<sup>14</sup> Volunteering for another family, not being formally regulated, also opened up many avenues for fraud and abuse. For instance, in 1804 it was prohibited to buy men (serfs) from nobles with the intention of sending them to the army, which towns

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<sup>13</sup> The book of 28 receipts received by Sofia for recruits, 1787–1817. TsGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 6. L. 1-44.

<sup>14</sup> Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armiiia i flot v XIX veke*, p. 77.

sometimes did. But there were always illegal ways of finding a substitute.<sup>15</sup> Among volunteers in the towns would usually be men from among the poor, single men, or unlucky members of the commune, as well as recent newcomers. Cases of deceit were quite common. For example, in early 1811 one Vasilli Artem'ev from Novaia Ladoga allegedly volunteered to go as a recruit 'for the commune of the town'. But having received a reward of almost 170 roubles he escaped: being a volunteer he had not been kept under lock and key. It seems that Artem'ev was known for various misdeeds: during the investigation that followed his escape, it was discovered that he had faced indictment twice, for a scuffle with peasants in 1805, and for assaulting a *meshchanin's* daughter in 1809 (he 'tore the handkerchief from her head, crumpled the valance, and tore the earrings from from her ears'). He had tax arrears and had already been sentenced as a recruit because of his dissolute behaviour. When found, Artem'ev claimed than he was 'insane' when he had volunteered: the investigation that the town council had to undertake took several months (it included interrogating 10 neighbours of the Artem'evs).<sup>16</sup>

This communal system of nomination, controlled by the communes' magistrates and wealthy families, often led to conflict: cases of outright abuse and extortion were frequent. Provincial governors would receive complaints against both the commune and the town's elected magistrates for threatening to send commoners for service if they refused to pay a bribe. The wife of Kirilov – one of the six men nominated by the *meshchane* commune of Novaia Ladoga during the 1810 levy on grounds of dissolute behaviour – claimed that the town head was trying to get rid of her husband as he had worked in the magistrate's office

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<sup>15</sup> E.g., it was revealed that men from the Baltic provinces volunteered to the army for another family for a reward, and then fled from their unit and returned to their provinces, where they were immune; indeed, some of them might do this several times.

<sup>16</sup> Novaia Ladoga council and commune on Artem'ev, 18.07. – 4.08.1811. TSGIA SPB SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 428. L. 86–89, 119–121, 127-131v.

‘with papers for four months’, but without an official contract (‘allowed in under the supervision of the secretary’); and now the town head owed her husband 100 roubles for the work done, and was trying to manipulate the *meshchane* commune so they would send Kirilov to the army.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the many problems attendant on the traditional system of supplying men by the communes, many parties benefited. The commune –above all, the richer families and elected magistrates of the *meshchane* – employed official and unofficial practices during the nomination process which helped to maintain the traditional social order: the nomination helped cleanse the town of undesirables, while safeguarding the rich and to a certain degree middling families. At the same time the authorities and the army received the manpower required. However, this system became unsustainable by the mid-1800s.

### **2.3. The crisis: the militia levy of 1806–1807**

From 1805, as Russian became involved in the wars of the Third Coalition, the demands for manpower increased dramatically: after several years of peace, levies jumped to 5 in every 500 men in 1805 and 1806. Commune meetings, still contriving to eliminate the troublesome in the first place, now had to decide which families to turn to to provide recruits: the supply of dissolute, single, poor, or other weaker members of the community was exhausted.

Choosing among families turned out to be a source of no less conflict than sentencing for dissolute behaviour: the communal elite determined which households contributed. In 1805–1807 *meshchane* began to evade the duty in greater numbers. Governors’ offices

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<sup>17</sup> Council on the appeal of Kirilova, 30.11. – 5.12.1810, TsGIA. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 428. L. 44-52.

were engulfed by a wave of appeals. In Novaia Ladoga when registering in the taxpayers' lists for 1806, 82 *meshchane* males moved to the merchant guild – about one-tenth of the commune: numbers of *meshchane* plummeted from 814 to 741 men, while the merchant community jumped from 294 to an unprecedented 369 males.<sup>18</sup> Nothing but the shock of the first demands for the wartime levy in 1805 explains such unnatural migration: average mobility between *meshchane* and merchants in Novaia Ladoga was 15–25 males in previous years – when annual levies required only 1-2 men from 500 *meshchane* per year. The same shifts, correlated with the outbreak of war, have been identified on other occasions: in Sofia in 1787–1788, in Sofia and Novaia Ladoga in 1811–1812. But such moves became more problematic for families of low- and middle-income as requirements for entering the merchant guilds increased: in 1807 the capital requirement for the third guild increased from 2000 to 8000 roubles, and next year in Novaia Ladoga the guild returned to the normal level of above 200 males; many newcomers from *meshchane* families evading the duty had to re-register themselves back to the *meshchane* commune.

The situation escalated further when in December 1806 a great number of militiamen had to be called up within the space of two weeks (see Table 1). Demand for the first militia exceeded even the worst war-time levies. By contrast, from the late 1780s to the early 1800s, communes of up to 1,000 males, such as Novaia Ladoga or Sofia, provided no more than 6-7 recruits a year, even during wartime (5 recruits in 500 men). In most years communes provided fewer than that: on average 3–4 men a year in the 1790s – but numbers of 'live' recruits provided could be even lower than that, when receipts for dissolutes and volunteers sent in advance were presented.

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<sup>18</sup> Council to the Governor on new merchants, Oct. 1806 – Mar. 1807. TSGIA SPB SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 230. On the recruit levy in 1806, Novaia Ladoga. L. 22, 106.

Table 1. Men from *meshchane* communes mobilized for militias: 1806–7, 1812.

| <b>First militia, 1806–7</b>            | <b>Novaia Ladoga</b> | <b>Sofia<sup>19</sup></b> | <b>Gdov</b>  |
|---|----------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Meshchane</i> commune in 1806 (men)  | 741                  | 768                       | 139          |
| Requested in 1806 (1 in 16 men)         | 46                   | 48                        | 9            |
| Requested in March 1807 (1 in 57 men)   | 13                   | 13                        | 2            |
| Sent in 1807 (% of commune men)         | 13 (1,75%)           | 24 (3,1%)                 | 2 (1,4%)     |
| In Autumn 1807                          | sent to army         | sent to army              | sent to army |
| <b>The People's militia, 1812–14</b>    |                      |                           |              |
| <i>Meshchane</i> commune in 1812 (men)  | 898                  | 883                       | 200          |
| Requested by end of July (1 in 10 men)  | 90                   | 83                        | 20           |
| Sent by October 1812 (% of commune men) | 45 (5%)              | 83 (10%)                  | 20 (10%)     |
| Returned in 1814–15 (% of men sent)     | 28 (62%)             | 48 (58%)                  | 13 (65%)     |

In all towns reviewed, the crisis of communal nomination developed during the first militia. For the purpose of comparison, the case of Serpukhov can serve as a good illustration. After the decree of 30.11.1806 and the receipt of the governor's orders, the *meshchane* commune urgently held meetings nominating men. Commune investigators and the Chief of Police would be the first to help to locate men in the town, take written promises from those nominated and guarantors, and arrest the evaders: but the means at the disposal of the commune and the Chief of Police were limited, even in larger district capitals such as Serpukhov – and it did not work well during the mass militia levy. The situation was aggravated also because, as the first mass levy revealed, many of the nominees seemed to be permanently absent.

Evasion by men and families was not necessarily deliberate. Many happened to be working and living in other, larger towns: Moscow, St. Petersburg, port towns such as

<sup>19</sup> For 1806-1807 figures are for Sofia; for 1812 – jointly for Tsarskoe Selo (543 *meshchane*), Gatchina (268), and Pavlovsk (72).

Kronstadt – where they were employed as coachmen and carpenters, day labourers in factories or on constructions sites. Others would be employed in the hinterland on nobles' estates, in mills. It became an acute problem when many men were needed urgently: files on the militia from 1806-1807 show that in each *meshchane* commune a large proportion of members were permanently living elsewhere – with or without passports. When in another town of the Northwest, Novgorod, in December 1806 the commune nominated 107 *meshchane* as militiamen, 38 of them appeared to be 'absent': that is more than one-third.<sup>20</sup> Often men from the provincial towns of St. Petersburg or Moscow provinces were discovered in the capitals. The town head of the small town Pavlovsk, for example, asked the St. Petersburg police to help return one of their men, Ivan Usov, who lived in St. Petersburg. Usov appeared to be well situated, being employed at the Directorate of the Imperial Theatres. After several attempts to catch him (on one occasion the investigators came to the Directorate office but managed to seize only Usov's personal belongings; the man himself had slipped away), Usov was eventually found. He testified to 'the bailiffs of the Admiralty quarters that he did not have a passport from the Pavlovsk commune, but claimed that he had lived in St. Petersburg since 1.08.1808 and all this time was not paying taxes in Pavlovsk' – meaning that he properly belonged to St. Petersburg. Pavlovsk insisted on claiming Usov back, complaining that the town 'had only 72 male souls and many are adolescent and there are only 25 proper (*ispravnykh*) ones, who pay taxes consistently and we do not want to sacrifice them'.<sup>21</sup> The case was settled by the Emperor himself, when the *ober-kamerger* A. L. Naryshkin, Director of the Imperial Theatres,

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<sup>20</sup> Council on the list of militiamen, End of 1806 – early 1807. RGANO. F. 93. Novgorod town council. Op. 3. D. 92. On the militia in Novgorod, 1806–1807. L. 98-106.

<sup>21</sup> The Pavlovsk town headman Moisei Builov to Tsarskoe Selo townhall on Ivan Usov, Aug. – Sep. 1812. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1060. L. 98-99v.

confirmed that Usov was needed by the Directorate.<sup>22</sup> It seems that G. Munro was right to argue that already during Catherine II's reign labour from villages and other towns, whether legal or not, supplied the major part of the St. Petersburg workforce, especially in the summer months<sup>23</sup> (P. Ryndziunskii has likewise argued the important role of labour migration for Moscow in this period<sup>24</sup>). The question remains: to what degree were the authorities by the 1800s aware of such a degree of mobility among urban commoners? It seems that it was the first militia levy of 1806-1807 that revealed to the authorities the increased migration of urban commoners, especially in provinces with sizeable centres such as St. Petersburg and Moscow, or industrial or port towns, where a great portion of the workforce was supplied by families from the district capitals, primarily from the *meshchane* communes.

But apart from natural mobility a greater degree of evasion among potential recruits during the first militia was noted, if compared to evasion during the regular, annual recruit levies. Early in December 1806 the town councils, town heads, and Chiefs of Police were already actively exchanging letters with other district capitals of the provinces, as well as corresponding with the district police, the provincial governor, and the Head of Police in St. Petersburg or Moscow – asking for assistance with returning their men. At the end of December 1806, the Civil governor of Moscow T. I. Tutomlin even wrote to the town councils of the province, saying that as he was receiving many complaints about families seeking to evade militia duty, the communes were encouraged to send their investigators

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<sup>22</sup> St. Petersburg Governor to Pavlovsk townhall on Usov, 31.10.1812. *Ibid.*, L. 132.

<sup>23</sup> Munro, *The most intentional city*, p. 70.

<sup>24</sup> Ryndziunskii, *Gorodskoe grazhdanstvo*, pp. 68–70, 90–95.

to him: the provincial police would assist in searching out evaders in the city and across the province.<sup>25</sup>

To understand better why the problem of evasion escalated during the first militia levy, let us return to the case of Serpukhov to see whom the *meshchane* appointed as militiamen. In December 1806 Serpukhov commune swiftly nominated to the militia several undesirable members accused as ‘dissolute’. But when it came to choosing families to contribute, this began giving rise to an enormous amount of procrastination and conflict. It seems that in most towns the communes – and their elites – as usual attempted to place most of the burden on the lower orders: the least stable and the least protected commoners. By February 1807 the Moscow governor Tutomlin, receiving many complaints about the verdicts of the communes, sent out another set of instructions. He stated that although the selection was not required to take into account the status of families, as was the case with regular recruit levies (number of labourers, recruit ‘history’ of a family), on threat of punishment he prohibited any harassment of small households during the recruitment for the militia army, ‘taking recruits from singles and small-families’ (families with 1–3 males). He also forbade the detention of nominees in fetters, of which he had heard – considering it to be ‘contrary to the very spirit of the militia’.<sup>26</sup>

But it turned out to be difficult to spread the duty evenly, as the governor had ordered. Wealthy households tended to be the most resolute, consistently refusing to hand over their males even after repeated orders from the commune and the local government; and there was next to nothing that the communes and councils could do to compel such

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<sup>25</sup> The Governor to Serpukhov town council, 29.12.1806. TsGA g. Moskv. F. 1036. Serpukhov town council. Op. 1. D. 107. On militia in 1806-1807. L. 31-32v.

<sup>26</sup> The Governor to Serpukhov town council, 23.01.1807 – Feb. 1807. TsGA g. Moskv. F. 1036. D. 107. L. 71, 87, 90, 98-98v.

families. In Serpukhov these were usually larger families – as local magistrates labelled them – that concealed their males. The Serpukhov town head, the merchant Ikonninkov, replied to the governor that he had not taken anyone into custody, but strict measures and all possible assistance from the authorities and the provincial police were necessary: there were, wrote Ikonninkov, a considerable number of ‘large family’ *meshchane* in the town (*‘ves’ma velikosemeinye’*) with ‘the largest number of labourers’, who neither appeared themselves despite several requests from the town head, nor presented their sons despite ‘all the admonitions’. These large families ignored the written promises that their heads (‘fathers’) gave to keep their males, nominated for service, from being kept under lock and key.<sup>27</sup> Ikonninkov complained that these ‘large family’ *meshchane* repeatedly claimed ‘that their sons are absent and they don't know where they are’.<sup>28</sup> In early February 1807 the town head sent to the Chief of Police a list of 50 large *meshchane* families with ‘preferred numbers of workers’: one man from each was to be delivered by February.<sup>29</sup> But by the beginning of March the *meshchane* headman reported to the town head that only 45 militiamen were in place – saying it was almost impossible to find the 35 still required. The headman complained that ‘the *meshchane* with families from the city are all now gone and where to look for them is unclear’, ‘though we are making every possible effort to find them’.<sup>30</sup> The headman also wrote that he and the ‘acceptors’ – the militia officers who came to the town – had approached those members of the commune without families, requesting them to supply more men by drawing lots. The latter, however, ‘disobediently’ refused: apparently, the *meshchane* without families and those with small families (1-2

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<sup>27</sup> Town headman to the town head of Serpukhov, Jan. – Mar. 1807. Ibid., L. 72-72v, 99.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., L. 72.

<sup>29</sup> Town head to the Chief of Police on evaders, Jan. – Mar. 1807. Ibid., L. 87-87v.

<sup>30</sup> The verdict of Serpukhov *meshchane* commune, 9.03.1807. Ibid., L. 118.

men) believed that it was only right that the burden of the duty should be shared by all families equally. The town head then kept pressurizing the larger families: he asked the Chief of Police to arrest and deliver the fathers of seven large families who had given written promises for their sons: the Chief of Police arrested four – one left Serpukhov, three more allegedly hid in the town.<sup>31</sup> By March, the Serpukhov town hall and town head even published announcements in the major Moscow and St. Petersburg newspaper, *Vedomosti*, listing 15 families from the town who were being searched for and were to be apprehended and sent to Serpukhov if found by anyone authorised – ‘even if they were with passports’.<sup>32</sup>

Evidently communes and their elites exercised authority most effectively over poor and weak members. Even the most marginal men were conscripted: in January 1807 the town head and town hall of Serpukhov resolved to release debtors, *zazhivy*, who were imprisoned as security for creditors (legal practice in the years 1736-1834<sup>33</sup>), to turn them into militiamen. The *meshchane* commune agreed to pay 24 roubles to each creditor – a year’s pay of a *zazhiv*.<sup>34</sup> Finally, on March 9<sup>th</sup> 1807, the Serpukhov *meshchane* meeting reported that since ‘it was not possible to find appointees with families’ and the deadline for dispatch of militiamen was approaching, it had resolved to resort to a traditional instrument again: ten more men were appointed to the militia as ‘dissolute’.<sup>35</sup> To the great relief of the commune and council, new orders were received soon after, announcing that the number of the men required had been reduced by three: as by this time Serpukhov had

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<sup>31</sup> The Chief of Police to the town council on evaders, Feb. – Mar. 1807. *Ibid.*, L. 87-87v. *Ibid.*, L. 130-130v, 134.

<sup>32</sup> On announcements in *Vedomosti*, early. 1807. *Ibid.*, L. 123, 124.

<sup>33</sup> Ryndziunskii, *Gorodskoe grazhdanstvo*, pp. 48–49.

<sup>34</sup> The verdict of Serpukhov *meshchane*, early 1807. TsGA g. Moskv. F. 1036. Op. 1. D. 107. L. 70-70v.

<sup>35</sup> The verdict of Serpukhov *meshchane* commune, 9.03.1807. *Ibid.*, L. 118.

already sent more than that number (47 recruits had already been dispatched), further nominations by the commune stopped immediately.<sup>36</sup>

The evasion experienced in 1807 did not come as a surprise: at the turn of the century, communes, the local government, provincial governors – all knew that a significant proportion of men, fit by age and health, would always hide from the levy. Some men were appointed as recruits by decision of the meeting in various years but never sent: many hid before their 34<sup>th</sup> year<sup>37</sup> (the age limit for recruits before 1831 was 34, raised to 40 in 1812). As Serpukhov town council put it in January 1807: ‘We cannot find enough men for the militia as some men are found to be not fit for service or absent, others who are most fit hide for two years or more in different places.’<sup>38</sup>

But the problem also lay in the lack of means in towns to enforce the meetings’ decisions, especially in critical periods. In Serpukhov in early 1807 all efforts of the commune and its investigators, the local government, the Chief of Police and provincial police to fight concealment and enforce the recruitment levy on larger families brought very limited results. By March even policemen were mobilized (*desyatskie* and *budochniki*): the Chief of Police now complained to the town head that he would give no further assistance until he received new people from the community, and these were to be ‘not young and not old’.<sup>39</sup> During the raising of the militia in Novaia Ladoga the Chief of Police replied to the townhall, who had asked him to provide men to help find nominees, that ‘I only have two bailiffs (*kvartalnye*) and they are busy day and night, and are also helping the townhall’: instead, the Chief of Police suggested the commune hire their own

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<sup>36</sup> Serpukhov council on final calculations of the supplied militiamen, late 1807, *Ibid.*, L. 232.

<sup>37</sup> Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armiiia i flot v XIX veke*, p. 77.

<sup>38</sup> Serpukhov town council to the *Zemskii Sud* asking for help (searching for evaders), Jan. 1807. TsGA g. Moskv. F. 1036. Op. 1. D. 107. L. 60-60v.

<sup>39</sup> The Chief of Police to Serpukhov council, early 1807. *Ibid.*, L. 111-111v.

guardsmen.<sup>40</sup> Novaia Ladoga was considered relatively large: the commune of *meshchane* numbered around 900 men. Even assuming that not all lived in the town, two bailiffs and several policemen seem to be a fairly adequate force – but not under such circumstances as a mass militia levy. Part of the problem was also that the communes and the council, who allocated to the Chief of Police an annual subsidy to maintain his force, were often not interested in spending more money on the police: in Gdov long disputes continued in 1811 – early 1812, over whether the town should employ more policemen (the town had four men on the payroll; the Chief of Police requested three more – the commune, reluctantly, agreed to hire one; see in detail in Chapter 5).<sup>41</sup>

In sum, it was during the first militia of 1806-1807 that the government faced the first acute crisis with the supply of manpower: the mass levy proved to be a critical test for the traditional system of nominating men for service by verdict of the commune meeting. Numerous verdicts for ‘dissolute’ behaviour, waves of appeals, evasion among families, the large and wealthy in particular, conflicts between poor, smaller households and the communal elite: everywhere in 1807 there was an unprecedented degree of conflict, even violence. When men, ‘sons’, hiding from duty were discovered, it often led to brawls, even to bloodshed. The Trofimovy, a *meshchane* father and a son appointed to be a militiaman, were discovered hiding on a barge belonging to a peasant: ‘Gavrila [the son] jumped ashore, swinging an axe; we took him with difficulty but without bloodshed’.<sup>42</sup> Another one, Petr Kulakov, was found in a merchant’s house: he grabbed a boar-spear and

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<sup>40</sup> The Chief of Police to Novaia Ladoga council, 28.07.1812. TsGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. L. 45-45v.

<sup>41</sup> Gdov council on the request of the Chief of Police, 5.04.1812. TsGIA SPb F. 885. Op. 1. D. 342. Minutes of Gdov town council of the first third of 1812, Jan. – Apr. 1812. L. 40-41v.

<sup>42</sup> Report of town headman Kochetov to town head Mazurin on 23 April about the incident in Podmonastyrskaja Sloboda, 23.04.1807. TsGA g. Moskv. F. 1036. Op. 1. D. 107. L. 148-148v.

attempted to pierce those detaining him.<sup>43</sup> On 26 June Semen Turinitsyn, 25 years old, appointed as a militiaman, when being transported, suddenly jumped off the cart and ‘having smashed with his fist the teeth’ of one of the commune’s investigators, tried to flee.<sup>44</sup> A more difficult case occurred when a priest named Alekseev from the hinterland refused for weeks to give up two of his brothers, appointed in January 1807, who fled for his protection: Alekseev openly attacked and beat half a dozen *meshchane* who arrived to take his brothers:<sup>45</sup> the report stated that the belligerent priest grabbed a wooden cudgel and assaulted 7 men, breaking the hand of the chief investigator, *meshchanin* Ivan Pavlov, and smashing the head of his companion Smetannikov, having torn to pieces the warrant he was bearing. Several more men from Serpukhov and the local administration were injured (Pavlov even listed clothes and items left in the priest’s house when the men had to retreat in haste, together with their cost: a hat – 2 roubles; a red handkerchief – 1,25; new mittens – 69 kopecks). The priest continued to persist: the case was only resolved after bulky correspondence from the town, including to the Spiritual authority of the Moscow province.

The failings of 1806–1807 made it clear to the authorities at various levels that the traditional communal system of nominating men had reached its limits. Irregular nomination largely controlled by the elite was causing too much bias, evasion, and conflict. There were also not enough means at the disposal of the commune, the council, and crown officials to enforce the verdicts. It was difficult to neglect objective trends such as the greater degree of mobility of townsmen. Protracted, mass appeals to the governors all led

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<sup>43</sup> Report of *meshchane* headman Ikonnikov on the incident, 23.04.1807. F. 1036. Op. 1. D. 107. L. 145-147v.

<sup>44</sup> Report of Ikonnikov to Mazurin on the incident, occurring on 26th June near Lysaia Gor, June 1807, *Ibid.*, L. 181-183.

<sup>45</sup> Reports of Ivan Pavlov on the incidents with the priest Alekseev, Jan. – Feb. 1807. *Ibid.*, L. 67, 110-111, 115-116, 122.

ultimately to supplies of militiamen being delayed. As L. Beskrovnyi notes, by the time the first militia was organized the war had almost come to an end:<sup>46</sup> it took almost 4 months to draft men to form the first battalions, and only a few of these took part in the war in East Prussia before hostilities ended in July 1807. Of course, it was not only the problem of nomination in communes. Many other factors also played a role in the failings of the first militia: the authorities were not ready for mass conscription, or for the transporting, arming, and supplying of the militia units. As a result, as S. Gulevich noted, the first militia eventually became something entirely different from what it was initially envisaged to be.<sup>47</sup>

#### **2.4. The government's response: changes in legislation about nomination**

The government had been aware that many problems were intrinsic to the communal system of supplying men. With regard to its central aspect, nomination, it was known that it could give rise to arbitrariness, bias, and abuse. At least at the level of the provincial governors officials knew that not all men sent as 'dissolute' were guilty as accused. But there were reasons why the authorities for a long time were not interested in change.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, until Nicholas I's reign (1825–1855) and even during it, Russia lacked a local administration. In towns and districts, the system introduced by Catherine II's reforms relied almost solely on estate self-government. The patriarchal rule of the commune, and the power of its elders, ensured stability in towns, as the nobles' assemblies and noble police did in the hinterland. The local elites, rich families of

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<sup>46</sup> Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armiiia i flot v XIX veke*, p. 72.

<sup>47</sup> Gulevich, *Istoriia Leib-gvardii Finliandskogo polka*, pp. 18.

merchants and *meshchane*, guaranteed the stable payment of taxes and performance of duties: as a result, their abuse of poor and weaker commoners went unregarded.

Likewise the nomination of a large proportion of 'dissolutes', newcomers, or poor and unlucky commoners minimized the state's expenditure on maintaining social order, saving the Treasury money otherwise required for the chronically underfunded urban police. Indeed, the army often received men from the communes – both rural and urban – who were not of the best: those sacrificed were the less needed. Prince Eugene of Wurttemberg, a German aristocrat and a Russian general, reflected in 1824 that 'for the most part, people are drafted as soldiers who, for various reasons, are not needed by the commune or are even a burden to it: their fate is thus not so terrible'.<sup>48</sup> Though further comparison needs to be made with the verdicts of peasant communes, the documents reviewed allow of the suggestion, that in the milieu of the district towns the 'cleansing role' of verdicts seems to have been more significant than in the countryside – and that was not without reason (the constant influx of newcomers, peasant migrants, growing inequality, and pauperization). Many statesmen complained about the low moral quality of recruits conscripted from urban communes. As late as 1824 Alexander I's adjutant baron F. K. von Korf pointed out that the proportion of 'dissolutes' among recruits from townsmen was very high: he argued that most men sent by the decision of *meshchane* communes were pilferers and 'known rogues'. Korf proposed to segregate recruits from towns: to send normal men with families to local units – the garrison battalions of the Home Guard – and

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<sup>48</sup> E. Wurttemberg 'From the memoirs of prince Eugene of Wurttemberg. A voyage to Russia in 1825', *Russkii Arkhiv*, 1878 (1-4), pp. 331-332.

dissolute men to the standing army far from home (if they stayed near their hometowns, their machinations would increase crime rates).<sup>49</sup>

Ages of conscripts from towns also reflect the importance of the cleansing role of verdicts for the Russian town in this period. Files on recruit levies reveal that the age of men from towns for a long time remained above the desired level: on average in the late 1780s–mid 1800s recruits sent were around 30 (the conscription usually being confined to men aged 17-35).<sup>50</sup> Many men accused of being ‘dissolute’ would be sent at 33 –34. The above-mentioned wife of Kirilov, nominated in 1810 in Novaia Ladoga, insisted, among other grounds in her appeal, that her husband was 37, not 33.<sup>51</sup>

Higher ages also distinguished militiamen sent from the *meshchane* communes. I. Lapina calculated that the average age of militiamen, conscripted from the towns of St. Petersburg province in 1812, fluctuated between 26 and 39, and the arithmetical mean was 35.<sup>52</sup> It can be more productive to calculate the median and the mode. The Lists composed in Novaia Ladoga, Tsarskoe Selo, and Gdov have survived. Higher ages seem to have been common for men from all towns: Table 2, based on the Militia committees’ lists, illustrates the median and mode for *meshchane* from the St. Petersburg communes and from the *meshchane* communes of all district towns of the province. The age 45 was the mode: it means that most men, nominated for militia service in 1812, were on the upper acceptance limit (many militiamen were in their 50s and even older: for militia, the 17/20-

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<sup>49</sup> Baron F. K. Korf’s proposal on the service of recruits from towns, 18.02.1824. RGVA. F. 846. Op. 16. D. 17980. L. 1–2.

<sup>50</sup> On recruit levies 1788-1841, in: TsGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 28, 44, 49, 50, 98, 188, 230, 332, 428, 463. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 6, 458, 681, 835, 1004, 1038, 1054, 1057, 1058, 1084, 1152; F. 494. Op. 1. D. 51, 53, 80, 91, 104.

<sup>51</sup> Town council on Kirilov and his wife’s appellation, 30.11. – 5.12.1810. Novaia Ladoga. TsGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 428. L. 44-52.

<sup>52</sup> Lapina, ‘Zemskoe opolchenie’, pp. 464-465.

45 requirement was often neglected, as the orders stated that militiamen could be older than 45 if they were fit, 'in good health' and 'capable of bearing arms'.<sup>53</sup>

Table.2. Ages (the median and the mode) of militiamen sent in 1812 from the towns of St. Petersburg province.<sup>54</sup>

| <b>Town</b>  | <b>The median</b>  | <b>The mode</b>  |
|--|--------------------|------------------|
| <b>The city of St. Petersburg</b>  |                    |                  |
| <i>Meshchane</i>   | 38                 | 38               |
| Russian craftsmen  | 29                 | 18               |
| Craftsmen of the Foreign guild   | 35                 | 27               |
| <b>The three communities together</b>                                    | <b>36</b>          | <b>48</b>        |
| <b>Towns of St. Petersburg Province</b>                                  |                    |                  |
| Novaia Ladoga  | 41                 | 54               |
| Gdov   | 21                 | 20               |
| Tsarskoe selo  | 41                 | 45               |
| Gatchina   | 45                 | 45               |
| Pavlovsk   | 30                 | 30               |
| Shlisselburg   | 35,5               | 45               |
| Luga   | 32,5               | 35               |
| Kronstadt  | 37,5               | –                |
| Oranienbaum  | 40                 | 45               |
| Iamburg  | 39                 | 40               |
| Narva (non-Russian commune)  | 35                 | 42               |
| <b>All towns of the metropolitan province (excluding St. Petersburg)</b> | <b>38</b>          | <b>45</b>        |
| <b>All urban communities of St. Petersburg province</b>                  |                    |                  |
|  | <u><b>36,5</b></u> | <u><b>45</b></u> |

For the 1807 militia, data are not available for the ages of men from St. Petersburg province but are available for Serpukhov: among 90 men appointed as militiamen ages were higher in 1807 than in 1812 in St. Petersburg province – both the median and the mode for the men sent to the first militia from Serpukhov in 1806-07 was 45.

<sup>53</sup> PSZ-1. V. 29. №22496.

<sup>54</sup> Lists of militiamen–townsmen from St. Petersburg province, Dec. 1812. TsGIA SPb. F 189. Militia committee of St. Petersburg province (1812). Op. 1. D. 96; D. 140.

The age and (not always) marital status of militiamen are the only data that survive: it is not possible therefore to establish which of these men were defaulters. Still, it seems that the communal elites tried to hold on to middle-aged men: those married, with families, who constituted the core of the commune – there are almost no men in the age bracket of 20–35 in recruit and militiamen lists.

By contrast calculations of the ages of several militiamen units manned by peasants give lower results. In the joint list of militiamen recruited from among peasants in 1812 in various provinces, and returning to their homes via Moscow in 1812, the median age was 31–32. Among peasant militiamen from Moscow province, the median was 30, and the most frequent age, the mode, only 22. By comparison, for the shorter list of militiamen from Vladimir province who were left in hospitals in Moscow, the median was 31, and the mode 35.<sup>55</sup>

Still, age was not the greatest problem.<sup>56</sup> More important was to have an uninterrupted supply. After the Treaties of Tilsit in 1807, the government-initiated a series of reforms of administration, taxation, and army regulations. The task was to stabilize the Russian economy and financial system, and to modernize the army, preparing it for the next large-scale conflict with France (in 1806-1812 there was also a long ongoing war with the Ottoman Empire, depleting the country).<sup>57</sup> With regard to the-reforms in the military sphere, the focus of the government in 1807-1812, among other things, was on improvements of manpower supplies: in 1808 a system of recruit depots was implemented, and in 1808–1812 heavy fines were introduced for delayed supplies of

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<sup>55</sup> Lists of militiamen returning via Moscow, 1814. TsGA g. Moskv. F. 17. Op. 1. D. 41. The Governor of Moscow on the return on militiamen via Moscow in 1814. L. 175-175v., 236; D. 399. The Governor of Moscow on the return on militiamen via Moscow in 1814. L. 81.

<sup>56</sup> Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armiiia i flot v XIX veke*. p. 73.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

recruits, as well as punishments for hiding recruits, deserters. More serious reforms of recruitment were also suggested, including, in 1811, the proposal to limit service to 12 years.<sup>58</sup> But global reforms had to be delayed amid the economic and financial troubles of the years of Continental Blockade and in anticipation of another war with France and its allies.

But there were also important changes in legislation regarding nomination – which remain neglected in the scholarship so far: important improvements were made to the system of nomination by verdict of the communes between 1808 and 1812. After 1807 the authorities finally turned their attention to the fundamental problems of appointing men for service by the commune: conscription for ‘dissolute’ behaviour and the colliding interests of families. More regulated and clearer practices were needed to minimize the grounds for conflict, appeal, and procrastination. It can be argued that the first militia levy of 1806-07 – a failed attempt to mobilize a large army – acted as a major catalyst for changing the system: in the preamble to the new legislation, it is implicitly stated that the new procedures are being introduced in response to the disastrous experience of the first militia levy of 1806-1807.

First, in April 1808 a set of far more elaborate procedures was introduced for sentencing the ‘dissolute’, which made the process look almost like formal judicial proceedings. The new legislation openly referred to mass violations revealed in communes during past militia levies, with many families much abused by commune officials – *meshchane* headmen, collectors. These elected posts were held by leaders of the communes from the affluent *meshchane* families, and were to be blamed for serving the

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<sup>58</sup> In 1817 it was suggested to make it 15, but in 1818 only service in the guard corps was shortened to 23. Beskrovnyi, *Ruskaia armii i flot v XIX veke*. p. 75.

interests only of the larger, wealthy families: 'During the last militia levy they [the communes' elected officials] bypassed the rich and large families, and turned all the burden of duty on to poor single men<sup>59</sup> and released from militia service only those who were able to satisfy their greed.'<sup>60</sup> Rules were first introduced for free peasant communes and then in 1809 were applied to *meshchane*.<sup>61</sup> Verdicts now had to be drawn up within the town council building in the presence of the town head. At least 24 men were to be present and sign the verdict: and they had now to swear under oath that a man appointed to the service as dissolute 'left no hope for improvement'. Headmen and other elected officials of the *meshchane* commune could not be among those 24, so that 'they could not use the power assigned to them for evil, and serving the rich pass verdicts recruiting men in contravention of the order by accusing them of various vices, in which they are not involved'. Verdicts were to be approved by the town head himself, and no more than three days later had to be sent for ratification to the governor's office, and then to the governor of the province himself.<sup>62</sup>

The authorities must have seen that behind the 'dissolute' issue there was a more general problem: poorly regulated selection among families required to contribute. This changed with the introduction, under the recruitment manual of 1810 (replacing the manual of 1766), of a system of official, legal recruit family groups. Families were now to be arranged in groups depending on the number of labourers they contained. For example, in a middle-sized provincial town, the first group might consist of families with 9 men, the second families with 8, and the last, with 1-2 men. During the new recruit levy, the largest

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<sup>59</sup> PSZ-1. V. 30. №22982.

<sup>60</sup> PSZ-1. V. 29. №. 22634.

<sup>61</sup> PSZ-1. V. 30. №23823.

<sup>62</sup> PSZ-1. V. 30. №23823.

families of the first group provided the most recruits; and of those, the first to provide were those who had not done so in the recent past. If a new recruit levy required a lot of soldiers (such as the recruit and militia levies of 1812), the families of the second group provided their recruits, and so on. This ensured the proper provision of recruits, putting it on a legal basis: the duty was spread more evenly, and offered less opportunity for large and rich families to evade.<sup>63</sup>

The council records show that these new measures immediately helped lessen the number of disputes, delays, and appeals. Already during the regular annual recruit levies of 1810–12 the process of nominating by commune went quicker. But what is especially apparent, is that the 1812 mass levy of militia caused significantly fewer problems and delays in towns, even though more men were conscripted, than in 1807 (1 in every 10, see Table 3).

Table 3. Second militia, 1812–1814: men requested and sent from towns.

| <b>The People's militia, <i>Zemskoe opolchenie</i>, 1812–1814</b> | <b>Novaia Ladoga</b> | <b>Tsarskoe Selo<sup>64</sup></b> | <b>Gdov</b> |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| <i>Meshchane</i> community in 1812 (men)                          | 898                  | 883                               | 200         |
| Demanded by end of July (1 from 10 men)                           | 90                   | 83                                | 20          |
| Sent by October 1812  | 45 (5%)              | 83 (10%)                          | 20 (10%)    |
| Returned in 1814–1815 r. (% of men sent)                          | 28 (62%)             | 48 (57%)                          | 14 (70%)    |

The first parties of militiamen left their towns within less than two weeks after receipt of the decree on militia of 6<sup>th</sup> July, and the later contingents left every 7–10 days.

<sup>63</sup> Books of recruit groups in the towns of Moscow province, 1814. TsGA g. Moskv. F. 17. Op. 1. D. 585. L. 3-27v.

<sup>64</sup> In 1808 Sofia was named Tsarskoe Selo. For the militia of 1812 are given totals for Tsarskoe Selo, Gatchina, and Pavlocks, as in 1811 Gatchina and Pavlovsk municipalities were made subordinate to Tsarskoe Selo Town Hall.

The recruit manual and new rules for the 'dissolute' were, of course, just one of the factors behind the 1812 success of the mobilization.<sup>65</sup> Many factors played their part, including the extraordinarily low level of requirements for service: in 1812 men of 1,50 metres in height were accepted into the army, the age was set at 18–40, and the list of deficiencies shortened (men 'with poor sight in one eye' or a stammer were now taken as recruits).

Patriotism, which raised the degree of involvement of society, of course also played its role during the Patriotic War of 1812, far more than in 1806-1807, during the Coalition Wars of the Emperors and kings.<sup>66</sup> But despite the legislative improvements to the nomination process, patriotic incentives, and the better organization of the second militia, it was difficult to eradicate all the flaws of the communal system of nomination. Evasion was still a problem. In Tsarskoe Selo in 1812 the town headman made the reasonable suggestion not to renew the passports of men arriving from another town: then such men would not be able to leave again, such as for work, in other towns – only this could help to get some men back when they were needed.<sup>67</sup> Apparently, there were still attempts to nominate to the militia men from among the poor, newcomers, and other more vulnerable categories, such as prisoners or 'labourers': the impulse to send the less desirable members of the community first was evidently still there (the high age of militiamen sent in 1812 confirms it), but there were fewer opportunities for abuse now. For instance, the Novaia Ladoga commune in 1812 appointed three men (a local *meshchanin* and two labourers), who were held in the city prison for burglary and theft, awaiting the decision of the chamber of the Criminal Court. This fact was soon revealed to governor Bakunin, and

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<sup>65</sup> Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armii i flot v XIX veke*, p. 73-74.

<sup>66</sup> Lieven, *Russia and Napoleon*, p. 220.

<sup>67</sup> The town headman of Tsarskoe Selo to the council, early September 1812. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1060. L. 92-95v.

provoked his indignation: he immediately ordered the appointment only of men who were, first, of decent behaviour, and second, present in the town. Several weeks later the Criminal Chamber also officially forbade nomination to the militia of any persons under trial.<sup>68</sup>

It is also notable that not all towns in 1812 ultimately supplied the militia with the requisite 1 in every 10 men. Many communes stopped on average at 1:20, complaining to the governor that otherwise there would remain no men to pay taxes. The council of Novaia Ladoga (where the *meshchane* had supplied 45 men – 1 in 20 registered males – during August–early September) openly rejected on several occasions the request of governor Bakunin, who up to October was demanding that the town send 45 more men. The council wrote to Bakunin, that if the commune supplied 45 more men, then ‘there will remain no men to pay taxes, only the adolescent and the elderly’. Can it be seen as a form of ‘resistance’ of the urban commonalty to the growing militarization and centralization of the Russian state? Apparently, the degree of independence of the council and communes from crown officials in the period under review may have been underestimated by historians – most of whom have traditionally assumed that councils and communes had been entirely powerless and wholly subject to the authorities. This question will require further study (see Chapter 5).

It is probable that violations continued in small towns in the 1810s. A middle-aged *meshchanin* Leontii Belokhvastov from Pavlovsk, who had been elected as a *ratman*, gave a detailed description of what meetings of the commune often looked like, especially in small centres. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of August 1812 at about 8 o’clock in the evening, Belokhvastov

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<sup>68</sup> The Civil Governor to Novaia Ladoga council, 07.08.1812. TsGIA St. Petersburg. F. 685, Op. 1. D. 500. L. 101-101v.

was returning home from the local government office when he was hailed on the street by the Pavlovsk townhead, the merchant Timofei Builov, who was in the tavern and invited Belokhvastov to come in. 'Not willing to disobey', Belokhvastov entered and ordered a beer for decency. Inside he saw a company of men sitting at the table, 'all drunk, but he Builov was sober'. Several of the men had bad reputations and were 'under fines' (that is had past convictions) and not supposed to take any part in town business. They were avidly drafting lists of militiamen, arbitrarily adding names, and before long were demanding 30 roubles from Belokhvastov, who replied that he did not have money on him. He urged them to deduct this money from the debt that another magistrate owed him, asked to send for his wife – his house was just across the street – to bring money, and also offered his expensive watch as a security. But Builov did not allow him out and began 'passionately' to demand from Belokhvastov even more, 'a formal written promise that I volunteer to be a soldier'. Belokhvastov replied that he had a wife, a son, three daughters, and an elderly mother, 'always contributed taxes on time and had no criminal record': he added that there were in the town 'unmarried doubles and threes' (Pavlovsk was a small community). The company left the tavern escorting Belokhvastov to the empty townhall building to lock him in, but he managed to escape: the half-drunk pursuers rushed to his house attempting to break the gate and the gate of his neighbour. Belokhvastov's wife fled with the children to relatives, 'scared half to death', and he found shelter at his noble friend's house, from where he wrote pleas to the governor.<sup>69</sup> Builov denied all the charges. What amazed the police is that all this happened on the very night the Emperor Alexander I was in Pavlovsk. Belokhvastov and Builov seem to have been reconciled, but in the Fall of 1812 another plea

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<sup>69</sup> The plea of L. Belokhvastov to the Civil Governor, 20.08.1812. RGIA. F. 1060. Op. 1. D. 1057. Governor Bakunin on Leontii Belokhvastov L. 3–4v.

was received that the headman was again demanding money in return from letting him off the duty. It was revealed that Builov's administration was a regular source of complaint, but he was not removed until after 1812. The arbitrariness of such individuals was a commonplace in provincial towns: new traditions of self-government, civil society norms (elections) were only introduced in the 1780s, and legal consciousness was in its infancy.

## **2.5. Increased demands, new norms: long-term social and political consequences**

The long-term social implications of these adjustments were very important. New procedures improved the ability of individuals to defend themselves legally. In previous decades, families had often appealed to provincial governors, asking them to revise allegedly 'biased' verdicts, but now families with 1–3 males almost always challenged verdicts: and governors automatically returned verdicts allegedly discriminating against small families. It became difficult for a community to 'expel' men from small families. Men accused of 'dissolute' activity also now had more chance of staying: during the recruit levies of the 1810s there were still many such accusations (tax arrears, absence, drinking) in the verdicts of the communes. Sending verdicts back for 'reconsideration', the governors demanded that the community select someone else or justify the decision made. It can be argued that the new rules helped to stabilize and solidify the commune: men from small or poorer households, families of newcomers, men accused as dissolutes could feel more secure. In 1811, for instance, the governor of Moscow received several complaints from small families. One Serpukhov *meshchanin* Matvei Nefedov complained that his son Kozma had been selected by the community as a recruit: the Nefedovy had 4 males, but Matvey wrote that there were enough families with 6–7 labourers in the city whom the community had overlooked. The governor immediately demanded that the Serpukhov *meshchane*

community reconsider the decision: he attached to his letter the register listing Serpukhov's largest families and suggested that they select a recruit from one of these (there were families with as many as 8 labourers in the list among whom, apparently, were rich households with means to prevent their males from being selected).<sup>70</sup>

The process of choosing men for service began to look even more orderly in the first decade after the end of campaigns in 1814. The book of receipts for recruits accepted from the town Tsarskoe Selo in 1817–1841 shows that already by 1820 the tradition of sentencing for dissolute behaviour had disappeared. Another drastic change is that the recruitment age had rapidly decreased: closer to 30 on average in the 1800s, by the 1820s it was mostly younger men who were being conscripted, and the age of recruits became more ~~even~~ standardized: almost all fell within a narrow range – consisting, in the 1820s, of 20–25-year-olds.<sup>71</sup> (The conscription age also lowered, but only in 1831: before 1831 it was still 17–35.<sup>72</sup>) The book indicates that by the early 1820s the practice of collecting receipts of acceptance for recruits 'dispatched in advance' (usually as 'dissolutes' during the year), for later use, has disappeared – this practice was typical of the communes in previous decades. The practice of buying receipts from third parties also ceased (in the past *meshchane* communes would sometimes buy such receipts, for example from nobles for non-returned militiamen). Likewise, from the late 1810s the subject of evasion is almost never discussed in the town councils. Everything indicates that by the 1820s the process had become regulated: one family supplied one of their youngsters at the first levy; at the next levy, another did the same, and so on. Of course, rich families remained influential in

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<sup>70</sup> The appeal of M. Nefedov, 22.02.1811. TsGA g. Moskv. F. 1036. Op. 1. D. 169A. Appeals to the governor from various persons, 1811. L. 1–3v.

<sup>71</sup> RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1152. Book of receipts for recruits from Tsarskoe Selo, 1817–1841. L. 1-69.

<sup>72</sup> Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armiiia i flot v XIX veke*, p. 72-73.

communes – and they simply had more options: hiring substitutes (*okhotniki*) or officially commuting the duty (after 1831). As a result most recruits continued to come from low- and middle-income families.

Furthermore, it can be argued that these legal improvements to nomination in 1808-1812 also had demographic implications. For the peasant village, the debate continues as to whether recruitment by community decision played a significant role in preserving traditional large families or rather fostered division in the late 18<sup>th</sup>–first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>73</sup> It is probable that large peasant families were fostered at least partly because of the recruit duty: in the rural world larger families withstood the loss of a worker better; and the commune would always prefer to eliminate smaller and poorer families. But in towns the increased conscription could have fostered the division of big families: in view of the dramatic levies and improved position of smaller families the desire to evade the service was one of the most important incentives for many families to use every opportunity to split. Among the verdicts that the Moscow governor returned in 1811 to Serpukhov for ‘reconsideration’, there was one that the Serpukhov town head, in his turn, returned to the governor: in his answer the town head explained why the decision of the community was right. He unveiled one of the tricks used to split families. One Anopova, wife of Ivan Anopov, complained that their only son Afanasii had been selected as a recruit. She also added that their family was, against their will, united (in tax registers) with another family, that of Ivan’s brother Vasilii Anopov, who had his own sons. So the aggregate number of males was increased. But the town head explained to the governor why there was no violation here: in 1797–1801 both brothers Ivan and Vasilii were registered as

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<sup>73</sup> Hartley, *Russia, 1762–1825*, pp. 35–39.

merchants against the single capital of their mother, widow of a merchant. They then moved down to the *meshchane*, as a single family unit. However, the 'ex-merchants' subverted the reassignment: for one year Ivan 'jumped' back to the merchant guild, having split from Vasilii, who remained in the *meshchane*. Next year Ivan returned from the merchants to the *meshchane*, this time 'creating' his own small *meshchane* family.<sup>74</sup> Though such splitting was not strictly illegal, this case shows that many men were perhaps willing to divide their large families by all means available: in view of the improved position of smaller families in 1808-1810, the desire to evade military service, which endangered younger males in the family, could often be their main goal.

## Conclusion

A. Martin has argued that the wars with Napoleon, and the 1812 war shock in particular, produced a great impact on the commoners' urban groups: this epoch 'forms an important moment in the unfolding of the civilizing process in Russia'.<sup>75</sup> As D. Lieven puts it, 'The greatest contribution of the «masses» to the Russian war effort was their service in the armed forces and the militia.'<sup>76</sup>

Of course, the recruit levies were a terrible burden for the commoners' families and communes – especially as demand for manpower grew exponentially in 1805-1813. In 1824 Prince Eugene of Wurttemberg and his companion discussed the state of affairs in Russia while travelling from Warsaw to St. Petersburg. They agreed that 'recruitment and the 25-year compulsory service connected with it represent a great evil...and the humane

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., pp. 4–5.

<sup>75</sup> A. M. Martin, 'The 1812 War and the Civilizing Process in Russia', in J. M. Hartley, P. Keenan, D. Lieven (eds), *Russia and the Napoleonic Wars (War, Culture and Society, 1750–1850)* (London, 2015), pp. 237–239.

<sup>76</sup> Lieven, *Russia and Napoleon*, p. 252.

Alexander should not be surprised that his subjects pronounce his name with the greatest bitterness'.<sup>77</sup>

In the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the levies remained one of the most important events in the life of the *meshchane* communes. The organization of levies in towns put a lot of pressure on families, the commune, and its elites, and on the town councils.

During the entire period under review – the 1800s and the early 1810s – incessant hostilities continued, and increased demand for recruits challenged the communes of the Russian provincial town: the exponentially increased levies and two mobilizational militia levies were the major events that dramatically impacted the families and communes of *meshchane* in district centres of St. Petersburg province. The levies became especially burdensome from 1805, added to which the first militia levy in 1806-1807 came as an especially challenging and unexpected shock.

The nomination of men by verdict of the meeting of the *meshchane* commune was one of the traditional practices the *meshchane* employed, which had been adopted as part of rural political culture inherited in Russian towns from the countryside. Despite the recruit manual of 1766 and other acts, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century nomination of men for service was not a process strictly regulated by legislative norms. Communal principles and local traditions largely defined the use of the practices employed.

In all towns reviewed, at the meetings of *meshchane* communes, the elites – the rich families and the communal magistrates – actively influenced if not controlled nomination of men and families. Abuse and arbitrariness were frequently the case in this period. When nominating men for service, the *meshchane* commune and its elites used various practices,

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<sup>77</sup> Wurttemberg E., 'From the memoirs of prince Eugene of Wurttemberg', pp. 332.

official and non-official, to exercise power over the families – and above all, over the poor and least protected members of the commune.

Nomination for service was essential to maintaining the existing social order in towns: it can be argued that in the urban communes, the ‘cleansing function’ of military service was employed more than in villages. There were objective reasons: increased influx of migrants, paupers, and peasants in these years, growing inequality. This produced specific effects on the process of conscription in towns: most men in the 1780s-early 1800s were sent as a result of accusations of ‘dissolute behaviour’. Very often they might be sent in advance, outside the levy months, when receipts were collected by the commune and presented during the next levies. It was a usual practice for communes to accumulate reserves of such receipts in the 1790s-1800s. Not all men were guilty as accused: but the truth is that the communes’ verdicts sought to eliminate those least needed in the community. Among these were absentees, defaulters, and drunkards – but also single men, newcomers, and *meshchane* from smaller or poorer households.

Evasion of the duty was widespread. Often men appointed (even several times) were never sent. The problem lay partly in the fact that nomination was frequently biased, as long as it was controlled by the communal elites. But another problem was the lack of means to enforce the meetings’ decision: one of the chronic problems of the Russian town which persisted after Catherine II’s reforms was the almost complete absence on the ground of representatives of the crown administration. This, however, meant that there were more powers given to the urban elites – the council members and magistrates of the communes, who were vital for maintaining order and ensuring that taxes were paid, and recruits delivered in time.

The authorities, especially the provincial governors, were aware of the drawbacks inherent in the system of community nomination and of the problems in *meshchane* communes in particular: arbitrary selection and biased verdicts (especially regarding the 'dissolute'), evasion, absence of many men in towns, frequent appeals challenging communes' decisions, the inability to compel wealthy families and prevent concealment, and the high degree of violence, especially during the levy months – all these problems, however, were not crucial as long as nomination by communes remained a sustainable system that met the government's and the army's needs: it provided enough recruits, and provided them in time – prior, that is, to the mid-1800s.

Things began to change rapidly in 1805-1807. With the beginning of the long period of war demands increased exponentially. So did the problems in towns: evasion, procrastination, and conflict became far more prevalent. The first critical test came during the militia of 1806-1807, when many more recruits were urgently needed. In all the towns reviewed, acute problems were reported during the first militia levy: an even greater degree of evasion, absenteeism, violence, protracted disputes, conflicts between families, rich and poor, large and small households, inability to enforce decisions, and waves of appeals to governors contesting the verdicts. The failings of the first militia demonstrated to the authorities that among other things that had to be reformed was the system of supplying men for service by nomination from the commune.

Important steps were undertaken in 1808-1810. It can be argued that by far the most important were changes in the legislation regarding the nomination process, which had hitherto been completely neglected. Improvements aimed to turn the nomination process, and its associated practices, into orderly, strictly regulated, and systematic proceedings, which minimized the grounds for conflicts, procrastination, and delayed supplies.

Two innovations were especially important.

The first were the new rules for nomination for service on grounds of 'dissolute behaviour' introduced in 1808-1809. Already by the 1810 levy, as [documents from the town councils' archives show, *meshchane*, when nominating 'dissolutes', would cite the 1808-1809 statutes, closely adhering to the new procedures.

The wider problem was nomination from families. It can be argued that the main conflict was among the interests of the poorer, usually smaller households, and well-to-do families and the *meshchane* elite. The low- and middle-income families (most were low-income, especially in small district capitals) were interested in spreading the duty more evenly. After 1807 it was also in the government's interest: regularization of nomination ensured a more stable supply of manpower. The recruit manual of 1810 solved this problem by introducing a system of recruit family groups, depending on the number of labourers in the family – where the largest families, organized by groups, were in theory the first to contribute.

The new regulations introduced in 1808-1810 – the revision of nomination for dissolute behaviour and the new system of recruit family groups – brought major improvements which were seen immediately in the recruit levies of 1810-1812. They were especially apparent in the experience of the 1812 militia, which required more men than the militia of 1806-1807, but caused significantly fewer problems, conflicts, and delays in towns.

Of course, the revision of the nomination process in 1808-1810 did not mean that abuse and violation could be eradicated completely in the *meshchane* communes, but at least there was less space for it. It seems that violation persisted more in smaller towns. But everywhere families would now more often challenge- verdicts by appealing to the

governor of the province – who now invariably returned verdicts allegedly discriminating against small and poor families to their communes for reconsideration. The practice of selecting individuals on grounds of ‘dissolute’ behaviour seems to have ceased in the late 1810s. Many other old practices, actively used by the communes in previous decades – such as accumulating reserves of receipts for recruits – also disappeared by the 1820s. The age of recruits, on average close to 30 in the 1790s–1800s, became significantly lower at the end of the 1810s-1820s, with conscription largely limited to 21–24-year-olds.

For social relations and political culture in the urban communes the legal revision of nomination had an important long-term pacifying and regulatory effect. Families of the low- and middle-income bracket benefited most of all: now it became more difficult for the commune and its elite to eliminate those from among small or poor households, as well as newcomers and marginal elements, even if accused of being dissolute. It can be argued that to a great degree the new legislation defended the rights of individuals, encouraged appeals, fostered the development of legal consciousness and furthered the adoption of the rules of civil society.

All these positive changes became even more evident in the decade after the 1812 war. In the 1820s the process of nomination in Tsarskoe Selo looked radically different from the traditional practice of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Now one family supplied one of their youngsters; during the next levy another family did so, and so on. Recruits in the post-war decades, of course, were still largely supplied from commoner families rather than the rich: the latter had more options to protect their males, including hiring a substitute or paying-off the duty.

It can also be assumed that increased military demand – and the improved legislation on nomination that it brought about – fostered the division of large families in towns: now,

in view of the improved position of small households, there was more incentive for larger families in towns to split.

Altogether, intensified demand for recruits from 1805, and especially the first militia levy of 1806-1807, triggered the revision of nomination in 1808-1810, which helped to transform the practices used by the *meshchane*. The new legislation displaced traditional communal principles of nomination, based on rural political culture, inherited by the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Russian town from the rural commune, by more modern, strictly regulated, legislative procedures, which to a great extent improved the process of nomination by decision of the commune. But the revision of nomination did not only change the practices used during the levies: the proceedings during the recruit levies in 1810-1812 and especially after the wars, in the late 1810s and 1820s, show that the new legislation eventually helped to significantly alter and modernize the social relationships and political culture of the urban communes, paving the way for a new culture and the town of modernity.

### **Chapter 3.**

#### **Material contributions of the urban communes**

Apart from supplying recruits, the material contributions of the urban commoners in the 1800s-1810s, during campaigns and in peace years, were very important. Researching them helps us to understand the participation of families, communes, and town councils in the war effort – and to examine the impact of growing challenges and pressures on the commoners in provincial towns of the Russian Northwest. Increasing military demand during this period affected the fortunes of the people, and the economy, finances, and political life of towns in many ways. The collection of recruit money, a part of the annual recruit levies, grew. There were also many extraordinary supplies that commoners provided for military needs, including various donations and subscriptions: it can be difficult to define the nature of some of these contributions, especially those of the wartime. As Russia's military engagements intensified, internal developments were increasingly influenced by the fluctuations of foreign and domestic policies. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and in the reign of Alexander I, with increased military activity, the twists and turns of policy of the central authorities, and the growing demands of the war and peace years, the life of the urban commoners became increasingly more affected by tax changes, the current economic situation, the state of industry and trade: in particular, during Paul I's abrupt reforms, his dispute with England in 1800-1801 – or, much more dramatically, in the years of the Continental Blockade, 1807-1812, and during the Patriotic War of 1812, and the 1813-1814 campaigns. Besides annual levies of money and other provisions during recruiting periods – and there were also especially challenging collections for militias in 1806-1807 and 1812-1813 – the people in provincial towns were equally

preoccupied during these years with the failing value of the paper rouble, inflation, the government's attempts to control the economy and finance, and the disruption caused by military actions.

The aim of this chapter is to reconstruct how the collections in the towns of St. Petersburg province were organized. Largely based on sources from three district town councils, this chapter studies the role of communes of merchants, *meshchane*, their families, and town councils in raising money, as well as equipment, provisions, and weapons during regular and militia levies. The organization of money collection in communes is explored in detail: the contributions of communes and individual (family) shares are examined, as well as what practices were adopted by families, communes, and town councils when collecting money and various other supplies. The first section explores the regular collections of recruit money, which would be raised by the *meshchane* communes and merchants of the town to equip and send the men nominated as conscripts. The second section examines the largest, extraordinary collections – donations for the organization of militias: in 1806-1807 and 1812-1813 the urban communes, within a very short time, raised exceptional amounts of money, provisions, clothes, and weapons. Merchants' contributions were most significant here. The role of the local elites was crucial in many respects: wealthy merchant families also held most posts on the town council, controlled the town budget, and supervised collections in *meshchane* and merchant communes. The third section explores how changes in taxation over this period, government economic and financial measures, and wartime disruptions and mobilizations of the economy and finances eventually impacted the fortunes of the merchant and *meshchane* families – especially of the local elites – along with the finances of their communes and the town budgets.

The organization of regular collections and extraordinary supplies for the army by communes of unprivileged estates, urban commoners in particular, has elicited almost next to no research even among historians writing in Russian. The donations for the organization of the 1812 militia has been more studied, as the focus of interest up to now has always been on the 1812 Patriotic War,<sup>1</sup> with studies devoted to the contributions of provincial nobles, clergy, and merchants from the largest towns. But usually only totals raised are listed, and there is next to no research on individual collections during the first militia in 1806-1807, apart from a general overview.<sup>2</sup> J. Hartley has recently focused on supplies of men and money from townspeople for the 1812 militia, exploring the extent to which extraordinary wartime contributions and militia service were genuinely voluntary.<sup>3</sup> This research has served as a corrective to the opinion of V. Babkin, who had predicated that the massive involvement of all classes in partisan warfare and militia was largely voluntary.<sup>4</sup> But only a detailed reconstruction of how money-raising would be organized during recruit and militia levies by particular *meshchane*, merchant communes, families, and town councils will allow us to fully explore the economic, social, and political background of these collections – and their significance for the commoners of provincial towns.

The main sources used include the verdicts of merchants' and *meshchane* communes regarding raising of money and other supplies during the recruit and militia levies; the minutes of the town councils of Novaia Ladoga, Gdov, Sofia-Tsarskoe Selo, as well as their reports to the governors – largely about the collections in communes; the orders of the

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<sup>1</sup> A. Dzhivelegov, S. Mel'gunov, V. Pichet (eds), *Otechestvennaia voina i russkoe obshchestvo: 1812–1912*, 5<sup>th</sup> volume (Moscow: Tipografiia T-va I. D. Sytina, 1912). pp. 43-73, 114-120.

<sup>2</sup> Gornovskii, 'Sto let nazad', pp. 534-554.

<sup>3</sup> Hartley, 'Patriotism in the Provinces in 1812', pp. 149–150.

<sup>4</sup> Babkin, *Narodnoe opolchenie*, pp. 37–51.

governors, of the War and Police ministries, the decrees and edicts of the Emperor, and of the Governing Senate.

Certain sources relating to contributions of the communes in other towns, such as Novgorod or Serpukhov, have been used for purposes of comparison. Additionally, some printed works of 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century commentators and scholars have been used, namely those including information about contributions made during the militia levies by the communes of various towns of the European provinces of Russia – these consist largely of the lists of donations made by merchant communes in 1812.<sup>5</sup>

The 'Bulletins of Russian manufactures' have also been used, as they allow us to examine the impact of campaigns in the 1810s on industries and family businesses in specific towns.

Last but not least, printed diaries and correspondence of some merchant families can serve as source, but only as a supportive source.<sup>6</sup> These works, which are not numerous, are usually considered as anecdotal,<sup>7</sup> largely focused on the events of the local microcosm such as donations for churches, marriages and deaths. Still, some of these writings reflect how the commoners perceived various hardships, including economic and financial struggles, during the war-period – among them the well-known diary of I. Tolchenov or the papers of N. F. Kotov, the Moscow merchant, who witnessed the invasion of the French in 1812.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> M. I. Polianskii, *Illyustrirovannyi istoriko-statisticheskii ocherk goroda Staroj Russy i Starorusskogo uezda* (Novgorod: Tipo-Litog. V. I. Pavlova, 1885); V. Pyliiaev, *Staraia Rusa. Istoricheskii ocherk goroda* (Sergiev Posad: Tupografia Troits.-Sergievoi lavry, 1916).

<sup>6</sup> A. G. Tartakovskii, *Russkaia memuaristika XVIII – pervoi poloviny XIX v.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> Ransel, *A Russian Merchant's Tale*, p. 194.

<sup>8</sup> N. F. Kotov, *Iz zapisok o voennykh deistviiakh 1812 goda*, in: *Kupecheskii dnevniki i memuary kontsa XVIII – pervoi poloviny XIX veka*, pp. 27-44.

### 3.1. Fundraising in communes: the collection of recruit money during levies

For each new levy, urban communes had to collect the necessary funds, which would be raised separately in *meshchane* and merchant communes. The merchant communes, which were excused the levy, only collected a certain amount of 'recruit money' – depending on the size of the levy (how many men were requested from each 500-men unit) – and dispatched it to the district treasury. The burden of equipping and delivering the recruits fell entirely on the *meshchane* commune.

Upon receiving orders for the new levy, the council ordered the *meshchane* headman to organize meetings of the commune, where along with nominating men it was decided how much money to raise on the occasion of the levy. For each levy the commune appointed a recruit collector, several guardsmen, and investigators, who were to be paid.

Conscripts nominated to the army or militia were to be delivered to the State Chamber's recruiting office with a prescribed set of clothes – boots, trousers, outerwear, a satchel – and a certain amount of money for 3-months' worth of provisions: the money was accepted at the recruit office, and receipts of acceptance were given to the commune's collectors for both the men and the money. The nominees and their guards could remain in the town for weeks before the recruit party was ready to depart: provisions, firewood, and other necessities for them were especially expensive during the winter months. The communes compensated those providing it for the lodging expenses and provisions for the party on the way to the provincial capital, and for a short stay in the city which could last several days. Additional costs were sometimes incurred: for a doctor, if a man fell ill, or if an additional medical examination was needed; for delivering a substitute from the commune if a conscript was found unfit.

The money was also needed to search for the men nominated in the town and across the province.

Finally, the *meshchane* commune always gave a money reward to conscripts: all men joining the army or militia, including those accused of being dissolute, would receive 25, 50 roubles, 75, 100, or even more – with larger amounts usually given to volunteers (*okhotniki* – see Chapter 4).

To cover these and other expenses, the *meshchane* commune would normally organize a single round of fundraising in the Autumn-Winter months, but additional rounds could be required later, especially during burdensome war-time levies or militias, when the number of men requested grew.

The verdicts of the *meshchane* communes from council files on levies, and the recommendations of the St. Petersburg State Chamber, allow us to establish how the amount required from a male in *meshchane* families of the province changed over time.

During the Russo-Turkish war (1787-1791) the levies required 5 recruits for each 500 men (see Ch. 1): the typical *meshchane* commune of Novaia Ladoga raised 50-60 kopeks from each contributor – or 70 in the case of intensified recruitment after the outbreak of the war with Sweden in 1788.<sup>9</sup> After a certain rise in the last years of the century, the amounts changed strikingly during Alexander I's wars. During the War of the Third Coalition in 1805 and 1806, for levies of 5 recruits from 500 men the commune of Novaia Ladoga had to raise 2-3 roubles and more:<sup>10</sup> the amounts required had increased several times since the Russo-Turkish war of 1787-1791. In 1810, for a levy of only 3 per 500, the Novaia

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<sup>9</sup> Verdicts of Novaia Ladoga *meshchane* commune, 22.03.1789 and 7.10.1789. TsGIA Spb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 28. On the levy of 1789 in Novaia Ladoga. L. 5-6, 23-23v; Verdict of Novaia Ladoga *meshchane* commune, 02.04.1790. TsGIA Spb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 49. On sending recruits from Novaia Ladoga in 1790. L. 8-8v.

<sup>10</sup> Verdict of *meshchane* commune, 10.10.1806. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 230. TsGIA Spb. L. 9.

Ladoga *meshchane* still raised 2 roubles – and in the summer of 1811 had to raise an additional 1.5 roubles to equip several recruits whose call-up had been delayed.<sup>11</sup>

Devaluation of the banknote rouble (*assignatsii*), which was used for paying taxes and other everyday operations, was also significant: printed from 1768, it was produced in large quantities from the mid-1780s, as expenditure grew, largely because of the wars. Several attempts were made during Paul I's and Alexander I's reigns to replace the paper rouble with golden and silver coins, or at least to limit the printing of paper, but they brought next to no result. Ivan Tolchenov, who moved to Moscow in 1797, recorded that people refused to give up precious metals: the measures of the government, often abrupt, unprepared, and strictly enforced, only led to further inflation, 'major disruptions and great conflict'.<sup>12</sup> The conversion rate of paper and copper to silver roubles continued to decrease to 50 silver kopeks by 1802, and more strikingly after the beginning of a decade-long period of hostilities in the mid-1800s – reaching 20 kopeks at the end of 1810, and even less in 1812.<sup>13</sup>

Table 1. Conversion rate of the paper rouble to the silver rouble, 1809-1822. Figures are given in kopeks (1/100 of the silver rouble) From: V. Morozan, *Istoriia bankovskogo dela v Rossii*, p. 130-131.

| Year | Conversion rate of the paper rouble to the silver rouble, in kopeks | Year | Conversion rate of the paper rouble to the silver rouble, in kopeks |
|------|---|------|---|
| 1809 | 43 1/3  | 1816 | 25 1/3  |
| 1810 | 25 2/5  | 1817 | 25 1/6  |
| 1811 | 26 2/5  | 1818 | 25 1/4  |
| 1812 | 25 1/5  | 1819 | 26 1/3  |
| 1813 | 25 1/5  | 1820 | 26 1/3  |
| 1814 | 20  | 1821 | 25 2/3  |
| 1815 | 20  | 1822 | 26 1/5  |

<sup>11</sup> Verdicts of *meshchane* commune, 2.11.1810 and 19.07.1811. TsGIA Spb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 428. L. 17-18v, 104.

<sup>12</sup> Ransel, *A Russian Merchant's Tale*, p. 194.

<sup>13</sup> Morozan, *Istoriia bankovskogo dela v Rossii*, pp. 129-132.

The amounts raised from each man in a family during the Alexandrine period also grew inevitably, as in almost every year after 1805 the levies took 4-5 men, and far more were required in 1812-1813. The raising of two additional militia levies during this period were the most onerous: in the towns of St. Petersburg province the *meshchane* requested approximately 5 roubles for each male for the 1806-1807 militia, and 10-20 during the 1812 militia levy.<sup>14</sup> Inflation and these increased levies significantly affected the finances of *meshchane* families and communes.

The money that ordinary *meshchane* had to provide for recruits outstripped all other payments for military needs which they were required to pay during this period. A good example is provided by an extraordinary military collection for artillery horses, demanded in early 1812 from the communes of St. Petersburg province: only 44 kopeks was raised in Gdov from each *meshchanin* for this purpose – as we can see, the money raised during the regular levies was significantly more, whilst the amounts collected during the militia levies were many times higher.<sup>15</sup>

By way of comparison, we may contrast the money raised for recruits with the poll tax charged to *meshchane* males – their major and largest annual state tax (see table 2). For the towns of St. Petersburg province, this tax stood at 1.02 roubles in the late 1780s,<sup>16</sup> was raised to 2.04 roubles in 1794,<sup>17</sup> 2.55 at the end of 1797,<sup>18</sup> 5 roubles in 1810, 8 in 1812, and raised to 8.3 roubles for the period 1818-1839.<sup>19</sup> As we can see, the amount of recruit money raised annually was less than the poll tax in the 1780s and the 1790s, but during

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<sup>14</sup> M. Iudin's report to Sofia council on collecting money for militiamen, 22.12.188. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 907. L. 130; Gvov council on fundraising, Dec. 1806 – early 1807. TSGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 215. L. 28-29v.

<sup>15</sup> Decision of the council on money for artillery horses, 13.05.1812. TSGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 343. Minutes of Gdov council of the second first third of 1812, May – Aug. 1812. L. 6.

<sup>16</sup> Tax registers of Novaia Ladoga *meshchane*, for 1789. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 44. L. 7-12v.

<sup>17</sup> PSZ-1. V. 23. №17222, 23.06.1794, p. 531.

<sup>18</sup> PSZ-1. V. 24. №18278, 18.12.1797, p. 846.

<sup>19</sup> Ryndziunskii, *Gorodskoe grazhdanstvo*, p. 42.

the wars of 1805-1814 it certainly equalled this main state tax for the *meshchane*, and in the years of militia levies far outstripped it (see table 2).

Table 2. Payments of recruit money and poll tax from *meshchane*. Figures are in paper roubles (*assignatsii*), per man per year.

|            | The poll tax in St. Petersburg province | The recruit money paid during levy  |
|------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1780s-1794 | 1,02                                    | 0,5-0,7                             |
| 1794-1797  | 2,04                                    | 0,7-1                               |
| 1797-1810  | 2,55                                    | 1,5-3<br>(5 for the first militia)  |
| 1810-1812  | 5                                       | 3-5                                 |
| 1812-1818  | 8                                       | 5-8<br>(10-20 for the 1812 militia) |

For some perspective: the cost of a 9-*pud*<sup>20</sup> sack of rye (1 pud was 16 kilos) in St. Petersburg province was 16-20 roubles during 1812, while one *chetvert'* – approximately 210 decimetres of buckwheat – 26-28 roubles.<sup>21</sup> A notary charged 1 rouble for writing a letter of attorney. The annual pay of a soldier was 10 roubles, and 12 roubles from 1814, while an army clerk (*pisar'*) or a sergeant received 14.<sup>22</sup>

The lack of credit institutions for urban commoners aggravated the situation. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian credit institutions were still largely serving the nobility.<sup>23</sup> For Russian townspeople various types of local or informal credit had to be called

<sup>20</sup> 1 *pud* was approximately 16 kilos.

<sup>21</sup> Requests on the price of rye and buckwheat in Gdov, 10.06.12, TsGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 343. L. 19-20; Requests, 11.11.1812. TsGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 344. P. 27.

<sup>22</sup> PSZ-1. V. 33. №25868. p. 183.

<sup>23</sup> Kahan, *The Plow, the Hammer, and the Knout*, pp. 311-318.

upon: as G. Monroe<sup>24</sup> and V. Zakharov demonstrated,<sup>25</sup> in the case of merchant businesses this often took the form of money borrowed from business partners using promissory notes – a tradition developed from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. But for *meshchane* communes and families in provincial towns, the lack of credit options was an acute problem, especially from the mid-1800s, in circumstances of increasing levies, inflation, and growing economic and financial pressures. Because of frequent defaults among members, there would be always arrears for poll-tax, city taxes, and recruit money devolving on the commune – and council files during the wartime period of the 1800s-1810s showing increasing arrears among *meshchane* families and communes.

With increased sums to supply the growing number of recruits, the communes from at least the mid-1800s were frequently forced to resort to short-term borrowing: it could take months before the commune completed the round of fundraising required to meet its liability, whilst the recruits had to be fitted out and dispatched within several weeks. Council documents demonstrate that the main source of borrowing available to the *meshchane* commune in the provinces, was the town budget, managed by the council: almost every year certain reserves would remain over after payment of state taxes. During the first wartime levy of 1805, the Novaia Ladoga commune asked the council for 800 roubles to prepare 6 recruits, promising to pay the money back in 1806.<sup>26</sup> In the following years such borrowing became a wide-spread norm in the town: communes would frequently borrow money from council funds money – at 6%, the official interest rate of

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<sup>24</sup> Munro, G. E. 'St. Petersburg's Bills of Exchange in the Russian Economy of the Eighteenth Century', in L. R. Fischer, W. Minchinton (eds), *People of the Northern Seas* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1992), pp. 99-109.

<sup>25</sup> V. N. Zakharov, *Zapadnoevropeiskie kuptsy d vorriiskoi trgovle XVIII veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 2005), pp. 417-484.

<sup>26</sup> The verdict of Novaia Ladoga *meshchane* commune meeting, 26.11.1805. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 188. On the recruit levy of 1805 in Novaia Ladoga. L. 22-22v, 28.

the State's credit institutions. For instance, in 1810 the Novaia Ladoga *meshchane* commune requested 700 roubles: the money was needed urgently to equip four late recruits.<sup>27</sup> Such loans would usually be repaid by the commune within a year. It was a convenient instrument for both parties: the councils could simply deduct the amount borrowed from new taxes raised from the *meshchane*.

A critical test for the local finances were the militia levies. The problem lay in the urgency with which such large sums had to be raised. In Gdov, on receipt of the militia decree in July 1812, the *meshchane* immediately asked the council for 1,000 roubles – for at least two months – to equip 10 militiamen.<sup>28</sup> By the end of 1812 the Tsarskoe Selo commune had spent 9,642.59 roubles on the 50 militiamen sent.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, 10,000 roubles were spent in Novaia Ladoga, which provided 45 men<sup>30</sup> (according to council accounts, the cost of sending one militiaman was close to 100 roubles in 1807, and about 200 roubles in 1812). Obviously, it was impossible to collect such large amounts in a few weeks, nor even a few months. In Novaia Ladoga, the collection of 10,000 roubles was almost complete only by the end of the next year, 1813.<sup>31</sup>

Town budgets were not large, and sometimes the richer families could also help find the money. In Pavlovsk, during the second militia the town head and merchant T. Builov – whose administration had caused many complaints (see Chapter 2) – contributed 210

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<sup>27</sup> The decision of Novaia Ladoga commune, 19.07.1811. TsGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 428. L. 102-107v.

<sup>28</sup> The verdict of Gdov *meshchane* commune, 26.07.1812. TSGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 345. Verdicts of Gdov's communes. L. 25v.

<sup>29</sup> The final calculations of *meshchane* headman in Tsarskoe Selo, after 1812. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1060. L. 8.

<sup>30</sup> Verdicts of Novaia Ladoga *meshchane* commune on fundraising for militia, 26 and 30.07.1812; decision of council, 02.08.1812. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. L. 30-30v, 40, 81, 92.

<sup>31</sup> Novaia Ladoga council on fundraising, 29.11.1813. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. L. 165.

roubles when the money was urgently needed for a new group of conscripts in 1812.<sup>32</sup> In 1815 the Tsarskoe Selo commune borrowed 835 roubles from the burgomaster *meshchanin* Il'ia Iudin – an exceptionally large amount for the *meshchanin* – to equip several recruits urgently.<sup>33</sup> Soon after, the communes compensated both Builov and Iudin.

Such borrowings demonstrate that relationships within towns were complex. Despite the almost complete absence of credit institutions for the commoners, there were always ways to mobilize money and other resources in small and medium-sized Russian town, and to successfully fulfil their duty – even during challenging wartime and militia levies.

It would be easy to assume that the finances of *meshchane* families and communes must have been increasingly depleted during the wars of 1805-1814. But even the largest amounts in 1812-1813 were eventually raised. The arrears of taxes (*nedoimki*) were a chronic problem for many communes: however, council files do not record a critical surge in non-payments of state and city taxes in 1812 and thereafter, which suggests that the communes and many families adapted to the financial pressures of the war-period. A further study of this question is needed, which would involve the analysis of the vast collection of registers of taxes and tax arrears which survive in the council archives.<sup>34</sup>

We must also explore briefly the way in which the upper class of urban commoners, the merchant families, contributed. From 1775 during regular military levies their communes were obliged to contribute the recruit money. For each conscript required per

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<sup>32</sup> The report of headman Timofei Builov about incomes and expenses on recruits and militiamen during 1812-1813, ca. early 1814. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 3062. Books of recruit and militia fundraising, 1812-1813. L. 18-34.

<sup>33</sup> On borrowing from *meshchanin* Il'ia Iudin, 18.09.1815 – 29.01.1816. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1084. On the levy of 1815. L. 59-60.

<sup>34</sup> The topic of arrears of communes in this period requires further investigation: the voluminous books of poll tax payments and arrears, a very informative source which can help explore how the financial position of the townspeople was changing, have never been adequately researched.

500 *meshchane*, the commune of merchants raised from the males in each household 1 rouble: if a levy was 1 from 500 men, families contributed 1 rouble from each male, 2 if it was 2:500. It means that in most years during the late 1780s – early 1800s, as the levies remained moderate, merchant families would usually pay 1-2 roubles per male: amounts not much exceeding the money that *meshchane* raised for recruits during these years – 0.6-1 roubles. From 1805 the recruit money contributed by merchants grew: for levies of 4-5 from 500, the families had to pay 4-5 roubles for each man.

Also it should be noted, that according to the tax registers, the merchant families in the towns reviewed were larger than those of the *meshchane* – at least 3-5 males was the norm, and often more than that - 6-7, and even more. It was logical for merchants to stay in one household, above all to minimize the guild fee paid out of family capital. The amount of recruit money that the families had to pay from 1805 could thus be close to their guild fee: the annual fee for the third guild, to which almost all families belonged, stood at 25 roubles in 1797-1806.<sup>35</sup>

However, during the testing years of 1812-13 the merchants and *meshchane* communes were excused the recruit money, because urban communes which provided militiamen were relieved of the necessity of supplying recruits before the militiamen returned; in 1815 on this occasion a special equalling levy, the last mass levy of Alexander's reign, took place.

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<sup>35</sup> Ryndziunskii, *Gorodskoe grazhdanstvo*, p. 42.

### **3.2. Extraordinary contributions: donations during the militia levies of 1806-1807 and 1812**

Besides regular recruit money, communes could be called upon to organize collections for various other military needs. These extraordinary supplies took various forms. Most often, during or in preparation for campaigns, councils would receive orders to raise the money for horses, carts, provisions, food trains for the army, or equipment for the newly formed regiments. The urban communes were held responsible for all collections. Resident nobles, officials, or clergy might occasionally join the communal fundraising in towns, on a voluntary basis, but normally they only contributed during wars with individual donations of families, monasteries, civil servants, or with subscriptions to help the wounded, refugees. The merchant communes played a special role in collections for extraordinary military needs in towns, merchant families being seen by the authorities as largely responsible for the town's wealth and finances.

Donations raised by the merchants raised for monasteries and churches, for various local charity needs, or for the monuments commemorating Russian victories (especially that in 1812) have always been considered an integral part of the culture of this social group, even in the most remote provincial and district capitals.<sup>36</sup> But the organization on the ground of fund-raising in merchant communes – for local charity purposes or for military needs – has never been adequately researched. This section explores the donations made for militias in 1806-1807 and 1812-1813 – the largest and most important wartime contributions of merchant communes in this period.

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<sup>36</sup> Evtuhov, *Portrait of a Russian province*, p. 51.

The donations of merchants have been less remarked on than the efforts of nobles in organizing, supplying, and arming the militias. Provincial noble assemblies were responsible for supplying militiamen from their districts, training them, and providing officers – but the material support for both militias, required by the militia decree, was largely made the responsibility of the urban class – the communes of merchants. They were expected to provide communal donations, collected by heads of the communes and local councils: both in 1806-1807 and 1812 this money was to be raised and sent post-haste to the State Chamber. However, the contributions of the communes and families of merchants and *meshchane* in support of the militias were not limited to this. Imperial decrees, government instructions, and governors' orders also encouraged individual donations – of money, provisions, equipment, clothes, and weapons – to be recorded and reported to the governors. Some merchant families might also help with money, provisions, or munitions for the conscripts being prepared for service by the *meshchane*.

In the scholarship so far, it has often been implied that the donations for militias were voluntary, as part of the charitable tradition of the Russian mercantile class. The existing works largely list the amounts received from merchant communes in 1812, and little information is given on the way the collections were organized. But as E. Lapina noticed, looking at the example of St. Petersburg merchants in 1812, the donations were not necessarily fully voluntary: some merchants were aggrieved at the amounts they were to pay (and some seem to have suggested that the commune and its elites were attempting to deliberately ruin them by demanding donations that were too high<sup>37</sup>). Only recently have some researchers begun to study how donations were raised within the commune,

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<sup>37</sup> Lapina, 'Zemskoe opolchenie Rossii 1812–1814', p. 163.

including studying the amounts raised from particular merchant families.<sup>38</sup> This opens avenues for discussion on the nature of these contributions: whether they should be deemed an extraordinary part of the one's civic duty or rather voluntary help for the benefit of society, as in the case of subscriptions. S. Belousov, studying the donations of merchants of the mid-Volga towns, considers communal contributions to the militia a form of voluntary help – differentiating them from *okladnye sbory*, ordered by the authorities (a lot of these were ordered in 1812: being money for the equipment of regiments, carts, horses). On the other hand, V. Bessonov, on the example of the Kaluga merchants, considers fundraising for the militia a part of military duty, in its extraordinary wartime form.<sup>39</sup>

The problem is that printed records and memoir literature almost never describe the organization of these collections. The best-known episode is the famous speech of Alexander I to Moscow merchants in July 1812. The Emperor met the nobles and merchants who gathered separately in the Slobodskoi Palace. The Moscow civil and general governor count F. Rostopchin mentioned the enormous excitement, righteous indignation, and outburst of patriotism as the merchants listened to the tsar's call to all estates to unite and make a stand against the enemy who had invaded the Fatherland ('The whole room was full of cries... I myself saw a man grinding his teeth'). Most attendees reacted zealously,<sup>40</sup> and many merchants immediately signed up to donate fortunes for raising the militia of the Moscow province. 2,400,000 roubles were received from the Moscow merchants; while the merchants of St. Petersburg contributed 2,000,000 for the

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<sup>38</sup> Belousov, 'Kupechestvo srednego Povolzh'ia', pp. 61-64.

<sup>39</sup> Bessonov, *Kaluzhskii krai*, pp. 43-49.

<sup>40</sup> P. A. Berlin, 'Russkoe kupechestvo i vojna 1812 goda', in: *Otechestvennaya vojna i russkoe obshchestvo*, K. Dzhivelegov, S. P. Mel'gunov, V. I. Pichet (eds), vol. 5 (Moscow 1912), p. 115.

organization of the St. Petersburg militia in that year.<sup>41</sup> The communes of the two capitals have always been closely studied: but not even the documents of the Moscow council for these months survive. In this regard, the new sources from provincial council archives enable the first holistic, detailed reconstruction of the organization of fundraising within the merchant communes.<sup>42</sup>

The first step is to examine who determined the amount of a communal donation, and how it was shared out among families; whether participation was mandatory for all members, and whether shares were equal or not. Among important questions to explore are the degree of independence of the merchant communes and local councils from the governors and higher authorities; another important question concerns the additional donations – who contributed more than others and why – notably, what was the role of merchants and *meshchane* elites.

Normally, on other occasions, the councils received instructions from the governors as to how much money to raise from each adult male in merchant or *meshchane* families for various military purposes – horses, carts. The commune of merchants, like the *meshchane*, collected the money, under the supervision of the council and with the help of the Chief of Police. But the decree of 30.11.1806 announcing the first militia levy, only gave general information. The merchant communes were to meet immediately and determine how the raising of donations was to be organized. The councils of St. Petersburg province received the decree in the first days of December, and soon a more detailed ‘Special instruction’ dated 4.12.1806 arrived:<sup>43</sup> it required ‘town councils, guilds, and

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<sup>41</sup> A. Semenova, ‘Moskovskoe kupechestvo i voina 1812 goda’, *Voprosy Istorii*, №12 (2012), p. 154.

<sup>42</sup> M. A. Belan, ‘«Ne nam, ne nam, a imeni tvoemu»: pozhertvovaniia uezdnogo kupechestva na opolcheniia v nachale xix v. (na primere Sankt-Peterburgskoj gubernii) *Vestnik Slav’ianskikh kultur*, № 60 (2021), pp. 82-96.

<sup>43</sup> The highest instruction on organization of militia. PSZ-1. Vol. 28. №22385, p. 902-905.

boards to arrange for the collection of donations within the next 8 days – ‘considering the strength, ability, and zeal for the common good of each citizen’.<sup>44</sup> At this point, the Civil Governor P. S. Pasev’ev invited all the delegations from the towns and guilds to St. Petersburg, receiving almost all of them, it seems, in the halls of St. Petersburg city council on the 13-14th (25-26th) December, that is on Sunday and Monday.<sup>45</sup> Those arriving were the men of the local elite: the town heads, headmen, representatives from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> guilds – those men who usually served as the headman or electees of the council, with each town sending a delegation of 3-5 men. The governor read out the decree to the assembled delegations, and informed them of the latest orders, insisting that the amount be organized within 8 days. During the meetings with the governor, each delegation subscribed to donate a certain amount of money from the merchant commune. On their return home, commune meetings were organized over the next couple of days, and the sums announced to the merchants. It was thus not the governor who decided how much the merchants of the town contributed; but nor was it the gathering of the members of the commune in the town. Rather, it was the urban elites who determined how much money the merchants of the town were prepared to offer to the state for the militia. In this regard the donations<sup>46</sup> for the militias were very different from the above-mentioned payments ordered by the authorities for military needs.

Next, we need to examine how the communal donations were shared between families. B. Mironov emphasised that merchants, excused in 1775 from collective

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 904. Article. 21.

<sup>45</sup> Gdov delegation promise to Pasev’ev on 13.12.1806. TSGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 215. L. 6; Novaia Ladoga promise on 14.12.1806. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 206. On militia in Novaia Ladoga, 1806-1807. L. 3; Sofia promise on 13.11.1806. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 907. L. 14; Pavlovsk promise on 13.12.1807. RGIA. F. 494. Op. 1. D. 74. L. 11; Gatchina promise on 14.12.1806. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 2132. L. 1.

<sup>46</sup> Bessonov, *Kaluzhskii krai*, p. 43.

responsibility for contributing taxes, were growing increasingly individualistic.<sup>47</sup> Still, in all towns reviewed decisions made during militia levies were similar, and influenced by communal traditions: merchants raised equal shares from each adult male in families of the 3<sup>rd</sup> guild, just as in case of the recruit money, – and participation was mandatory for all. In Novaia Ladoga in 1806-1807 the levy was 25 roubles per man, for a total donation of 10,000 roubles;<sup>48</sup> in the larger Novgorod – 35 roubles per man, for a donation of 6,915;<sup>49</sup> in Serpukhov – 33 roubles 33.5 kopeks (38,435 roubles were promised from 1,153 men).<sup>50</sup> In poorer Gdov merchants initially were called to give 4.15 roubles for a donation of 500 roubles, but eventually almost all families here contributed far more additionally.<sup>51</sup> There were always families who in fact possessed capital larger than that declared, but there could also be those who were 'merchants' in name only – those not running businesses. Splitting the communal donation into equal shares per man neutralised any difference: the size of the family contribution was thus only dependent on the number of adult males.

The only exceptions were the richest merchants of the town, who according to the communes' verdicts, were to pay larger shares: this could be 50, 100, or 200 roubles. In the three district capitals of St. Petersburg province reviewed, there were normally not more than 2-5 families from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and, occasionally, the 1<sup>st</sup> guild. Most of them held posts in the town government. Also present might be a couple of 'guests' – richer merchants

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<sup>47</sup> Mironov, *Sotsial'naia istoriia*, Vol. 1., p. 496.

<sup>48</sup> The response of merchants' elected militia collectors Ivan Kn'iaziev and his comrades to the council, on the decision how to raise money from merchants, 31.12.1806. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 206. L. 13.

<sup>49</sup> The decision of Novgorod merchant commune, 29.12.1806. RGANO (State Historical Archive of Novgorod region). F. 93. Op. 3. D. 92. On militia in Novgorod, 1806-1807. L. 16-17v.

<sup>50</sup> On decisions of the Serpukhov merchant commune, 21.12.1806, TsGA. F. 1036. Op. 1. D. 107. On Militia. Serpukhov, 1806–1807. L. 12, 63.

<sup>51</sup> Council of Gdov to the governor, on contributions of merchants, 16.01.1807. TSGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 215. The book of donations for militia, Gdov, 1806-1807. L. 15-16v, 25-25v.

residing in the town, but formally registered elsewhere – who also contributed larger amounts for militias.

These amounts should be seen in perspective. As mentioned above, in 1797-1806 families of the 3rd guild paid an annual tax – a guild fee of 25 roubles, from the family's capital.<sup>52</sup> The merchants' families, larger than those of the *meshchane* – most often paid for 3-4 or more males: it means that for the first militia in 1806-1807, when shares of 25 or more roubles per man were common, most merchant families contributed amounts equal to their family's guild tax for several years.

It is notable also that these communal donations for the first militia were raised with considerable speed. Already by early March 1807 the Novaia Ladoga council had sent 7,337 roubles of the 10,000 promised by the merchants, with 9,202 raised by May.<sup>53</sup> In little Gdov, 1,176 roubles rather than the 500 promised<sup>54</sup> had been dispatched to the district treasury by the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 1807. In Serpukhov, after the first week of fundraising, the collectors reported on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1807 that 12,867 roubles had been collected of about 38,500 promised.<sup>55</sup> It could take several more months to collect the remainder, with many towns sending smaller amounts throughout 1807, or even later – partly because many merchants would have been absent for business reasons. Even so, it can be seen that fundraising during the first militia was remarkably fast and effective in most communes, not only of the Northwest – and even more money could sometimes be provided than the communes had signed up for.

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<sup>52</sup> Ryndziunskii, *Gorodskoe grazhdanstvo*, p. 42.

<sup>53</sup> Receipts, presented to the council by merchants Ivan Sharov and Prokofii Davydov, 4.11.1807. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 206. L. 73.

<sup>54</sup> Lists of donation and additional contributions made in Gdov, various dates, Dec. 1806-1807. TSGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 215. The book of donations for militia, Gdov, 1806-1807. L. 6, 9, 21, 24, 31-32.

<sup>55</sup> The report of Serpukhov merchants – militia collectors, 4.01.1807. TsGA. F. 1036. Op. 1. D. 107. On Militia. Serpukhov, 1806–1807. L. 37-37v.

It was of course significant that almost everywhere the richest families made additional contributions, donating money, provisions, clothes besides their mandatory share. Lists of such voluntary contributions would include all 1–2<sup>nd</sup> guild families of the town and most prominent 3<sup>rd</sup> guild merchant families: this group of the local elite could be small, but everywhere it included the families of the town head, headman, members of the town council and merchant collectors, as well as many of the current and past burgomasters or *ratmany*. The Novaia Ladoga tax registers show that almost all families of this urban elite were registered in the towns from at least the late 1780s.<sup>56</sup> Five men here gave 25 roubles – one of them, Luka Mukhin, promising to 'pay 25 more each year as long as the militia continues' – whilst the town head merchant Vasilii Manakov gave 50 roubles.<sup>57</sup> In richer Serpukhov 3 men gave 200, and 3 – 100 roubles, and there were donations of 400, 100, 50 roubles as well.<sup>58</sup> In smaller Gdov almost all merchant families of the commune contributed additional donations, 10-25 roubles on average.<sup>59</sup> Of course, these sums do not look very large, when compared with the donations of the Moscow or St. Petersburg merchants, and the communes of big and rich towns: still, 25 roubles, as noted above, was equal to the annual guild fee of a 3-rd guild family in these years.

And remarkable were few largest donations made as early as December – January 1807, by the first men of the district towns. In Novaia Ladoga, the only first guild merchant registered was the town head Alexander Popov: the Popov family, with only two males,

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<sup>56</sup> Novaia Ladoga ex-headman P. Voronkov's reports on families and taxes in 1789, 11.04.1790. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 44.

<sup>57</sup> Lists of additional contributions in Novaia Ladoga, various dates Dec. 1806 – end of 1807. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 206. L. 31-32, 50-52.

<sup>58</sup> On additional fundraising for militia in Serpukhov, Dec. 1806 – early 1807. TsGA. F. 1036. Op. 1. D. 107. L. 15.

<sup>59</sup> Lists of donation and additional contributions made in Gdov, various dates, Dec. 1806-1807. TSGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 215. L. 15-16, 25v, 29.

contributed an additional 2,000 roubles.<sup>60</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> guild family minimum capital in 1794-1806 stood at 16,000 roubles; even if Alexander understated his officially declared capital of 16,010 roubles (to minimize the annual guild fee), 2,000 roubles was a sizeable donation for a district capital. In Novgorod, Andrei Panov, also a first guild merchant and the town head, contributed 1,000 roubles.<sup>61</sup> In small Gdov the town head Kozma Filatov, the only 2<sup>nd</sup> guild merchant here, gave 100 roubles.<sup>62</sup> In Serpukhov one half of all additional money contributed, – 1,800 roubles out of 3,650 – was given by a single merchant called Bezdánov.<sup>63</sup>

Registers from Novaia Ladoga also show that some elite families of the town who contributed money (such as those who gave an additional 25 roubles), also contributed rye, buckwheat, clothes – provisions which were perhaps intended to help the *meshchane* commune supply their recruits.<sup>64</sup>

Lastly, the decree of 30.11.1806 and the orders that followed encouraged everyone in towns to donate weapons. These additional contributions were to be accepted ‘with special gratitude’ at the council or by the Chief of Police: receipts of acceptance were given, and the reports were regularly sent to the civil governors and provincial militia commanders.<sup>65</sup> Most prominent families of both merchants and *meshchane* would bring to the town councils firearms, swords. Often there might be obsolete muskets and blunt sabres, later rejected by the militia officers. But the councils accepted and meticulously

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<sup>60</sup> Council on the donations of the Popovy, 14.01-05.02.1807. Novaia Ladoga, 1806-1807. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 206. L. 33-36.

<sup>61</sup> Novgorod council to the governor on additional contribution, 23.12.1806. RGANO. F. 93. Op. 3. D. 92. L. 17.

<sup>62</sup> Lists of donation and additional contributions made in Gdov, various dates. Gdov, late 1806 – 1807. TSGIA SPb. F. 885. Op. 1. D. 215. L. 15-16, 25v, 29.

<sup>63</sup> The report of Serpukhov merchants – militia collectors, 4.01.1807. TsGA. F. 1036. Op. 1. D. 107. L. 15-15v.

<sup>64</sup> On additional donations for militia from merchants and *meshchane* in Novaia Ladoga, late 1806 – early 1807. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 206. L. 31-34, 42, 51-52.

<sup>65</sup> Decree on Militia. PSZ-1. Vol. 29. №22374, p. 895. Art. 14; Instruction on Militia. Ibid., p. 904. Art. 25.

recorded every contribution, amassing whole arsenals, with the town's municipal buildings playing the role of depots for money, provisions, clothes, and various munitions. In Novaia Ladoga, during December 1806–January 1807, 13 merchants, mostly the same families who donated money or provisions, and 17 *meshchane* supplied 26 muskets, a pistol, 8 sabres and epees, and 9 pikes (all nine given by Andrei Sharov, a 2<sup>nd</sup> guild merchant and the headman), whilst one 3<sup>rd</sup> guild merchant brought along two small cast iron cannons.<sup>66</sup> In an extraordinary time of mobilization, the local councils proved that they were true and effective political centres of the town.

For the 1812 militia, the decrees of the 6 (18) and 18 (30) July and instructions of the governors set out the same requests for donations from the communes.<sup>67</sup> In fact, from the end of 1811 instructions from the Ministry of Police were already being sent out, welcoming individual donations for the regular army: these were to be given *gratis*, but recorded and reported by councils and Chefs of Police to the governor. In particular, munitions and clothes were required in preparation for the war with Napoleon: shakos, satchels, harnesses – samples of which were sent out to be displayed in municipal buildings town councils or in the office of the Chief of Police; and in May 1812 orders arrived announcing their money equivalents were also accepted.<sup>68</sup> However, before the war with France began, no donations were registered in the towns reviewed. This was not only the case in the Northwest: V. Bessonov draws attention to the same situation in the large town of Kaluga, a rich provincial capital of the central Russian province.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> On donation of two canons and other weapons, early 1807, TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 206. Ibid., L. 50.

<sup>67</sup> PSZ-1, V. 32, №25176 P. 388, №25188 P. 397.

<sup>68</sup> Gdov council on receiving the orders on voluntary donations for the army, May 1812. TsGIA SPb. F. 885. Op. 1. D. 340. Ukases to Gdov local council, first third of 1812. L. 11-12v.

<sup>69</sup> Bessonov, *Kaluzhskii krai*, pp. 43-49.

By the end of July 1812, after the decrees on the new militia and the governors' orders had been issued, merchant communes again signed up for collective money donations. The results, however, could be very different from the 1806-1807 experience. This time the fundraising often met with obstacles, some communities struggling to collect even the money promised. In July 1812 Novaia Ladoga's merchants, still presided over by Alexander Popov, signed up for 5,000 roubles – half the sum pledged for the first militia.<sup>70</sup> The commune must have hoped to raise 25 roubles again from each adult man in every family – there were now about 200 merchants in the town.<sup>71</sup> The devaluation of the paper rouble, which had almost doubled since 1806, was evidently a contributory factor.<sup>72</sup> Still, the Civil Governor M. Bakunin wrote several times to the council of Novaia Ladoga during August – October 1812, criticizing it for making too small a donation, 'while other and smaller towns had signed up for more'. Urging the commune to increase the amount of its donation, Bakunin especially insisted, that it was the duty of the merchants who held posts in the town council to 'demonstrate personal example' with their contributions.<sup>73</sup> But, in September 1812 only 3,000 roubles of the 5,000 promised had been sent,<sup>74</sup> and only in September of 1813 – a year later – did Popov travel to St. Petersburg with another 1,235. By then the provincial committee of the militia had closed down, and Popov was advised to hand the money to the State Incomes Office (*Ekspeditsiia o Gosudarstvennykh Dokhodakh*). Instead, he chose to return to Novaia Ladoga where it was decided to store

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<sup>70</sup> The decision of the Novaia Ladoga merchant commune, 25-26, 29.07.1812. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. L. 33, 39, 57-59v.

<sup>71</sup> Register of Novaia Ladoga merchants in 1811. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 547. L. 13-15.

<sup>72</sup> Morozan, *Istoriia bankovskogo dela v Rossii*, p. 129-132.

<sup>73</sup> Civil Governor to Novaia Ladoga council, August 1812. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. L. 103, 108-109v.

<sup>74</sup> Report of the Novaia Ladoga town head Popov and report of the town headman Selui'anov about delivery of money with acceptance ticket, 28.08.1812 and 25.09.1812. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. L. 125-127.

the money separately until instructions followed.<sup>75</sup> What happened later to this money remains unclear. Thus, the Novaia Ladoga commune – the second largest and wealthiest merchant commune in the province after St. Petersburg – succeeded in raising only 4,135 roubles for the second militia – and that with difficulty and delay – and in 1812 had handed over only 3,000. To compensate, and to go some way to satisfy Governor, the Novaia Ladoga commune resolved to set up a second book (*shnurovaia kniga za pechatu*) in August 1812 – for recording additional donations. No other contributions, however, were ever registered.<sup>76</sup>

In Gdov, merchants pledged to raise 2,000 roubles, a donation larger than their contribution of 1,176 roubles in 1807:<sup>77</sup> but, as noted above, the value of the paper rouble had halved by now. It is not possible to establish whether the donation was raised in full and dispatched to the treasury, but as in the case of Ladoga there was no mention of any additional communal or individual contributions in Gdov – as it had been the case during 1806-1807.

It can be argued that during the 1812-1813 militia levy many communities faced the same problems: many merchants complained that they could not pay even their mandatory share of the communal donation, which was too large for them,<sup>78</sup> as they did not hold enough money in cash; some evaded payment altogether – even by leaving the town. Among them were often those who had previously been the richest members of the community. A. Ershov, Gdov's former burgomaster, was not able to pay his 250 roubles in

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<sup>75</sup> Popov to the council, council on 1235 roubles, Sep. – Oct. 1813. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. L. 156, 159.

<sup>76</sup> On the book for additional contributions, 14.08.1812. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. L. 108.

<sup>77</sup> The decision of the commune, 26.07.1812. TSGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 345. L. 11.

<sup>78</sup> Lapina, 'Zemskoe opolchenie Rossii 1812–1814', pp. 163-168.

1812 – eventually, and with difficulty, contributing only 100.<sup>79</sup> The Novaia Ladoga council and commune searched for months for the 2<sup>nd</sup> guild merchant Aleksandr Sharov, from the second richest merchant family in Novaia Ladoga after the Popovy. Since Sharov resided in the capital, the council approached the St. Petersburg police to help collect his mandatory share in the communal donation. The council unsuccessfully sought for several other merchants across the province, including men from once rich families, such as the ex-town headman V. Manakov (who contributed an additional 50 roubles during the first militia). Nor could the money always be reclaimed from the guarantors of the men searched for, in Novaia Ladoga, who several times refused to pay up.<sup>80</sup> (Interestingly, the registers of additional donations for the first militia show, that several leading families of the *meshchane* commune of Novaia Ladoga also joined in this additional raising of money in 1806-1807, though contributing smaller amounts than the families of the merchant elite.)

Of course, this situation did not apply in all towns. In larger capitals such as Novgorod or Staraiia Rusa, where merchant communes were bigger and industries (such as salt production) were more established, donations in 1812 exceeded the contributions made for the first militia. For smaller communities – Tsarskoe Selo, Gatchina, or Pavlovsk – it is more difficult to compare the contributions for militias and individual shares, since communes here were small and rather fluid, with rich 1-2nd guild merchants from St. Petersburg, and even foreigners, occasionally registering there.

Patriotism certainly played its role in 1812, no less than in 1806-1807. An interesting case took place in Tsarskoe Selo. The merchant Ivan Persianov, a former town head, who organized the fundraising for the first militia in 1806-1807, had no money this time to pay

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<sup>79</sup> Gdov council on Ershov, early Oct. 1812. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 344. L. 13.

<sup>80</sup> The town headman Elipatov to Novaia Ladoga council on searching for merchants, 28.08.1812. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. L. 116; The council to St. Petersburg Deanery Board, 03.09.1812. Ibid., L. 122.

his share even in the communal donation. He visited Governor Bakunin in St. Petersburg and asked him to accept his younger son Fedor as a 'donation' to the fatherland. Fedor was accepted, not as a militiaman conscripted for the period of the war only, but as a soldier in the Lifeguard Jäger regiment – that is for a 25-year term of service. His unlucky father, once a prosperous merchant, had to reregister in the following year, 1813, to the *meshchane* commune – a typical fate for many families of the merchant elite in the towns of the province, who had been the richest members of the commune only several years before.<sup>81</sup>

### **3.3. The urban commoners and the financial crises of the wartime**

To understand the changes in the commoners' economic and financial positions in these years, it is necessary to examine the factors affecting the businesses of the merchant families, especially those of the urban elite in 1805-1815, and what effect the mobilizational measures taken by the government had on the council budgets and finances of district towns during this period.

I. Tolchenov, who used to supply grain to St. Petersburg, had been complaining of rising prices as back as the late 1780s:<sup>82</sup> but he records that the trading situation in the last years of the century had become especially unpredictable and difficult (after Paul I's break with England in 1800, when the price of grain exports plummeted, while the prices of imported goods soared). The economic period of the 1800s–1810s – including the decade

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<sup>81</sup> Tsarskoe Selo Townhall on Ivan Persianov, 1.08.1812 and 05.11.1812. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1060. L. 59-60, 162.

<sup>82</sup> The price of grain in the internal market had begun to rise significantly in the early reign of Catherine II, after she had allowed the export of grain: the price in the Russian market soon equaled prices in Europe, which was especially painful for peasants and townsmen.

of wars and the years of blockade – was even more volatile.<sup>83</sup> As A. I. Aksenov remarks, many merchants in provincial towns, seeking to avoid financial hardship, had already begun in the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to move down to the lower 3<sup>rd</sup> guild, only occasionally, for status or some other reason, appearing in the 2<sup>nd</sup><sup>84</sup> Annual registers of the declared capital of merchant families in typical towns of St. Petersburg province, such as Schlisselburg and Novaia Ladoga confirm that the upper guilds – the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> guild families – practically disappeared from the registers over the period of the 1790s–early 1800s. But the years of wars and continental blockade that followed brought even more significant challenges. The recession in imports and growing military demands may have opened, as P. A. Berlin argued,<sup>85</sup> certain opportunities, for instance for state contractors such as broadcloth producers. But it seems that in smaller provincial communes the families of merchants were seriously affected by the lack of credit and ready cash, rising prices and the inflation of the paper rouble.<sup>86</sup>

Table 3. Guild fee revisions, % of a family capital, all guilds.

| Years            | 1775 | 1797   | 1810   | 1812   | 1821    | 1824  |
|------------------|------|--------|--------|--------|---------|-------|
| Annual guild fee | 1 %  | 1,25 % | 1,75 % | 4,75 % | 5,225 % | 1,75% |

Direct taxation of the commoners also grew in these years: and for the merchant estate the increase was especially dramatic between 1807 and 1812. Both the guild fee and the capital requirements were revised. The guild fee, which had been 1% since 1775,

<sup>83</sup> Ransel, *A Russian Merchant's Tale*, p. 196.

<sup>84</sup> A. I. Aksenov, *Ocherki genealogii uezdnogo kupechestva XVIII v.* (Moscow: Institut Istorii Rossii, 1993), p. 204.

<sup>85</sup> P. A. Berlin, 'Russkoe kupechestvo i voina 1812 goda', in: *Otechestvennaya vojna i russkoe obshchestvo*, Vol. 5, p. 117-119. A different opinion: M. F. Zlotnikov, *Kontinentalnaia Blokada i Rossiia'* (Moscow, Leningrad: Nauka, 1966).

<sup>86</sup> Morozan, *Istoriia bankovskogo dela*, p. 130.

and 1.25% from 1797, was raised to 1.75% in 1810 – and then jumped to 4.75% in February 1812. The requirements of capital also changed: in 1807 the 3<sup>rd</sup> guild capital increased most strikingly – fourfold – from 2,000 to 8,000 roubles.<sup>87</sup>

Table 4. Capital requirements, in paper roubles per family.

| Years               | 1775  | 1785   | 1794   | 1807   |
|---------------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| <b>First Guild</b>  | 10000 | 10 000 | 16 000 | 50 000 |
| <b>Second Guild</b> | 1000  | 5 000  | 8 000  | 20 000 |
| <b>Third Guild</b>  | 500   | 1 000  | 2 000  | 8 000  |

Unsurprisingly, tax arrears among provincial merchants began to grow, especially after 1807 – with the urban elite in particular suffering. In 1810–1812 delays or arrears in paying taxes often become the norm among the most prominent families. When Alexander Popov in Novaia Ladoga left his post after 1812, he owed almost 5 000 roubles in state taxes – equal to two years' guild fees for the 1<sup>st</sup> guild capital: it is hardly surprising therefore that he only contributed 200 roubles for the second militia – a tenth of his contribution in 1807. In 1814 the new council complained to the governor half a dozen times about Popov's enormous debts.<sup>88</sup>

There were also four other rich merchants in Novaia Ladoga, all of whom actively contributed during the first militia – these were mainly families involved in the grain and timber trade typical for this region – but who struggled thereafter. In 1808-1810 they took out big loans from the communal purse (in 1807-1812 councils were allowed to lend 'an additional quarter-percent of the guild fee' tax to local commoners: that is 0.25 of the 1.25-

<sup>87</sup> Ryndziunskii, *Gorodskoe grazhdanstvo*, p. 42.

<sup>88</sup> The new council to the governor on the inability to collect arrears from A. Popov, Novaia Ladoga, 1812-1814. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 329. On quarter-percent city loans. L. 68-68v, 104-104v.

1.75% fees collected on merchant capitals in those years).<sup>89</sup> These four merchants of Novaia Ladoga borrowed about 1,500 roubles each, most of them vouching for each other. But in the aftermath of 1812 all borrowers and guarantors, bar one, collapsed and re-registered as *meshchane*: some continued to repay loans right up to 1817-1818.<sup>90</sup> A similar situation was reported by the Gdov council, where families of the local merchant elite borrowed on average 300-350 roubles – and all had likewise gone bankrupt by the end of 1812.<sup>91</sup>

In all this, the 1812 war itself was of course a crucial factor, in the damage it caused to domestic trade and industry. Towns of the central provinces and Moscow, the economic centre, were most immediately, and directly, affected: a 3<sup>rd</sup> guild merchant from the capital N. F. Kotov vividly depicted the calamities and despair of the merchants, who found all their trade and storage facilities eliminated;<sup>92</sup> many of them had to leave the city after 1812 and even abandon business completely. But in reality, the war reverberated across most Russian towns. As A. Semenova points out, the problem was that merchants everywhere in Russia even in the 1800s-1810s relied largely on the turnover of their business, and owing to the limited credit options available for commoners almost all merchants operated with money borrowed from other merchants using promissory notes – including from foreign merchants and financiers, such as those living in St. Petersburg.<sup>93</sup> It meant, explains Semenova, that when in 1812 several merchant families went bankrupt, and a number of supply chains were disrupted, it had the effect of occasioning further

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<sup>89</sup> PSZ-1. V. 32. №22418. P. 977.

<sup>90</sup> The Novaia Ladoga council on retrieving the quarter-percent loans from merchants, various documents, 1813-1817. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 329. L. 81-116.

<sup>91</sup> The reports of the council to the State Chamber on the quarter-percent loans, 26.08.1812. TSGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 340. The decrees of the State Chamber to Gdov council, second third of 1812. L. 76-76v.

<sup>92</sup> Kotov, *Iz zapisok o voennykh deistviakh*, pp. 40-42.

<sup>93</sup> Munro, 'St. Petersburg's Bills of Exchange', p. 99

bankruptcies across even remote towns.<sup>94</sup> In St. Petersburg province, many merchant communes in district towns contracted by a third, even a half, in a single year. Out of almost 300 merchants in Ladoga in 1806, and 220 in early 1812, only 168 remained in 1813, and 155 in 1814.<sup>95</sup> Of 123 Gdov merchants in 1806, only 77 remained in 1812: half of families left the guild.<sup>96</sup> And as we have seen above, many representatives of the former urban elite moved to the category of *meshchane* after 1812.

With regard to the city finances, special mention must be made of the State Council's decree of 15.07.1812. Aimed at mobilizing all sources available to fortify the budget, it cancelled any loans from town budgets, prohibited all construction work in towns – except for military infrastructure – and forbade the council from undertaking any expenditure apart from the strictly essential (such as maintaining the urban police, paying clerical staff, providing lighting). Moreover, all spare sums of money from the towns' budgets, including loans retrieved from merchants, taxes received by the council in relation to the state's wine monopoly, or rents from the leasing of town properties – all were to be diverted to the treasury.<sup>97</sup> The councils in the towns of St. Petersburg province under review reported in late 1812 that this measure had left their budgets almost empty.

The 'stagnation of merchant capital' in the period 1807–1824 has been observed across many regions of Russia: even in distant Siberia military demands, increased taxation, the disruption caused by the campaigns and the blockade occasioned a significant contraction of merchant communes, as the leading expert on the history of Siberian trade

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<sup>94</sup> Semenova, *Kupecheskii dnevniki i memuary*, pp. 35.

<sup>95</sup> Tax registers for 1811-1812, Novaia Ladoga. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 547. L. 13 – 18.

<sup>96</sup> Orders of the governor to the Gdov town hall; town hall to the Governor on the number of merchants, Oct. 1812. TSGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 341. L. 45-48v.

<sup>97</sup> The state council's decree on Measures to fortify the treasury, 15.07.1812 1812. TSGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 341. L. 56; PSZ-1. V. 32. №25186. P. 396.

V. P. Boiko observes.<sup>98</sup> Significant losses of merchant elites were observed in many places. This could correlate with the growing participation of *meshchane* in urban self-government, observed in some towns from the 1810s.<sup>99</sup> However, the situation was often more complicated, and further research is needed to fully understand the economic, social, and political changes inside the provincial communes in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: for instance, some merchant families might move to the *meshchane* category deliberately, continuing their trade or other businesses, perhaps on a smaller scale, but no more required to pay the merchant capital annual guild fee.

The depression of the 1810s-1820s, in merchant communes especially, seem to have lasted longer in the Northwest. Apart from war conscription, high taxes, and financial burdens, new tariffs, unfavourable to Russian producers, were introduced in the 1810s (partly to compensate the British for their help with repaying of 'the Dutch debt'),<sup>100</sup> while the agricultural depression, which began in Russia in this period – slightly later than in other countries of Europe – maintained the low prices for grain for several decades. In the towns reviewed, industry might be relatively developed, but even in Staraia Rusa and Novgorod, (the latter was a small provincial capital), it remained far inferior to the towns of the Central Economic region and confined mostly to traditional industries, such as brick factories, salt-production, leather-processing, potash-making, some shipbuilding, glass-making. In the district towns of St. Petersburg or Novgorod province there was less potential for recovery than in the areas around Moscow: the towns of the Central

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<sup>98</sup> V. P. Boiko, 'Otechestvennaia vojna 1812 goda i tomskoe kupechestvo', *Vestnik TGU Istorii*, № 4/20 (2012), pp. 17–20.

<sup>99</sup> E. Iu. Lebedenko, 'V raznykh gradskikh sluzheniiakh»: uchastie meshchan v sisteme gorodskogo samoupravleniia russkoi provintsii v kontse XVIII - pervoi polovine XIX v. (po materialam Permskoi gubernii), *Vestnik RUDN Istorii Rossii*, № 8 (2001), pp. 5-14.

<sup>100</sup> Semenova, *Kupecheskii dnevniki i memuary*, pp. 75.

Economic region, despite conscription, bankruptcies, and significant loss of trade and business, managed to recover fairly quickly. Merchant communes, always fluid and volatile here, also recuperated more easily – in Moscow, despite the calamities of 1812, the merchant commune had already replenished its ranks by mid-1813.<sup>101</sup> And Serpukhov, which had been evacuated and where merchants and *meshchane* families had also suffered large losses in 1812, likewise recovered very quickly, due to the rapid expansion of the cotton industry, which after the 1812 war took the place of substituted broadcloth production in many towns of the central region.<sup>102</sup>

## Conclusion

The material contributions of the urban commoners – the families and communes of provincial *meshchane* and merchants – is an important and informative topic. But the organization of raising financial and other contributions even in the largest Russian towns has remained hitherto largely neglected in the existing scholarship, both in Russian and European languages. This chapter has offered the first detailed reconstruction of how the collection of money and other supplies might be organized during regular recruit levies and extraordinary militia levies. The main focus has been on the collections of recruit money and donations during the militias of 1806-1807 and 1812-1813 in three major district towns of St. Petersburg province, as well as the impact of government policies during this war period on particular families and communes in these towns, and on the town councils' finances. The theme of regular and extraordinary war contributions is of continuing

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<sup>101</sup> Semenova, *Kupecheskii dnevniki i memuary*, pp. 35.

<sup>102</sup> *Vedomost' o manufakturakh v Rossii za 1812 god*, pp. 28–29, 92, 117; *Vedomost' o manufakturakh v Rossii za 1813 i 1814 gody*, pp. 97, 229, 269–270.

relevance, and deserves further study: for instance, there is evidence that merchant communes also provided considerable money donations during other outbreaks of war, such as the Russo-Swedish war of 1808-1809 – as has been demonstrated in the example of the merchant communes of Moscow<sup>103</sup> or Staraia Rusa.

The analysis of the amounts raised, and the grounds on which the communes organized such fundraising, allows to see the economic, social, and political background of the collections made for military needs in the 1780s-1810s, and to estimate to what extent the demands of the state, increasing during this period, affected the position of the various groups, and of provincial towns as a whole.

In addition to supplying men for service, the other important military duty of the commune of *meshchane* was to equip the men nominated as recruits during the regular or militia levies. The conscripts were to be clothed, provided with food, salaries, and rewards, and delivered to the provincial capital at the expense of the communes – which in the case of extraordinary military levies were also responsible for buying weapons and other equipment.

Both the *meshchane* and merchants were still bound by the rules of the commune: on most occasions, equal shares would be raised from each adult male in a family, with the commune elites deciding how much was to be raised from members of both *meshchane* and merchant communes.

The amount of recruit money required from each adult male grew from the late 1780s, then again from the late 1790s, but especially from the mid-1800s. In Alexander I's reign, during the demanding wars with France, the recruit money that *meshchane* families

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<sup>103</sup> A. V. Semenova, 'Moskovskoe kupechestvo v Otechestvennoi voine 1812 g.', *Voprosy istorii*, № 12 (2012), pp. 151-155.

paid equalled their poll tax, which also increased. The raising of funds during the militia levies was even more taxing: the shares paid by families of the *meshchane* commune for equipment of militiamen in 1806-1807 and 1812-1814 far outstripped the poll-tax – their main state tax – as well as any other regular and extraordinary payments for military needs, even those during wartime. However, in understanding the financial situation, the specificity of the Russian financial system in these years must be taken in consideration – including the reduction in value of the paper rouble, and later even the existence of two rates of exchange (official and unofficial).

A lack of credit was an important problem for merchant and *meshchane* communes, especially during the difficult war years of 1805-1814. However, the towns always had some reserves of money: the local councils effectively financed the *meshchane* communes during the regular and militia levies, and also provided loans for individual borrowers – as in the case of richer merchants who actively resorted to the so-called quarter-percent loans in 1807-1812, which seem to have been an effective instrument for providing credit for the families of the local urban elite.

The viability, self-sufficiency, but also a certain independence of the urban communes was manifested during the extraordinary collections. It is significant that, in the case of both militias the local elites – and not the governors – determined the amounts of the towns' main material contributions: the money donations raised by the merchant communes. These elite families stood at the centre of all collections in the town, they supervised the fundraising, while often themselves making additional contributions. The position of the elites is an important one here: richer families of merchants, and sometimes of the local *meshchane*, controlled the money-raising, and largely dictated its operation. But they also represented the town before the provincial authorities, and would often

effectively protect the interests of their community. On occasion, if rarely, the communes of merchants might even reject the governor's demands, if the councils and merchants of the town considered them 'excessive', and damaging to the city finances – such as the Novaia Ladoga council did during the raising of militia in 1812. The view long prevalent in the existing scholarship, stressing the impotence of councils in the face of the crown authorities, needs closer investigation and further correction.

The long period of war had a profound and complex impact on the urban communes, on the businesses and fortunes of merchants and *meshchane*, and on local councils and town finances. But despite increasing pressure in the demand for recruit money and other tax payments, it seems that the *meshchane* communes in the Northwest not only maintained their numbers, but largely managed to remain financially stable – which shows the effectiveness of the urban system, social and political, which emerged during and after the urban reforms of Catherine II. The stability of certain communes at least was no doubt strengthened by the fact that from the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and even more in the 1800s–1810s, many merchants moved to the *meshchane* category – especially after the disastrous year of 1812.

The merchant communes indeed contracted in many towns of the St. Petersburg and Novgorod provinces: in smaller district capitals the contraction was more marked, and the recovery often took far longer than in the larger centres. Many families felt the pressure of increased taxation especially after 1807, and by 1810-1812 tax arrears and private debts were commonplace even among the most respected families. But it was the 1812 war which occasioned the most serious disruption to the merchant communes: many men, even from the urban elites, richer merchant families who were often registered in these towns from the 1780s, and who had contributed actively during the first militia levy of

1806-1807 – were forced into bankruptcy and moved to the lower category of *meshchane* in 1812 or immediately after. Though the Northwest was not directly affected by the campaigns, the disruption to trade and industry, and the collapse of many personal credit networks which worked on the basis of promissory notes, significantly challenged even the communes of merchants in remoter district capitals. But the question of social categorization remains a complicated one: the distinction between merchants and *meshchane*, especially in provincial towns, is a very complex question, and more research is required on the political and economic correlation between individual status and the real occupation, capabilities, and ambitions of the families of merchants and *meshchane* in the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It seems that the upper part of the *meschchane* commune was always very close to that of the merchants.

Picture. D. I. Antonelli, Portrait of a merchant (with the medal 'In memory of the 1812 War'), 1820  
(The State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg).



## Chapter 4.

### Volunteers and militiamen from the towns of St. Petersburg province and their service

The focus in Chapter 2 was on the actions and motivations of the *meshchane* commune when responsible for the nomination of recruits and militiamen during regular and extraordinary military levies in the late 18<sup>th</sup>–early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this chapter the focus will be on the soldiers themselves, and in particular on those who volunteered for military service: council files offer much more documentation about those men who, at least formally, came forward to serve. The aim of this chapter, based on research into cases of men from *meshchane* and merchant households who volunteered, is to examine (1) what were the motives of these men; (2) what happened to them during their service; and (3) what were their prospects after demobilization in respect of retirement rights, other privileges, employment prospects, and the fate of invalids.

Volunteering could take place under various circumstances. Men from the *meshchane*, and less often from merchant families, could volunteer (they were known as *okhotniki*) when the regular levy was announced, in the autumn–winter months, but some might, for various reasons, come forward at other times of the year. Volunteering could also take place during extraordinary call-ups, when a massive summoning of volunteers was announced for temporary military service; this happened at least three times during the period under review: after the outbreak of the Russo-Swedish war of 1788, which endangered the Northwest, and on the two occasions when national militias were raised during Alexander I's wars with France, in 1806 and 1812.

Military service in the Russian Empire was always seen as a burdensome duty, hence the regular recruit levies that resulted. Volunteering at this period is a complicated

problem, which – apart from the involvement of the Russian commonalty in the war of 1812 – has never been properly studied.<sup>1</sup> The phenomenon of volunteering in towns needs to be explored from several perspectives. In this chapter, both statistical documents and personal cases will be examined, largely concerning men from the towns of St. Petersburg province, who volunteered to serve from the end of the 1780s to the 1820s. The goals of the chapter are, first, to analyse the motives for entering regular and temporary military service from the perspective of the men and their families. Among these might be truly patriotic motives, as well as the prospect of various benefits for the men and their households promised by the authorities and the commune. Poverty often played a significant role in such decisions: awards and debt relief could be promised by the commune, whilst 'substituting' for another family during the levy could bring a significant reward for a man and his household. Finally, the desire to escape the commune of the provincial town – especially for the *meshchane* and merchants from among the poor – should not be overlooked: for commoners military service was one of the most important, and certainly most available, means of social and geographical mobility. Service could also open prospects of further military or civil advancement, or at least bring men to the bigger towns or ports, including the capital – St. Petersburg.

Thus, secondly, this chapter will attempt, for the first time, to examine the lifepaths of ordinary men from the towns who entered the army or militia service. Among the topics that will be explored are the geography of service of volunteers; their involvement in campaigns, awards, wounds, cases of transfer to other military units and offices, and the specifics of the demobilization process. It remains to be noted that the life of a Russian

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<sup>1</sup> A. Dzhivelegov, S. Mel'gunov, V. Pichet (eds), *Otechestvennaia voina i russkoe obshchestvo: 1812–1912*, Vol. 5. pp. 43-73, 114-120; Babkin, *Narodnoe Opolchenie*, pp. 32-41.

soldier during and after service is a complicated topic, which has not yet been adequately researched:<sup>2</sup> it is difficult to trace what happened to men conscripted into the army or navy in this period. This is not only because official statistics in the 18<sup>th</sup> – early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries were largely undeveloped, but also because not all men survived a 25-year term of service – and those who did rarely wrote any recollections.

Finally, the chapter will explore the subsequent fate of those men who joined the regular army and militia. Many important problems will be examined for the first time. First of all, the return of men to their hometowns will be studied, and what happened to them after their return, including the privileges and awards their service could bring to them and their families. The fate of invalids, another important topic, will also be examined. Lastly, attention will be paid to instances of promotion and of the further careers of former *meshchane* and merchants, in the military or civil service.

As mentioned above, the fate of Russian conscripts in the epoch of recruit levies, and the topic of volunteers in particular, are inadequately researched in the existing scholarship, both in Russia and in the West. The role of Russian society, in particular of commoners – the peasants and townspeople – during the 1812 war remains the most widely known episode, with militiamen's service, partisan warfare, support measures for the army having all been examined. But evidence for volunteers from among the *meshchane*, merchants, and men of other ranks from towns (students, clerks, minor officials, teachers) has until recently received far less attention than that of nobles or peasants who came forward to serve.<sup>3</sup> The role of the 'educated classes', particularly during the period of Russia's wars with France, 1805-1814, has always been more closely

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<sup>2</sup> The few works that exist have become classics: Keep, *Soldiers of the Tsar*; Wirtshafter, *From Serf to Russian Soldier*.

<sup>3</sup> Hartley, *Patriotism in the Provinces in 1812*, pp. 149-153; Lapina, 'Zemskoe opolchenie', pp. 224-227.

studied than that of other classes, with the officer corps – volunteers from noble families – attracting more attention than other ranks. A good example is the service of Konstantin Batiushkov, a nobleman and poet, considered by some contemporaries to be second only to A. S. Pushkin as the greatest Russian poet of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1807 Batiushkov volunteered, contrary to his father's wishes, and became an officer of the first militia. With the battalions from St. Petersburg province he marched to East Prussia, where the militia engaged in fierce fighting during the last months of the War of the Fourth Coalition.<sup>4</sup>

However, very little is known about the motives, service, and ultimate fate of volunteers from among the urban commonalty – men from the less privileged social groups of *meshchane*, artisans, and merchants. Researchers, such as I. Lapina and J. Hartley,<sup>5</sup> have only recently turned their attention to those men of non-noble origin who joined the 1812 militia in towns and villages, highlighting the fact that commoners from the communes of St. Petersburg and provincial towns of the Northwest, as well as members of the local 'intelligentsia', were actively volunteering during 1812. Among those joining the militia of their own free will were students, seminarists, clerks, and minor officials – with instances of such men from St. Petersburg, Novgorod, Viatka, Nizhnii Novgorod in particular being studied. But most volunteers joining militias were men of common origin, from *meshchane* and merchant families, and their cases remain far less explored.<sup>6</sup>

Even less is known of volunteers from among the *meshchane*, artisans, or merchants who joined the regular army during the annual recruit levies. In the existing scholarship there are only a couple of short works on the phenomenon of volunteering when

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<sup>4</sup> K. N. Batiushkov, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh* (Moscow: Hudozhestvennaia Literatura, 1989), Vol. 2: letters and diaries, A. L. Zorin (ed.), pp. 66-73.

<sup>5</sup> Hartley, 'Patriotism in the Province', pp. 151.

<sup>6</sup> Lapina, 'Zemskoe opolchenie', pp. 257-259.

'substituting' for a man nominated by the commune from another family. Usually this would occur in exchange for a significant reward for the volunteer and his household, as one of the traditional practices of the peasant commune (*mir*) and the *meshchane*. But our understanding of the mechanisms, social background, and the hidden motives behind such practices remains very limited.

Very little research is available on periods other than that of the wars with Napoleonic France. Meanwhile, cases of extensive volunteering in earlier decades also took place, but have not so far been examined. One such example is the mobilization of the men of St. Petersburg province for the duration of the war with Sweden in 1788-90, where no research has been done on this theme up to now.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, attention is turning to these topics, which are customarily more closely studied in the historiography of Western European countries. One such example is the subsequent fate of retirees, along with the pension, care and support system available for invalid soldiers, recently examined by Hartley.<sup>8</sup>

To study these questions, the main sources can be divided into several groups. First are the files derived from council archives relating to annual recruit levies, from the late 1780s to the 1820s, and also on the militias of 1806–7 and 1812–15. Most of these files have already been introduced in a previous chapter. Such documents include decisions (verdicts) of the communes offering awards, lists of recruits, correspondence of the

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<sup>7</sup> M. A. Belan, 'Fenomen Vremennoi Voennoi Sluzhby: Dobrovoltsy gorodov Sankt-Peterburgskoi Gubernii vo vremia Russko-Schvedskoi Voiny 1788-1790 gg.', in Iu. A. Petrov, O. A. Plekh (eds), *Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen do XXI veka: problemy, diskussii, novye vzgliady: sbornik statei Mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi shkoly-konferentsii molodykh uchenykh* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Instituta Istorii RAN, 2021), pp. 80-85.

<sup>8</sup> J. L. H. Keep, 'Catherine's Veterans', *Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (1981), p. 385-396; J. M. Hartley, 'Veterans and empire: a comparison of British and Russian treatment of veterans in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 100 (2022), pp. 14-31.

councils regarding volunteers; they also include individual cases of men who volunteered for the commune and for other families. These documents allow us to trace the motives of these men, the circumstances of their joining up, their career in the military, and return to their town, with important details relating to awards, wounds, demobilization, and the prospects of those who became invalids.

Second, the materials of the 1812 Militia Committee of St. Petersburg Province were used (hereafter the Committee). Unfortunately, far fewer documents are available on the first militia. The office of the Committee kept lists of all militiamen who had entered the service across the province, and there are several lists of those men who joined from district capitals – that is, from all *meshchane* communes of the capital province. I. Lapina was the first researcher who turned her attention to this informative source, which remains inadequately researched.<sup>9</sup> These lists<sup>10</sup> offer comprehensive statistical information: names of militiamen, their age, and a short record of the man's service against each name – his involvement in campaigns and battles, the circumstances of wounds, awards, his stay in hospital, cases of captivity. The lists also show when men were released and sent back to their hometown, or the circumstances and place of death, desertion, transfer to other units ('left in hospital in ... ', 'left behind on the march near the village ... ', 'left to guard the carts in the town ...'). For a broader perspective and purposes of comparison, some files of the 1812 Committees of Novgorod and Moscow provinces have also been examined.

Further to these, recourse has been made to statistical records emanating from the central state offices: first of all, those from the statistical (*inspection*) department of the War Ministry, now kept at the Russian Military-Historical Archive. Among these materials

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<sup>9</sup> Lapina, 'Zemskoe oplchenie', p. 31.

<sup>10</sup> TSGiA SPb. F. 189. D. 96, 140.

are the files with statistics for various levies – in particular a detailed table, dated Summer 1815, so far overlooked, which includes figures for those men who joined the 1812 militia from towns in the St. Petersburg province, with precise figures for those who returned, were sent on missions, cured, pensioned, lost.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, diaries, correspondence, and reminiscences of the men involved – above all, from the merchant class – have been consulted to supplement the above.

#### **4.1. The volunteers from Sofia during the Russo-Swedish War of 1788– 1790**

This case study aims to introduce the major problems encountered by provincial towns at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when their men were voluntarily entering the army, during their service, and when they were being discharged.

In 1788–1790 the government in St. Petersburg faced an acute crisis over the supply of manpower for the protection of the Northwest. On 21 June 1788, during the troublesome war with the Ottoman Empire (1787–1791), the Swedish King Gustav III declared war on Russia. Many battalions from the north-western provinces, including those from the Guards regiments, were then in the southern theatre of operations. Now St. Petersburg province and the capital itself were under threat, being in close proximity to the new theatre of operations. The danger was real, and intense hostilities continued both on land and in the waters of the Baltic Sea: during the campaigns of 1788 and 1789, Russian forces suffered several misfortunes on land, especially in the early months of the war. In such circumstances, a lot of men were urgently needed to make up the ranks of the regiments stationed in the province, whilst reserve battalions were also to be created.

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<sup>11</sup> Table of militiamen conscripted from the towns of St. Petersburg province in 1812, with status in early 1815 (Additional *vedomost'*). RGVIA, F. 395. Op. 240. D. 17. L. 26.

J. Hartley estimates that by the end of the war in 1790 the Russian army had grown to about 300,000 men.<sup>12</sup>

In the summer of 1788 Catherine II and her entourage had to resort to exceptional measures: they appealed to the population of the capital province, inviting all men of free status – initially, those from peasant and *meshchane* families – to join the army and the navy voluntarily. Service was promised to last only for the duration of war 'for the protection against our new enemy, the king of Sweden'.<sup>13</sup> This episode has remained hitherto unresearched in the existing scholarship, both in Russian and in European languages. The present study of temporary military service during the Russian-Swedish War is based on previously unexplored archival materials. Documents on volunteers have been found in the archives of the councils of several towns of St. Petersburg province, with those from Sofia town council, dated 1788–1792, being examined in detail.<sup>14</sup>

The Empress signed the decree on 3 July 1788, and with this in hand the Commander-in-Chief of the Province, Yakov A. Bruce, prepared at once a short but detailed ordinance, which was sent out across the towns and villages of St. Petersburg province. In accordance with its instructions, the councils and *magistraty*, together with the Chiefs of Police in towns, and the district authorities in the districts, were ordered to announce to the townspeople and 'peasants of the Department of the Director of Economy' the proposed plan for 'voluntary military service' – the term of service promised to last only for the duration of war against Sweden. Men from 17 to 45 years old, of sound health, were invited

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<sup>12</sup> Hartley, *Russia, 1762–1825*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>13</sup> RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 18. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 18. The Edict of the Commander-in-Chief of St. Petersburg to Sofia town council (with the copy of Her Imperial Majesty's Edict to Ia. A. Brus of 3.07.1788), received on 17.08.1788. L. 2-4v.

<sup>14</sup> RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 18, 37, 94, 138, 3280, 3286.

to join.<sup>15</sup> These new volunteer recruits were to be accepted on the basis of standard procedures. The men were to be presented at the recruit office of the State Chamber in St. Petersburg; and the cost of equipping them, as in the case of regular levies, was made the responsibility of the *meshchane* commune: volunteers were to receive standard uniforms, basic equipment, and provisions for three months from their hometowns, and the commune was to organize the delivery of these men to the recruit office. The instructions of the Commander-in-Chief emphasized that any coercion or abuse in the communes was strictly prohibited. This was the first time the authorities had been required to mount this kind of mobilization, and not all details regarding it are clear from the materials available. Some issues remain obscure for the researcher: for instance, it is difficult to establish from council sources whether volunteers were excluded from the tax registers for their period of service, or whether the commune was supposed to continue paying taxes for them.

According to the Empress's decree, a copy of which was attached to the Commander-in-Chief's ordinance received by the councils, those who entered the service of their own free will were promised several important privileges, which were to serve as important incentives for the men and their families. First, Catherine confirmed that all volunteers were guaranteed release at the end of the war with Sweden. Second, the volunteer's family was to be made exempt from the 20 next recruit levy 'takes'. Under a 'single' recruit 'take', the decree meant that 1 recruit out of 500 males would be taken during the regular autumn levy.<sup>16</sup> So, if the next levy specified 1 recruit from 500 men – that would be equivalent to 1

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<sup>15</sup> The Edict of the Commander-in-Chief of St. Petersburg to Sofia town council, received on 17.08.1788. L. 2-4. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 18. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 18. L. 2-3.

<sup>16</sup> Her Imperial Majesty's Edict to the Commander-in-Chief Ia. A. Brus, 3.07.1788. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 18. L. 4-4v.

take; if the levy was for 4 from 500 – 4 ‘takes’; 5 from 500 – 5 takes. Voluntary service therefore 'against the King of Sweden' allowed the volunteer's family immunity from recruit levies for several years thereafter, if not a decade – provided the levies remained moderate. Thirdly, the families of volunteers who were killed or died during service were promised the state's 'care' (*vzyaty na popechenie*): the decree ordered the provincial authorities to pay pensions to the families of volunteers on the same grounds as in the case of widows of regular soldiers who died.<sup>17</sup>

Records from Sofia show that almost all men entered the service in organized groups: equipped, supplied, and delivered by the *meshchane* commune. However, several men registered to Sofia's *meshchane* families joined various army units of their own accord in other towns – for instance, enlisting in reserve battalions, which were being formed in other parts of the province. One man, for example, enlisted in Schlisselburg, as a result, probably, of working or living there: his later release from the army occasioned a long correspondence between the council in Sofia and the College of War.

The two main files on volunteers from Sofia<sup>18</sup> allow us to establish who were the men who were entering the service, where they served, and what happened to them after the peace treaty between Russia and Sweden was signed in August 1790. According to the calculations of the council in October 1790, 93 volunteers had entered service during the war. Taking into account those men who had volunteered in other towns, it can be assumed that about 100 men from Sofia entered the service: this makes almost one-sixth of the officially registered *meshchane* males, as there were 636 men in the commune in

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<sup>17</sup> Her Imperial Majesty's Edict to the Commander-in-Chief Ia. A. Brus, 3.07.1788. *Ibid.*, L. 4-5v.

<sup>18</sup> RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 3286. On the counting of 91 volunteers from Sofia, who entered the service during the war with Sweden, 1788-1794; RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 138. On the return of Sofia volunteers from the Preobrazhenskii regiment, 1790-1792.

1787. Such a response to the call for volunteers could be attributable to both patriotic sentiments and the significant privileges promised, such as the guaranteed exemption of the household from several subsequent levies. A more detailed study of the social origins of the men who entered the service will help us to clarify the motives and incentives of these men.

The table given below was drawn up by the Sofia council for the purpose of correspondence with the College of War regarding the men's return. The table demonstrates that out of 91 volunteers, 19 – through the intermediary of the Chief of Police – entered the elite Preobrazhenskii Life-Guards Regiment as privates; 52 men were hired 'to the galley fleet on a paid basis', perhaps becoming sailors or labourers (*masterovye*).<sup>19</sup> There was also a third group: 20 men who turned out not to be volunteers. These were *meshchane* from Sofia, who were detained and delivered to the Commandant of Kronstadt, for living without passports in the area of the metropolis.<sup>20</sup> They were sent to the Kronstadt garrison battalion, a unit known for its strict discipline, to which those criminals sentenced to army service would often be sent to serve out their punishment. It seems that, unlike the other men who volunteered, these 20 were not released at the end of the war, but were left in the army. But it is noteworthy that the council of Sofia, at the end of 1790, asked the College of War to release and return these men as well: the matter was eventually settled, with the council receiving 20 receipts of acceptance for them similar to those for recruits supplied in advance of the regular levies.

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<sup>19</sup> Sofia council on men who volunteered during the war, 05.02.1791. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 3286. L. 1-1v.

<sup>20</sup> Sofia council on the men who had been apprehended in Kronstadt and sent to the army during the war, 13.06.1793. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 3286. L. 11-14.

Table 1: Men from Sofia entering the service in 1788–1790 (not during the annual recruit levies)

| <b>Townpeople of Sofia</b>   | <b>Sent</b> | <b>By Autumn 1790</b>   |
|--|-------------|---|
| 1. Sent by <i>gorodnichii</i> Tokarev to the Preobrazhenskii Life-Guards regiment to serve as soldiers | <b>21</b>   | 1 died; 1 chose to stay in the Guards regiment; 17 released and returned to Sofia: of them, 1 chose to re-enlist in the army of his own free will after one month (son of a merchant, he joined the Kozlovskii infantry regiment) |
| 2. Hired to galley fleet for pay   | <b>52</b>   | Released; figures for returned/died not available   |
| 3. Taken in Kronstadt without passport; sent by Commandant to serve in Kronstadt garrison battalion    | <b>20</b>   | 4 died; 16 were left in the army after 1790: of them 1 later taken to the military service office ( <i>kantseliaria</i> ).  |
| <b>Total:</b>  | <b>93</b>   |   |

The fate of the 52 men hired to the galley fleet is not explained in the documents from Sofia, but the town council corresponded about their return.

It is possible to trace the origins of several men who entered the Preobrazhenskii Life-Guards Regiment, and also the background of almost all those who were detained in Kronstadt. In October 1790 the council of Sofia received the following account from the Preobrazhenskii regimental office (*polkovaia kantseliaria*): out of 21 volunteers three fled, one died during service, and 16 were released. These men had returned to Sofia by October, having been provided with official passes from the regiment and some means for travelling to their hometown. Lastly, one man chose not to return, but to remain in the regiment for 'indefinite service' (only in 1793 was the term set at 25 years): this was Nikolai Astaf'iev, assigned to the *meshchane* commune of Sofia in 1782 'from among the returnees from Poland' (*iz poskikh vukhodtsev*). This suggests that Astaf'iev may have been a former runaway peasant or deserter, who returned from abroad during one of the amnesties.<sup>21</sup> Such men were accepted in small provincial towns, but, as shown in Chapter 2, they were usually doomed to join the lowest stratum of the commune, working as day labourers,

<sup>21</sup> The office of the regiment to Sofia council, 01.10.1790. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. D. 138. L. 1-10v.

coachmen: and very often communes were only too ready to get rid of such men from among the poor by nominating recent newcomers as recruits.

The social composition of the men taken in Kronstadt is of great interest too: the sources confirm that many of them, like Astaf'iev, represented the poorest strata of the commune. Of these 20 men, almost all were from among those who had only recently been enrolled in the commune: 18 men from the Sofia *meshchane* in 1784 were described as 'labourers', suggesting that these men were former *meshchane* from St. Petersburg, punished for minor crimes and sent out to the smaller provincial towns. For such men also, it was very difficult to become integrated into the new *meshchane* commune.<sup>22</sup>

However, along with the men from the *meshchane*, most of whom were – as shown above – from among the poor, or were newcomers, or labourers, several merchants signed up for military service: in the archives of Sofia town council are several petitions from persons of merchant rank. Voluntary entry into the service of merchants and merchants' sons – who were excused conscription in 1775 – their motives, and subsequent careers are of particular interest for the researcher. In some cases, enrolment might well have been due to poverty. In October 1790, the council of Sofia received a couple of petitions from men returning from service, with the request to exclude them from the commune, and expressing the wish to return, full time, to military service. One of these petitions was in the name of a merchant of the third guild, Nikifor Ovchinnikov. Ovchinnikov was among those volunteers who served in the Preobrazhenskii regiment: according to the documents, Ovchinnikov 'performed his service flawlessly as a soldier and was duly released ... but now, upon his return, he does not have proper means to feed himself and pay taxes, and

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<sup>22</sup> On the men who were taken for service in Kronstadt, 13.06.1793. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 3286. L. 11-12v.

therefore, out of zeal, wishes to continue military service for life'. The town council promptly agreed, and soon Ovchinnikov was duly excluded from the merchant commune and merchant rank,<sup>23</sup> excused taxes for the year 1790, and provided with a passport to return to the army.<sup>24</sup> Obviously, poverty, the lack of work, tax arrears and debt – together with the privileges and other attractions of military service – were the main incentives for many men from towns to join the army.

Some men might join up, however, out of feelings of patriotism, especially during a war. In March 1789, in the middle of hostilities, two brothers, merchant's sons Grigorii and Stepan Lomakin, presented themselves at the town council of Sofia and submitted petitions to be excluded from merchant rank at the earliest possible opportunity, in order to enter military service for 'the defence of the Fatherland'.<sup>25</sup> It is noteworthy that the brothers were not from local merchant families: they were the sons of a rich First Guild merchant from Perm, who probably had a good income as he 'had businesses in the copper factories of Perm's State Chamber'. The brothers attached to their petitions a letter from their father encouraging them to join the ranks of the military and to defend their homeland.<sup>26</sup> But prior to issuing the Lomakin brothers a formal release from merchant rank which would allow them to join the army, the council of Sofia had to run long checks to make sure that there were no unpaid debts outstanding with the Lomakins. The check took

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<sup>23</sup> A man leaving his current commune or (and) changing his estate was to be excluded. Checks were performed by the local government to establish that he did not have arrears of taxes and private debts, and also that his family was not next in 'a recruit line'. The exclusion was then approved by the State Chamber. Ryndziunskii, *Gorodskoe Grazhdanstvo*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>24</sup> The council of Sofia on the petition of N. Ovchinnikov, 15.10.1790. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 138. L. 22-23.

<sup>25</sup> The petition of the merchant brothers Grigorii and Stepan, sons of the merchant Kirila Lomakin, to the Sofia council, to exclude them from merchant rank and allow them to join the army, March 1789 – June 1790. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 37. L. 1-5v.

<sup>26</sup> The council of Sofia to on the Lomakins, 26.04.1789. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 37. L. 5.

months – perhaps because the family of the Lomakins was not registered in Sofia – and the brothers several times had to request the council to expedite matters.

In the event, on 5 May 1789, the elder brother Grigorii, having a 'zealous desire' (*imeia revnostnoe staranie*) to serve, left Sofia without permission from the council and joined the Nevsky Infantry Regiment. Over the next year, the town council repeatedly complained to the St. Petersburg authorities that Grigorii had joined up without obtaining a proper exclusion from the merchant estate.<sup>27</sup> In August 1789, his younger brother Stepan also joined the army, having received only a preliminary decision confirming exclusion from merchant rank that had not as yet been ratified by the State Chamber of St. Petersburg.<sup>28</sup> In June of the following year, 1790, Stepan arrived in Sofia to provide the council with information about the place of service of the brothers, so that the council could finish the paperwork related to their exclusion. Stepan presented his document – as a sergeant of the Kozlovskii infantry regiment. The Colonel of his regiment authorized Stepan to travel freely to St. Petersburg and back 'for official needs of his regiment'.<sup>29</sup> This indicates a fairly large freedom of action for Stepan in his new status.

Several other merchants' petitions were discovered in the council archives of other towns of St. Petersburg province. These documents confirm that volunteers of merchant rank were regularly entering military service not only during wartime, but also in various years during the 1790s–early 1810s. Those volunteers who were merchants or merchants' sons invariably entered infantry regiments, with almost all being promoted within a short time to the rank of sergeant. In some cases it seems that poverty or lack of prospects played

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<sup>27</sup> Stepan Lomakin to the council of Sofia, 23.08.1789. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 37. L. 8.

<sup>28</sup> St. Petersburg governor's office to Sofia council on the Lomakins, April 1790. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 37. L. 11.

<sup>29</sup> Council of Sofia on Semen Lomakin's visit, with the copy of his passport, 10.06.1790, *Ibid.*, L. 13-14.

a role in such decisions, as in the case of the above-mentioned Nikifor Ovchinnikov. Patriotism, especially in times of war, also contributed. But importantly, military service could open up new horizons – especially for the literate and those of merchant rank – in particular for those from families with connections, who were able fairly rapidly to make a career for themselves within their regiments.

#### **4.2. Motives for entering the service**

An examination of the Sofia records for 1788–90 has shown that even the short term of service of men during a single war can be explored from multiple perspectives. Men from commoners' families would join the military estate for various reasons, whether for a full term of 25 years, or for temporary – wartime or militia – service. This section will examine the motives of men who joined the service in the 1790s–1810s in various circumstances. The position of these men and their families, and the background to their decisions, will be explored.

The role of patriotism was uppermost when extraordinary call-ups were announced, as during 1788–90, and when militias were summoned in 1806–7 and 1812. The militia levies required more men from towns than the war of 1788–90, and the authorities made the supply of men a duty of the *meshchane* commune – which resulted in commune meetings duly nominating militiamen or families responsible for providing men, as in the case of regular levies (see Ch. 2). But already in December 1807, shortly after the decree summoning the first militia was received in the towns of St. Petersburg province, some men had begun to present themselves at council premises 'proclaiming their desire to go and protect the Fatherland'. The small town of Pavlovsk was ordered by the governor to supply four men, and by the end of December the townhall was reporting that the four

men were ready to leave, all of them having volunteered to go for their commune. These volunteers were provided by the townhall with muskets and sabres.<sup>30</sup> However, in another document it was mentioned that these men had come forward after 'being strongly persuaded by the commune': most likely the four volunteers were from among families of the poor, or former newcomers or labourers, just like most 'volunteers' who had entered the army in the 1788–90 war. This was true also of the men in the towns of St. Petersburg province who volunteered for the second militia in 1812, where reasons for enlistment other than patriotism are evident from the record. Based on the documents reviewed, it appears that most volunteers who joined the militias were impelled by the same factors as before: above all, family poverty and lack of prospects in the town, and the hope that military service could offer new openings – motives very similar to those of the peasantry. Russian towns, as demonstrated in previous chapters, were still governed by communal rules, and though urban life offered more options than the villages, they were also a difficult and competitive place to live.

#### **4.2.1. Rewards**

Documents from the council archives also show that during regular recruit levies there were also volunteers, mostly from *meshchane* families, many of them often opting for full-time military service over 25 years – a burdensome and dangerous undertaking given how often Russia conducted wars during this period, and how intense many of these conflicts were. The cases of such men, who came forward for regular army service in the

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<sup>30</sup> Reports of the Pavlovsk townhall to the Governor, 22-24.12.1806. RGIA. F. 494. Op. 1. D. 74. On militia in Pavlovks, 1806-1807. L. 22-23.

autumn or at various points of the year can be found in almost all files relating to the levies of the 1780s–1820s. Let us examine the particular motives of such men.

Chapter 2 demonstrated that during regular levies the *meshchane* commune – its officials and rich families – would use every opportunity to dispatch the poorest and least needed members of the community to serve: men from among the poor or new households, bankrupts, single men, or 'dissolutes' (such as drunkards). However, besides the clothing, three months' salary, provisions and delivery expenses which the *meshchane* commune provided, it was normal practice of the commune to give awards (*nagrazhdenie*) to all men sent as recruits or militiamen. The awards were given both to those men who were nominated by the meetings, even if chosen for their dissolute behaviour, and to volunteers, though the latter would receive more money. Awards were significant: in fact, a large proportion of the money raised by the commune on the occasion of the levy could be spent on the awards.

In verdicts listing the names of nominees and volunteers, it was always stated how much money each man was supposed to receive. The size of awards could fluctuate, but they were of comparable size across the towns of St. Petersburg province, and they grew from the 1780s to 1820s as the value of the paper rouble declined and conscription called for more men. In Novaia Ladoga, a typical North-western commune, in the late 1780s the men who were nominated would receive 25 roubles: almost all of them were chosen from among those members of the commune known for their arrears. During the war with Sweden of 1788–90 such nominees received 50 roubles.<sup>31</sup> In the 1790s, 50 roubles became the standard award for most 'ordinary' nominees. But volunteers always received more:

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<sup>31</sup> Verdicts of the Novaia Ladoga *meshchane* commune, 1789. TSGiA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 28. L. 9, 12, 13, 15, 25, 29-30, 36.

from 40–60 in the late 1780s to 80–100 roubles in the 1790s.<sup>32</sup> By the mid-1800s the amounts were increasing: ordinary nominees in Novaia Ladoga received 100 roubles,<sup>33</sup> while volunteers could earn 200.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, the most problematic men – those who were nominated for dissolute behaviour, who often went into hiding and might be nominated several times – would receive least of all: on average 50 roubles in 1805–1812.<sup>35</sup> In Sofia, which was poorer than Novaia Ladoga, the amounts were slightly lower.<sup>36</sup> In 1811–1813, when the levies peaked and the recruit manual which legalized many norms appeared, the awards could be even higher, especially for volunteers: the latter could receive more than 200, and some as much as 500 roubles.<sup>37</sup> Militiamen, who were supposed to be engaged for temporary service, also received awards, but of smaller size (they were also excused taxes for the period of their service). In 1812, 25 roubles was paid to each militiaman in Novaia Ladoga.<sup>38</sup> Volunteers for the militia could receive more: in Tsarskoe Selo<sup>39</sup> and Pavlovsk<sup>40</sup> awards for militiamen in 1812 fluctuated from 25 to 100 roubles. After the war, during the levies of 1815–18, as the situation began to stabilize and

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<sup>32</sup> Verdicts of the Novaia Ladoga *meshchane* commune, 1790. TSGiA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 49. On sending recruits from Novaia Ladoga in 1790. L. 9, 10, 11, 15, 20; Verdicts of the Novaia Ladoga *meshchane* commune, 1796. TSGiA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 98. On the recruit levy of 1796 in Novaia Ladoga. L. 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Verdicts of the Novaia Ladoga *meshchane* commune, 1805. TSGiA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 188. On the recruit levy of 1805 in Novaia Ladoga. L. 10-12, 14, 15, 22, 26, 30, 34. 16.

<sup>34</sup> Verdicts of the Novaia Ladoga *meshchane* commune, 1812. RGIA D. 488. Op. 1. D. 1058. On the levy of 1812 in Tsarskoe Selo, L. 3, 6.

<sup>35</sup> Verdicts of the Novaia Ladoga *meshchane* commune, 1810. TSGiA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 428. L. 67, 86, 94, 95, 111-112, 114-115, 118, 139, 142-144.

<sup>36</sup> Dissolutes here received 35 roubles in 1810, and during 1811-1812 were given even less – 10-15 roubles. Tsarskoe Selo townhall minutes, 18.05.1810. RGIA D. 488. Op. 1. D. 1004. On the levy of 1810 in Tsarskoe Selo. L. 16.; Headman Panteleev's report to the Tsarskoe Selo townhall, 27.06.1810 *meshchane* commune, 27.06.1811. RGIA D. 488. Op. 1. D. 1038. On the levy of 1811. L. 8v.

<sup>37</sup> Verdicts of the Novaia Ladoga *meshchane* commune, 1811. TSGiA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 463. On the recruit levy of 1811 in Novaia Ladoga. L. 9, 17, 22.

<sup>38</sup> Militia verdicts of the Novaia Ldoga commune, 1812. TSGiA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. L. 98, 107, 165.

<sup>39</sup> The account books of money raised and spent in Tsarskoe Selo for recruits and militiamen in 1812. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 3062. L. 22, 32.

<sup>40</sup> Verdicts of the Tsarskoe Selo *meshchane* commune, 1812. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1060. L. 201, 207.

recruitment in the commune became more regulated (see Ch. 2), awards still played their role: for instance, in Tsarskoe Selo in 1815–16 men received 25, 50, 130 and 225 roubles.<sup>41</sup>

With regard to awards and incentives for volunteering, some aspects need to be further explained: first, the reduction of debts, and second, substituting for another family.

#### **4.2.2. Reduction of debts**

From the late 18<sup>th</sup> century men who were conscripted as recruits were officially excused tax arrears and private debts, up to the amount of 100 roubles: the council was supposed to repay creditors from the money of the *meshchane* commune. The council would therefore deduct from each award arrears and debts of up to 100 roubles. Both volunteers and men nominated by the commune almost always received less money than the value of their award stated in the official verdict of the commune. This reinforces the view that both nominees and most volunteers were recruited from non-payers and the less fortunate members of the commune. The reduction of debts seems to have been an important incentive for many men to volunteer, with their service intended to alleviate the position of their family. Some men, however, could try to elude the commune and their creditors. Councils always had to run checks to establish the amount of arrears and private debts attaching to those who were nominated or who volunteered: the files record numerous cases, especially from the late 1800s, when creditors attempted to retrieve their money from the council and the commune by claiming that the debtor had left for army or militia service. The result was that the number of men and families in difficult financial

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<sup>41</sup> Verdicts of the Tsarskoe Selo *meshchane* commune, 1815. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1084. L. 48-49v, 56, 59, 61.

situations grew during the war period in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and social stratification of the townspeople of the Northwest inevitably increased.

As already remarked, the award would normally be paid by the council from the funds of the commune. But already in the 1790s sources reflect cases of men or families nominated to supply a recruit (or militiaman), who chose to offer money – in addition to the award from the commune – for a volunteer to take the place of the nominee. In 1796 a certain *meshchanin*, Ivan Fedorov from Novaia Ladoga, who was nominated as a recruit, made an agreement with the council and commune that another *meshchanin*, Emel'an Prokof'ev, would go in his place: Prokof'ev was a known bankrupt, so the commune agreed to repay 200 roubles of his debts, whilst Fedorov undertook to repay a further 200 roubles of Prokof'ev's remaining debts and arrears.<sup>42</sup>

#### 4.2.3. Substitution

In the 1800s substitution became a normal practice. It could be done in various ways – more or less legal. As the levies increased, it even became permissible to pay money direct to the council. One *meshchanin*, Ivan Ivanov, who was nominated for recruitment in 1810 for stealing fish at the market of Novaia Ladoga, paid 200 roubles in cash and undertook to pay 300 more to the council to excuse him from the duty (the 200 roubles in cash was provided by his guarantor, a merchant's son).<sup>43</sup> The practice of substitution became more frequent as the new manual of 1811 standardized the procedure for commuting the duty: officially now, a family could pay the standard amount – 500 roubles

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<sup>42</sup> The council on the case of Prokof'ev and Fedorov, 12.10.1796. TSGiA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 98. L. 11-12.

<sup>43</sup> Regarding the release of Ivan Ivanov, the *meshchanin* of Novaia Ladoga nominated as a recruit for stealing fish, who offers an indemnity of 500 roubles to be excused from the duty, 13.12 and 20.12.1810. TSGiA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 428. L. 66, 70.

– to another man for volunteering. Alternatively, it was possible to pay a sum directly to the commune – then set at 2000 roubles – for the 'volunteer' to be found by the commune.<sup>44</sup> Files on recruit levies in 1811–12 show that many families, nominated to supply recruits, were already choosing to pay the required amounts.

This official monetization of the duty helped to legalize many existing practices and reduce conflict. Volunteering and substituting – for an award from the commune or from another family – was a serious business, and there could be various violations and attempts at procrastination. A good example is a complicated case that took place in Novaia Ladoga in 1810: one *meshchanin*, Vasilii Artem'iev, was arraigned by the council, which claimed that in 1809 he had volunteered to go as a recruit for the commune in return for an award. But Artem'iev had fled from his guards, 'having taken almost 200 roubles of the commune's money' – the award and the money given to his guards. Artem'iev and his father claimed that the son was insane when he had volunteered and should be released from his oath. But in fact, Vasilii Artem'iev was known for his bad behaviour: he had debts, and was twice held in custody – for a scuffle with peasants and for beating a girl from a *meshchane* family. The council had to start a long investigation to establish if Vasilii was really insane when he had volunteered to serve for the commune: the investigation necessitated questioning 10 of his neighbours and took several months.<sup>45</sup>

To conclude, the men who entered service in the 1780s–1820s could volunteer to become a recruit (or militiaman) either for the commune or in substitution for another family. By the 1810s, as the levies grew, the regularization of volunteering for the

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<sup>44</sup> Verdicts and cases of men considered by the council, 1811. TSGiA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 463. L. 9, 17-17v, 22.

<sup>45</sup> The case of Artem'iev, 1810-1811. TSGiA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 428. L. 111, 119-121, 127-131v, 136, 154-156v.

commune and the process of substitution helped to reduce the number of abuses and protracted disputes. Still, new norms did not affect the positions of richer families. Those who volunteered were largely drawn from among the poor and less prosperous families, much as in the case of nominees.<sup>46</sup> It can be argued that most men were attracted to military service by the awards offered by the commune or the family they went for, by the exemption from tax arrears and debts, or because of the lack of prospects in the town: the communes never welcomed poor and problematic members.

#### **4.3. In service and after: the case of the militiamen in 1812–1815 and their prospects**

Very few documents are available on recruits from the towns for this period. But a collection of documents relating to the second militia – council records on returning militiamen and documents of the Militia Committee – allows us to trace the service and subsequent fate of men from the towns of St. Petersburg province. The councils registered all the men who returned during 1814–early 1815 and listed their service – a short service record was normally provided by their last commander. Council files on militias and levies in 1815–1818 also throw light on what happened to many former militiamen after the war. The Militia Committee lists show when men were accepted for service, to which battalion they were assigned, whether they took part in combat, received awards, or were subject to hospital treatment.

Let us first examine the records. I. Lapina has produced a table based on the Committee lists, with calculations for all militiamen from the towns of St. Petersburg province: the table shows how many men from each town were mobilized in 1812, and

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<sup>46</sup> The Senate's Decree on merchants volunteering to go as recruits 1812. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1060. L. 6-6v.

their average age (see Ch. 2).<sup>47</sup> The statistics of the War Ministry offer a more detailed picture, and include information on the status of men up to Spring 1815: formally, the militia was disbanded in early 1814<sup>48</sup> and most men had returned to their towns by the end of 1814, but some men were released later. As we can see, not all those who did not return had perished: the materials of the Inspection Office indicate that a lot of men, who, for instance, had been wounded, were in 1815 still assigned to hospitals, while others were on various missions.

Table 2. Men from the towns of St. Petersburg Province, by Spring 1815 (table from the files of the War Ministry's Inspection Office).<sup>49</sup>

|   | Entered service, 1812 | Sent home, 1814-15 | killed | died | missing | wounded | remain in hospitals | away on mission | left behind on march | on vacation | whereabouts not known because of lack of information | number of medals given |
|---|-----------------------|--------------------|--------|------|---------|---------|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------|--|------------------------|
| <b><i>Meshchane</i></b>   |                       |                    |        |      |         |         |                     |                 |                      |             |  |                        |
| St. Petersburg  | <b>385</b>            | <b>243</b>         | 7      | 10   | 12      | 14      | 46                  | 12              | 11                   | 1           | <b>29</b>  | <b>136</b>             |
| Schlisselburg   | <b>45</b>             | <b>26</b>          | 1      | 1    | -       | 2       | 6                   | 4               | 2                    | -           | <b>3</b>   | <b>20</b>              |
| Tsarskoe Selo, Gatchina, Pavlovsk                               | <b>83</b>             | <b>49</b>          | 3      | 5    | 2       | -       | 9                   | 5               | 1                    | -           | <b>9</b>   | <b>18</b>              |
| Luga  | <b>18</b>             | <b>7</b>           | 1      | 1    | 1       | -       | 2                   | -               | -                    | -           | <b>6</b>   | <b>2</b>               |
| Gdov  | <b>20</b>             | <b>14</b>          | -      | 1    | 2       | -       | 1                   | 2               | -                    | -           |  | <b>3</b>               |
| <b>Craftsmen</b>  |                       |                    |        |      |         |         |                     |                 |                      |             |  |                        |
| Russian commune, St. Petersburg                                 | <b>133</b>            | <b>89</b>          | 2      | 5    | 2       | 4       | 8                   | 2               | 5                    | -           | <b>16</b>  | <b>52</b>              |
| Foreign commune, St. Petersburg                                 | <b>70</b>             | <b>26</b>          | 2      | 1    | 2       | 5       | 4                   | 3               | 4                    | 1           | <b>22</b>  | <b>12</b>              |
| Narva:<br><i>Meshchane</i> volunteers<br>( <i>po userdiiu</i> ) | <b>17</b>             | <b>11</b>          | -      | -    | -       | -       | -                   | -               | 1                    | -           | <b>5</b>   | <b>7</b>               |

<sup>47</sup> Lapina, 'Zemskoe Opolchenie', p. 258.

<sup>48</sup> PSZ-1. V. 32. №22523, 22524.

<sup>49</sup> Table of militiamen conscripted from the towns of St. Petersburg province in 1812, with status in early 1815. RGVA, D. 395, Op. 240, D. 17, L. 26.

#### 4.3.1. Demobilization

The council files provide more detailed information about the circumstances of the return of militiamen. Provincial militias were officially disbanded by the Emperor's decree of 22.01.1814.<sup>50</sup> The men from the towns of St. Petersburg province were spread across vast distances, from Pskov to Danzig, where militia from the Northwest had taken part in the siege. Most men were allocated to various battalions of militia, but some also to the regular army's garrison squads (*kommandy*) – auxiliary rear units. Most men returned to their hometowns during 1814. The men were received by the town council: returning militiamen had to sign a petition to be registered back to their communes, and to pay taxes again.

This process of return, it is worth noting, was highly organized. It was usual for groups of 3–7 men to present themselves before the council, but sometimes no more than 1 or 2 men might arrive, especially if they had been released earlier or later than others. The last to arrive – at the end of 1814 or in early 1815 – were several militiamen who were documented as being 'Cossacks of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Volunteer Cossack Regiment of the St. Petersburg Militia' – two of these regiments of light cavalry were created within the militia in 1812 (perhaps taking advantage of men who knew how to ride).<sup>51</sup> These small groups of men were normally delivered to their hometowns by various authorities: some arrived under the command of a militia or army officer, or a sergeant, who handed their documents to the council. Some came back with the help of the office of the Governor of

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<sup>50</sup> PSZ-1. V. 32. №22523, 22524, pp. 734-735.

<sup>51</sup> Only five out of 45 men mobilized for the militia in Novaia Ladoga were sent to the 2<sup>nd</sup> regiment of Colonel Berdnikov; in Tsarskoe Selo, Gatchina, and Pavlovsk, 12 men were allocated to Berdnikov's 2<sup>nd</sup> regiment, and 3 to the 1<sup>st</sup> regiment of Colonel Yakhontov. Colonel Berdnikov sending 5 men to Novaia Ladoga council, 31.12.1814. TSGia SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. L. 190; Certificates to Tsarskoe Selo townhall on the men who entered various militia units, 1815. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1060. L. 229-233v.

St. Petersburg; others arrived with the provincial police, or even with couriers carrying the post. Since travel across long distances was expensive, the Emperor ordered both army and militia commanders and the civil authorities to provide help for the men's return; the men were also to receive basic warm clothing, shoes, and a small amount of money when leaving their units (they were, in turn, ordered to hand over arms and their uniform). There were also instances of certain men, on release, attempting to escape on their way home – this was particularly the case of militiamen from among poor *meshchane*, labourers and marginals. Reports on such escapes on their journeys home related to several men were recorded by officers and are present in the council files. Several men are also noted in the lists as deserting during service.<sup>52</sup> Names of some of these men are known, showing them usually to have been marginals or former criminals nominated for recruitment by the commune; some of them were later captured and returned to their towns. The figure of 40 per cent given for militiamen who did not return in 1814,<sup>53</sup> should therefore be treated with caution, since it doesn't include deserters, men who remained in hospital, those who were left behind.

The service of Naum Shakhmatinskii, who was one of the leading figures of the *meshchane* commune in Novaia Ladoga, may serve as a good example. Shakhmatinskii volunteered for the militia in July 1812 at the age of 45: he was the leader of the first and the largest group of men who left for St. Petersburg only a month after the militia ordinance was received. Naum returned to Novaia Ladoga among the first returnees, in March 1814, together with a second militiaman, having been sent from the office of Governor Bakunin. Their military superiors provided both men with short service records

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<sup>52</sup> Sergeant of the 1<sup>st</sup> Volunteer Regiment Alexander Rauner reporting to the council at Tsarskoe Selo townhall regarding men returning and those who had deserted, Jul. 1815. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1060. L. 220-221.

<sup>53</sup> Lapina, 'Zemskoe Opolchenie', p. 258.

(*formul'arnii spisok*), a simplified version of the records of soldiers and officers of the regular army. Such documents allow us to explore far more about the men's term of service, but, unfortunately, councils did not preserve the service records of all men who returned. Shakhmatinskii was literate; he never was 'fined' during his service in the militia; he fought at the second battle of Polotsk (6–8 October 1812), where he was 'wounded with a bullet to his leg', 'after which he was no longer fit for service'.<sup>54</sup> Having spent some time in the hospital in Pskov, Shakhmatinskii was assigned on recovery to a local squad of Pskov commandant Major Eldern: Pskov was in the Russian hinterland, far from the field of battle, and the units there were reserves manned with men in poor health, new recruits, those recovering from injury, and other invalids. Shakhmatinskii continued his service in Pskov until November 1813, when he was returned to service in the standing army (*prichislen v komandu*); but when, after a couple of months, the Emperor decreed the release of all militiamen, Naum was sent back home – awarded the silver medal (see below) for his service and the injury he had sustained. Shakhmatinskii and his companion arrived safely in Novaia Ladoga, signed petitions asking the council to 'return them to their previous state' (*vernut' v prezhnee sstoianie*), and were reestablished in the registers of the *meshchane*. For several more years Shakhmatinskii continued to play an important role in the commune and business life of Novaia Ladoga.

#### 4.3.2. Militia privileges

The main legislative ordinance governing the status of men returning from militia service appeared in 1815: on 12 June 1815, Alexander I signed the decree № 6120, a copy

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<sup>54</sup> The service record of Naum Shakhmatinskii, presented by him upon arrival to the Novaia Ladoga town council, 23.03.1814. TSGiA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. L. 170-175v.

of which was soon afterwards delivered to all town councils and town halls.<sup>55</sup> The Emperor's decree defined the position of returnees, their awards and privileges, and outlined such provision of state care as was available to those who had been severely injured or suffered other health problems during their service in the militia.

Former militiamen were excused all city and state taxes (such as poll tax) for the period of their service. Notwithstanding their service – men spent on average 2 years in the militia – they were not exempt from subsequent regular levies, which resumed in St. Petersburg province in the autumn of 1815. However, if such men were nominated as recruits, their service in the militia was to be counted as 1:1, and the soldier's term of 25 years was proportionately reduced. Council files bear evidence that in the years immediately following the war several former militiamen were nominated as recruits, the commune invariably justifying its decision on grounds of non-payment of debts, indecent or dissolute behaviour, or drunkenness, which 'finally brought this man to the most miserable state, and made him a danger and a burden to the community'. In Tsarskoe Selo, at least 2 returnees were sent back as recruits as early as the levy of 1815,<sup>56</sup> confirming our assumption that most men who volunteered or were nominated to the militia were from the same categories as those men who volunteered or were nominated during regular recruit levies – that is, from among the poor or otherwise disadvantaged members of the commune.

The decree also outlined other privileges and awards – including the medals which militiamen were entitled to receive for their service during 1812–1813. Already in 1807

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<sup>55</sup> The decree № 6120, 12.06.1815. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1060. L. 212-215v.

<sup>56</sup> Nomination of Fedor Fadeev, Gavrila Iakovlev, who were in the militia, 8.11.1815. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1084. L. 25, 31, 32-32v.

there were plans to issue silver medals for militiamen who took part in combat,<sup>57</sup> but almost all men from the first militia were transferred to the army as soldiers. In 1814 the medal 'In memory of the 1812 War' was issued, better known by the inscription 'Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name' on its obverse (while on the reverse there was a pyramid with an eye, known by soldiers and among the populace as 'Kutuzoff's eye' – see Picture). There were two versions of this medal: the bronze one, mentioned in Chapter 3, was to be awarded to nobles and merchants who made donations to the war effort. But the best known was the silver medal, which was presented to all soldiers, militiamen and officers who took part in combat during the campaigns of 1812–1814 (about 300,000 medals in total were awarded).

Picture. The medal 'In Memory of the 1812 War'.



Our research, based on the Committee lists, shows that all militiamen from the towns of St. Petersburg province who took part in battles, sieges or naval operations received these silver medals.<sup>58</sup> According to the lists, most medals were given for the

<sup>57</sup> These were to be silver medals 'to be worn on the chest' with the inscription 'For faith and fatherland'. PSZ-1. V. 29. No. 22496, P. 1051, 9 March 1807. Medals were to carry the inscription 'Alexander I Emperor of All Russia. 1807 y.' on the obverse, and 'For faith and fatherland to militia' on the reverse. Gulevich, *Istoriia*, p. 32.

<sup>58</sup> The lists of men returned from militia (from *meshchane* communes of St. Petersburg province), end of 1814 – 1815. TSGIA SPb. F. 189. Op. 1. D. 140.

second battle of Polotsk, where the militia battalions from St. Petersburg and Novgorod provinces played an important role reinforcing the regular army regiments of the corps of general *kniaz'* P. Kh. Vitgensteiin. Altogether, 12 out of 29 men who returned to Tsarskoe Selo were awarded silver medals, as likewise 3 out of 4 men<sup>59</sup> from Pavlovsk, 6 out of 15 men who returned to Gatchina, 3 out of 13 returning to Gdov, and 23 out of 28 men from Novaia Ladoga (the men from Novaia Ladoga served in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> battalions of the St. Petersburg militia, which saw more combat service than others). According to part 3 of the decree of 1815, 'Concerning those who bear insignia', men who had received silver medals were to be excused all corporal punishment. Also, if they were later nominated to the army as recruits, they were supposed to receive an increase in salary of one-third: that is 16 roubles instead of 12 roubles per year for a private, and 17.5 roubles instead of 14 for a sergeant (*urisdnik*) or army clerk.<sup>60</sup>

#### 4.3.3. 'Invalids'

Another important topic, which has remained largely neglected until recently, is the various forms of support provided by the Russian government, local authorities and charitable institutions for demobilized retirees, in particular for those who were considered 'invalids' – men who had been wounded or suffered other health problems during service, which made normal living difficult or impossible for them. According to J. L. H. Keep and J. Hartley, the Russian system of care for retired soldiers and men in the navy – whose numbers increased from 1793 – is still almost unexamined. The care available to men returning from militia service has likewise been neglected – even though, as shown

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<sup>59</sup> The lists of men returned from militia (from *meshchane* communes of St. Petersburg province), end of 1814 – 1815. TSGIA SPb. F. 189. Op. 1. D. 140.

<sup>60</sup> The decree № 6120, 12.06.1815. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1060. L. 212-215v.

above, some 60 per cent of men returned to their hometowns in 1814–15, many of them already in their 40s and 50s, suffering from war injuries and health-related problems, which made it difficult for some of them to earn a living. In an earlier section it was noted that, following the Russo-Swedish war of 1788–90, the government undertook to provide widows and families of volunteers with the same care and support from the provincial authorities that was received by the families of regular soldiers. Let us examine, in the case of invalids who returned from the second militia, what exactly state support meant in the period under review.

Provision of care for the rank and file after military service was of a particular type in Russia and differed from the systems of support available in Western Europe. In England, for example, state and charitable support for invalids was actively developed during and after the period of the Napoleonic wars. It included among other things small money allowances – pensions – which men could apply for in various offices across England, Scotland, and other parts of the country. Development of this support system was vital as growing waves of demobilization took place in Britain, especially after 1815, as the standing army was reduced from a force of 250,000 soldiers to 103,000 in 1828. Retirees could apply for financial assistance, and on condition of a physical examination, be entitled to receive regular if small allowances of money by way of support, which could help them to avoid the extremes of poverty that might otherwise have obliged them to turn to begging or robbery.<sup>61</sup>

By contrast, Russia, as J. Hartley emphasizes, with its system of recruit levies and 25-year term of service, did not face the problems associated with frequent waves of

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<sup>61</sup> Hartley, 'Veterans and empire', pp. 16-17.

demobilization in Western countries. Despite the greater size of the Russian army, there would always be fewer retired soldiers in Russia than in Britain (fewer men indeed survived the term); there was therefore less need for state care for veterans and invalids, and also fewer threats to social order than were posed by demobilized soldiers.<sup>62</sup> The system of state care and support in Russia thus remained very little developed in the late 18<sup>th</sup>–early 19<sup>th</sup> century: some soldiers, who were old or unable to earn a living, were sent to monasteries<sup>63</sup> or sometimes to private charitable institutions founded by aristocrats. A centralized system of state pensions – in the form of small money allowances – was still in its infancy during Paul I and Alexander I's reigns,<sup>64</sup> as was the programme of offering retirees small patches of land (initially, on the frontiers).

The Russian standing army grew from 400,000 to over 700,000 regular soldiers by 1815, and remained around this level for the next decade, as the Emperor continued to resist demobilization. However, during 1814– early 1815 a great wave of demobilization occurred as the second militia was disbanded. Of about 200,000 militiamen conscripted in 1812, at least 120,000 men were returned to their home villages and towns.<sup>65</sup> From the example of this demobilization, it is possible to examine how state care of invalids functioned, and what changed during the war period.

A number of documents were discovered in the council archives regarding returning militiamen who claimed that they were no longer able to earn their living and pay taxes because of the injuries or health problems experienced as a result of their service: several petitions for state support from such men were lodged with the councils during 1815.

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<sup>62</sup> Hartley, *Russia, 1762–1825*, pp. 11, 210.

<sup>63</sup> N. V. Kozlova, *L'udi dr'ahlye, bol'nye, ubogie v Moskve XVIII veka* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2010).

<sup>64</sup> Hartley, 'Veterans and empire', pp. 21-22.

<sup>65</sup> Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armiiia i flot v XIX v.*, pp. 75-76.

The documents examined show that the care of invalids in this period was mainly provided by the army itself.<sup>66</sup> According to the regulations issued in 1810, soldiers of the regular army who were nearing the end of their term, or who became seriously ill or unfit as a result of injury, were to be inspected by medical commissions. They could be found either 'half-fit' for civilian life (*polusposobnye k selskokhoziastvennym rabotam*) or 'completely unfit' (*sovsem nesposobnye*). Men assigned to both categories were to be retired from active service and sent to the so-called invalid battalions, which were a part of the Internal Watch corps – a species of military police and local safety units spread across the empire (prior to 1811, known as garrison battalions). Service in the invalid squads was relaxed, and limited to formal duties such as guarding turnpikes, municipal buildings, state offices, and markets in the towns. Designation as an invalid was thus considered to be a privilege, with service in the Russian invalid squads analogous to the pension care system elsewhere, as invalids received clothes, provisions, a small money allowance, and so were spared the necessity of looking after themselves, becoming a burden to their family or commune, and struggling to find a job or source of income to survive. According to former soldier P. Nazarov in the 1820s, older soldiers waited impatiently to be inspected and sent to 'the invalids' on account of their age or wounds: life would be easy for them thereafter and their future secured.<sup>67</sup>

The first part of the 1815 decree dealing with returning militiamen, 'Concerning invalids' (*Ob uvechnykh*), set stricter conditions for invalids drawn from the militia. Their position was slightly different from that of retired soldiers. According to the decree, returning militiamen could also apply to be inspected by medical commissions in the

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>67</sup> Nazarov, '«Zapiski» Pamfila Nazarova', p. 532.

provincial capitals: but only those found to be 'completely unfit' were assigned to the invalid squads of the province. The decree emphasized that only those men who had recently returned were to be allowed to submit such petitions to their councils, to avoid cases of the more unscrupulous petitioning to be designated as invalids months or even years after their service in the army had ended, 'having acquired disabilities after being discharged'. In Tsarskoe Selo, Gatchina and Pavlovsk, of 49 militiamen who returned to their hometowns, there are three petitions in the militia file from men applying to become invalids, and more can no doubt be found in other files.

One of these applicants, the *meshchanin* Maksim Shemiakinskii, had served in the 1<sup>st</sup> volunteer Cossack regiment. He stated in his petition that 'in a place in Saxony, whose the name he doesn't remember, he was knocked off his horse, and his head was broken by a hoof, and his right hand dislocated, so he now feels a permanent ache (*lomoty*) in this arm'. As a result of such injuries he is totally 'unable to work and earn a living'.<sup>68</sup> Another *meshchanin*, by the name of Afanasii Kuznetsov, claimed that because of 'long marches both his legs were weakened, as well as having been damaged (*pomiaty*) in the battle of Polotsk',<sup>69</sup> while a *meshchanin* named Vasilii Ivanov Mukhin testified that in 1813 'his right hand and also leg were damaged, and now he needed to use crutches to walk'.<sup>70</sup> Once these men had been inspected by the doctor, and had their deficiencies confirmed, Tsarskoe Selo town hall lost no time in excluding them from the *meshchane* commune: no doubt, the commune was only too happy not to have to pay taxes for these men. The former militiamen were delivered to the recruit office in St. Petersburg, where they were

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<sup>68</sup> Tsarskoe Selo townhall on the petition of M. Shemiakinskii, Aug. – Sep. 1815. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1060. L. 218-221v, 233, 241.

<sup>69</sup> Tsarskoe Selo townhall on the petition of A. Kuznetsov, Aug. – Sep. 1815. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1060. L. 228, 239-240v.

<sup>70</sup> Tsarskoe Selo townhall on the petition of V. I. Mukhin Aug. – Sep. 1815. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1060. L. 222.

accepted and sent to the invalid squads. This outcome – that of being designated an invalid of the state – must have been considered a privilege by many men from the towns, especially by those from among the poor and marginalized. Such men could remain in the service, performing very light duties and receiving everything they needed, while permanently excused the poll tax, and other state and city taxes. There are other documents as well, that make mention of several men being sent from Tsarskoe Selo to become 'invalids of the St. Petersburg province' during their service in the militia, owing to health issues.<sup>71</sup> Thus, as noted above, the figure of 40 per cent of men not returning to their hometowns should always be read with caution, as not a few may have survived and gone into service elsewhere.

## Conclusion

This chapter has explored the motives of those men from *meshchane* and merchant families who entered the army or militia, together with aspects of their service, as well as the return of these men to their hometowns and their prospects thereafter. The focus has been on the men from the towns of St. Petersburg province, in particular on those who volunteered to serve from the late 1780s to the 1810s. Our knowledge of the fate of men who joined the lower ranks of the Russian army remains very limited, as not many sources are available for this period. But materials relating to volunteers from the towns discovered in council archives, and in the records of the Militia Committees and the War Ministry's statistics office, have allowed us to reconstruct the role of military service as it was experienced by Russian rank and file from the towns of the Northwest.

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<sup>71</sup> Sergeant A. Rauner reporting to Tsarskoe Selo townhall regarding those who deserted and those 'invalided out' during militia service, 26.07.1815. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 1060. L. 220-221v.

Documents from the town councils show that when opting for military service, patriotic incentives could certainly play a role; but this was mostly the case when the Russian heartland was endangered, as during the war with Sweden in 1788–89 and with France in 1812.

But men in these towns were volunteering not only for the militias or for temporary army service, as in 1788–1790; there were volunteers joining the army every year, during regular military levies, who opted for the long and burdensome term of service of a permanent soldier. Most of these men were from the poorer families of *meshchane*; only rarely do the documents also refer to men from merchant households. It seems that many volunteers were from the same categories as those nominated for service by the commune: men from among the poor, former newcomers, labourers, singles, younger sons of large families. For many of these men, the main incentives for joining up were the financial awards provided by the communes, which also repaid the debts, state, and city tax arrears up to the sum of 100 roubles. Volunteering during the levy could often take the form of substituting for another family: in this case, the family for whom the volunteer offered to serve could pay him a significant sum of money, with some men receiving both the money from the family and the commune's award and promised exemption from debt.

The size of awards grew from the 1780s to the 1810s, as the value of the paper rouble declined, and levies required more men. It should also be noted that ordinary nominees – those men appointed by the commune – would also receive awards, even those marked down as dissolutes. Twenty-five roubles was a standard award in the late 1780s, while volunteers could receive 40–60. In the 1790s, the standard sum was set at 50 roubles, whilst volunteers received 100; in the 1800s–1810s, men in Novaia Ladoga or Sofia–

Tsarskoe Selo, who were nominated by the commune, received 100 roubles, dissolutes 50, whilst volunteers could receive 200 roubles or more.

The practice of substituting and paying off the duty became more regulated in the early 1810s: this allowed for a more open monetization of the duty, whilst also reducing abuses, disputes and other delaying tactics. Even beyond the period of the war, military service – including volunteering – remained the easiest option for men from lower and middle-income families.

The desire to escape the commune, pay off debts and arrears, and the general lack of prospects were the major incentives for men from the towns to join the military service. As in the case of the peasantry, military service remained an important, and for many men from among the poor the only, means of social and geographical mobility. However, men from the towns were more literate: from the signatures appended to the verdicts, it is apparent that literacy rates were growing rapidly among the *meshchane*, not to mention the merchant class (maybe as a consequence of Catherine II's educational reforms, which established the city schools). Conscripts from towns could thus hope for a better career in the army, perhaps as a regimental clerk (*pisar'*) or scribe in one of the military offices (*kantseliarii*). Following their service, some of these men were employed in the towns' municipal offices, or served in the councils and magistrates' offices, or were hired by merchants. (Many men might actually be released from the military before the end of their term, owing to health problems, in their thirties or forties, or even younger.) Hartley emphasizes that the lack of educated men in Russia remained a serious problem up to the second third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, making the authorities at all levels more ready to employ retired soldiers and officers.

On the other hand, men from towns, especially those who volunteered, could expect military service to lead to their transfer to larger cities, helping them gain a qualification and to obtain a decent position during or after service – especially those who were literate and had received some education.

In this connection, the cases of merchants and merchants' sons who volunteered are of great interest. Such cases emerged in the archives of almost all the town councils under review, with merchants volunteering throughout the period in question. For the most part these were men from poorer families, but occasionally they could be seen to come from fairly well-to-do merchant households. Most men from the merchant class joined infantry regiments of the regular army (rarely the Guards) and were rapidly promoted to the rank of sergeant, with many of them performing tasks for the regimental commanders.

The authorities promised certain privileges to those men who joined the army and navy, and also the militias. For those volunteers who served during the war with Sweden, 1788–1790 (an episode comparatively neglected till now), exemption from subsequent levies was promised for a period, as well as state support for the family of those who died while in service. After the war with Napoleon, the men mobilized for the militia would also receive awards, in addition to certain privileges such as exemption from corporal punishment for those who had received medals (since all men who took part in combat were awarded medals, this number was not small). Service in the militia would also be counted if a man was sent to military service in the following years; the pay was likewise higher for those men who had been awarded medals for service in 1812–14. Indeed, not a few of the militiamen who returned were subsequently nominated by their communes to serve during the next recruit levies – a fact which confirms that most men who joined up from the towns, including those volunteering during 1812, would invariably be from among

the poor and less fortunate members of the commune, who had arrears, debt problems or behavioural issues in the commune.

As a result of the conditions of military service in Russia, it was only slowly that a support system developed for 'invalids' – those retirees who had been injured or suffered health problems as a result of their service. By comparison with the system of care available for veterans and invalids in Britain during and after the wars with France, the system of state pensions and charitable support in Russia remained fairly rudimentary. However, with its large standing army, and given the limited funds available to government, and the limited capacity of charitable institutions (such as monasteries, or almshouses established by aristocratic donations), it was the army itself which provided support: men found by medical commissions to qualify as 'invalids' were transferred to 'invalid squads' of the local watch, where they could be employed for the rest of their lives, receiving clothes and money, and thus saved from poverty and the necessity of resorting to a life of beggary or criminality. In 1815 this support was also made available to former militiamen, who had been rendered incapable of earning a living in normal circumstances by virtue of their service. On return to their hometowns, such men could petition the local council, and provided they were pronounced, on medical examination, to be 'completely unfit for work', would qualify as military invalids, be discharged from their commune, and exempted from all taxes. The long period of hostilities at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century highlighted many of these problems for the authorities, and the system of state care for retirees was one of those areas which saw further development as a result.

## **Chapter 5.**

### **Commoners and the Chief of Police**

In the previous chapters, the relationships of the urban commoners with the higher provincial authorities in regard to military duty have been examined, largely based on the analysis of the coordinated effort during regular and militia levies of the town councils, communes – and the Civil Governor in St. Petersburg, his office, or the provincial Militia Committee. This chapter looks at interaction on the ground: it focuses on local practices, on the relationships in district capitals between the commoners, their institutions of self-government, and the urban police – that is the office of the Chief of Police, as the main state agent in the Russian provincial town, and often the only actor there with the power of enforcement.

The chapter examines relationships in connection with the main military duties between the communes and town councils on the one hand and the urban police on the other. The chapter looks at the range of actions, limitations, and motivations of the councils, communes, and the Chief of Police in various situations. It will examine the positions of commoner families, communes, and especially of the town councils – in their interactions with the office of the Chief of Police – in peacetime, when resolving disputes regarding the financing of the urban police; and during the levies of wartime, and especially during the militia mobilizations, when collecting recruits, raising and storing money, weapons, and other supplies, or when managing the billeting of troops of the regular army in the provincial town. Finally, it explores how these positions changed during the period in question – the decades of increased military and state demands.

The aim of the chapter is to analyse the complex relationships between the commoners and the office of the Chief of Police when it came to performing military duties

– the recruit and militia levies, and billeting – in three provincial towns of St. Petersburg province in the 1790s-1810s. At the centre of this chapter are the town councils, since they represented the interests of the families and communes of *meshchane* and merchants in most situations, which implied direct contact with the office of the Chief of Police, as well as with other state officials in the provincial town, in the district, or in the provincial capital, St. Petersburg.

The central objectives are to explore 1) the process of negotiation between the councils and the urban police; 2) the organization of cooperation between them when performing military duties; as well as 3) the disputes and conflicts which emerged, and how these could be settled. The chapter examines how independent the councils were in their relationships with the Chief of Police's office; what kind of cooperation they established with the urban police, as well as with other officials – under various circumstances – and how effective it could be; what negotiations between the councils and the Chief of Police looked like, in various situations; what were the grounds for dispute and open conflict, and the positions of the parties involved, and how such controversies could be resolved; as well as what changes we can observe in the actions, practices, and motivations of the councils, commoners, and Chiefs of Police during the period in question.

The chapter looks at several forms of interaction, which involved the councils and the office of the Chief of Police. First, there are the disputes regarding financial matters (the financing of the urban police). The central theme was the relationship between the councils and the police during the levies: the search for nominees (conscripts for army and militia) during the levy and outside the levy months; the collection of money, provisions, clothing, weapons, and the storage of these supplies during the regular levies and especially during the two mobilizational militia call-ups. The interaction between councils and the urban

police as regards billeting is also considered: when regular army troops (infantry or cavalry) arrived in the district capital, the officers, rank and file, regimental warehouses, workshops, would be allocated to the houses of local residents or to buildings belonging to the town; the allocation would normally be carried out by the billeting commission of the town, in which the Chief of Police played the main role. (This billeting duty was crucial to the interests of councils, communes, and commoner families.)

The first section of this chapter outlines the state of the problem: it introduces the office of Chief of Police, with its duties, capabilities, and limits, focusing on the relationships between the urban police and the councils and commoner families of the district town; the section demonstrates how these have been researched so far, what is the novelty of this study, and what sources have been employed for it. The section also discovers other state agents, with whom the urban commoners might come into contact within the town, the district, and the provincial capital – St. Petersburg, especially when it came to conscripting men, collecting money, provisions, during the levies, storing them, or when performing other duties (such as billeting). Lastly, the section explores the complicated financial relationships of the councils, which managed the town budget, and the Chief of Police's office, with the focus on negotiations between them. The second section analyses the relationships between the councils and the Chief of Police's office during the regular and militia levies. At the centre is the cooperation between the councils and urban police during the recruit and especially the militia levies, with the focus on particular practices employed during the collection of recruits and detention of evaders, raising money, weapons, storing supplies. The third section examines the complex relationships between the commoners and council self-government on the one hand and the Chief of Police and the billeting commission (see below) on the other hand, when troops of the regular army would be

billeted in the district town: local families were supposed either to accept the officers and soldiers into their houses or to pay the so-called billeting money. This section concentrates on exploring disputes and conflicts, the reasons behind them, the positions and actions of the parties involved, their motivations, and the outcomes. The conclusion explains how the analysis of practices relating to military duties on the ground, the study of relationships between commoners and the urban police – the role of negotiation, cooperation, and conflict – whether in peacetime or during recruit and militia levies, or in relation to billeting – helps us to understand the real positions, roles, capacities, and limits of the commonalty and of council self-government, and also of the urban police in the 1790s-1810s, while illustrating how these changed in the decades of increased demand, and what were the reasons for those changes.

## **5.1. Urban commoners and the urban police: relationships on the ground**

### **5.1.1. The state of the problem**

The relationships regarding military duties between commoners on the one hand and the police and other state agents on the other as these were acted out on the ground in provincial towns, during peacetime, wartime, and in periods of mobilization is a very important theme for the history of Europe, its urban social groups and institutions; it is especially acute for the decades of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. The study of this problem offers many avenues for discussion. As regards Russia in this early period, the direct everyday relationships of commoners – families of free peasants, *meshchane*, and merchants, their communes and councils – with the representatives of the crown in provincial towns and villages have up to now received very little attention. In particular, the contacts of the commoner families, communes, and councils of small and

middle-sized district capitals with the urban police and other crown officials have been little explored, except in the context of the Patriotic War of 1812. But everyday relationships regarding the performance of particular military duties during the recruit and militia levies, and on other occasions, such as billeting; the contacts established; the mechanisms of how cooperation could be organized in various situations; what practices were employed, what negotiation processes looked like, what conflicts emerged and how they were solved – these topics remain unexamined for small- and middle-sized Russian provincial towns of the 18<sup>th</sup>– early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Only certain areas have been studied, such as the legal correlation between the institutions of urban self-government (councils and *magistraty*) and the Chief of Police's office – a topic which has attracted the attention of a number of Russian historians, especially those studying the legal foundations of the Russian town as it emerged and evolved after the reforms of Catherine II. Still, scholarship on the everyday interaction of councils and the urban police is very limited, even in Russian, and next to no research has been done on relationships connected to the military duties of commoners as regards the recruit and militia levies, billeting. Only some situations, such as the role of the Chief of Police's office in the work of the billeting commission of the town, have been examined, but the scholarship in Russian remains very limited, with most attention diverted to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a period after the Great Reform.<sup>1</sup>

As mentioned in the Introductory section and Chapter 1, the dominant view of 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> century historiography, both in Russian and in western languages, has tended to

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<sup>1</sup> V. V. Lapin, 'Reforma postojnoj povinnosti v ryadu preobrazovanij epohi Aleksandra II', in V.V. Lapin (ed.), *Aleksandr II. Tragediya reformatora: lyudi v sud'bah reform, reformy v sud'bah lyudej*, sb. statei (SPb: Izdatelstvo Evropeiskogo universiteta v Sankt-Peterburge, 2012), pp. 175-194; I. N. Pleshakov, 'Saratovskaia kvartitnaia komissiiia (1808-1872). K istorii postoinoi povinnosti v Rossii', *Izvestiia Saratovskogo universiteta*, Vol. 7 Ser. Istoriiia. Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, Vips. 2. (2007), pp. 59-67.

portray urban councils and communes, in the way they were introduced in the 1780s and up to at least the decades of the Great Reform, as entirely subject to the crown, particularly to the Chief of Police (*gorodnichii*) in the town, and the governor in the provincial capital. It has often been implied that any important business in district towns, especially as regards military duties, was controlled or at least influenced by the office of the Chief of Police and other crown officials. Councils and communes, it has been suggested, had charge only of local, municipal matters, such as raising taxes, maintaining the infrastructure of the town, overseeing urban healthcare, fire safety, schools, orphanages; whilst, when it came to performing military duties during the levy months, especially in wartime, or when it came to billeting and fulfilling any other requests, the councils and communes obediently followed the instructions of the governor and higher authorities regarding the number of recruits, money, supplies to be sent. Since the Chiefs of Police were made responsible by the authorities for supervision of the communes and councils, it has been suggested that in small and middle-sized towns the Chief of Police would supervise if not control the conscription of recruits, any raising of money and other supplies by the communes and councils, including storing those supplies, as well as managing such activities as allocating houses when army troops, both officers and rank and file, were billeted on the town. With regard to everyday interaction between the commoners, councils, and the police and other crown officials it has been maintained that the capacities and scope of action of families, communes, and councils were very limited and the Chief of Police, the military commanders, and higher crown officials asserted their authority over the urban commoners, dominating in almost all disputes or legal cases, often resorting to pressure, even open violence towards the families and magistrates; whilst the people and councils, especially in district centres, were never really able to resist. (In Moscow, St. Petersburg,

and large provincial capitals urban communes and magistrates could be more resilient; in the first place there would be more merchants of the upper guilds in these towns.) But the previous chapters have demonstrated that even in small district capitals the councils could sometimes, if not resist, then at least object to the authorities – notably rejecting in some cases the growing requests of the governor of St. Petersburg province for recruits, money from the communes: the study of the donations and supplies of recruits during the militia levies has proved that (see Chapters 2, 3).

The sources have often been seen as part of the problem: the collection of statistics remained undeveloped at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; descriptions and accounts revealing of the everyday life and proceedings of provincial towns – during recruit and militias levies, or as regards billeting – are not numerous, even for the months of the 1812 war. (As are the personal memoirs, letters, and correspondence of provincial urban commoners).

In this regard, the analysis of the files coming from the councils' archives of district towns opens new avenues for research. This chapter is largely based on those documents, which have already been introduced. They consist of the minutes, protocols of the councils of Gdov, Novaia Ladoga, and Sofia-Tsarskoe Selo, which reflect the discussions in the councils and communes regarding the relationships of the commoner families and councils with the urban police and other officials, on various occasions; the correspondence of the councils with the Chief of Police, and with the provincial governor – regarding cooperation, negotiation, and conflicts between the commoners and the urban police during the recruit levies, militia levies, billeting process. The corresponding files from the archive of the Civil Governor of St. Petersburg province and his office have also been used (reports, pleas, complaints of the councils, communes, and families; as well as the accounts and letters of the Chief of Police to the governor).

### 5.1.2 The commoners of the Russian provincial town and crown officials

After the reforms of Catherine II, the presence of crown authorities in provincial Russian towns remained very limited. The Civil Governor's office was located in the provincial capital. In Moscow and St. Petersburg there also existed the Military Governor's office, and also the Police Board (*Uprava Blagochinia*) headed by the *Oberpolitsmeister* – an office with many responsibilities and a large staff of policemen, investigators, bailiffs. But for small- and medium-sized district capitals – to which category most provincial towns belonged – the Police reform of 1782 had only established the office of the Chief of Police, which was supposed to be the main and practically the only crown representative with enforcement functions on the spot, in theory responsible for the urban police. The Chief of Police's sphere of duties and range of actions was not limited to matters of local security, though the main purpose of the urban police squad was to maintain safety and order: the police guarded the town centre and the governmental agencies' buildings, the market square and the market arcades (*gostinnyi dvor*); state 'salt and wine warehouses' (*magazeiny*), turnpikes and guardrooms at the market, at the exit roads, bridges (there might also be a small prison, guardhouse under the supervision of the Chief of Police's office). But in reality, the interests of the Chief of Police were far broader than that, and he took an active part in the everyday business of the councils and communes, especially in small and middle-sized district capitals (see below). In addition to the urban police squad, in larger district centres there could also be a squad of 'invalids' – retired soldiers, usually under the command of the commandant; but in most provincial towns, such as the district capitals of St. Petersburg province reviewed here, there was only – in the 1780s-1810s –

the urban police office headed by the Chief of Police (with the exception of Novaia Ladoga, where a small half-military squad of the Ladoga Canal Board was stationed<sup>2</sup>).

Thanks to the underlying principles of Catherine II's reforms – which sought to delegate power to local districts (see Ch. 1) – the functions of the Chief of Police's office were closely intertwined with the business of the councils and communes. The most crucial help that the Chief of Police rendered to the communes and councils was his direct assistance in conducting business related to fulfilling state and local municipal duties required of commoner families: the urban police would help to raise taxes from *meshchane* and merchant families in the town; assist in finding those evading the payments or military duty; locate those men or families nominated to provide recruits (if they were in the town); they would also collect subscriptions, detain and guard debtors, evaders.

Apart from the Chief of Police, the councils – it may be noted – were often directly in touch with other, higher crown officials on matters related to military duties; on most occasions it would be the Civil Governor of the province: the governor and his office would be in correspondence with the councils regarding the supply of men, munitions, extraordinary collections (such as donations during militias); the State Chamber in St. Petersburg would also correspond with the councils mainly about the collection of taxes and other fundraising. But other authorities might occasionally contact the councils of provincial towns, during levies or regarding other matters relating to military duties owed by urban commoners. During regular recruit levies and especially during a militia call-up, the Military Governors of St. Petersburg and Moscow could send edicts and orders on the more important matters (such as the equipment of recruits being dispatched by the

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<sup>2</sup> On the hospital of Canal Board, 04.09.1803. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 156. On building the hospital and other buildings in Novaia Ladoga, April 1803 - June 1804. L. 15-16v.

communes, the collection of money donations and weapons in towns); the War Ministry, the Police Ministry, and the Finance Ministry, as well as the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Synod could also send instructions to the councils, or require reports or accounts – especially during campaigns or in preparation for them. But there could also be other officials, from provincial and central agencies, who might contact the councils, for example during the levies, outside the levy months, regarding various military supplies: contacts of this kind have often been neglected by historians. Some examples of such cooperation (such as with the St. Petersburg and Kronstadt Steelworks Board) are discussed below: this study helps expand our understanding of the position and roles, capacities, and limitations of the district councils, communes and urban police in the years of peace, war, and during militia mobilizations.

The last subsection will examine the complex financial interrelationships between the town councils and the urban police; while the next two sections of the chapter will explore particular practices employed by the councils and the Chief of Police's office, looking at the organization of cooperation, negotiation processes, disputes, and conflicts between commoners and the urban police during recruit and militia levies, and when resolving billeting issues.

### **5.1.3. Councils and financing of the urban police: negotiation**

The Chief of Police would normally be a retired army officer, very often holding the rank of major. The office of the Chief of Police was subject to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD; see Chapter 1). The situation, however, was complicated, as it was the town council's budget (that is the town budget) from which funds were derived for supporting the Chief of Police, his squad of bailiffs and policemen (called *chastnye pristavy*, *kvartalnye*

*nadzirateli, budochniki*), as well as for maintaining the urban police buildings, such as the guardrooms, turnpikes, town prison. Only occasionally did the MVD allocate money directly to the Chiefs of Police of district towns, for example, when significant construction or other work for the needs of urban security required it (e.g., orders were received in 1797, during Paul I's reign, requesting the urgent construction of new guardrooms, turnpikes in all provincial towns).

In each town, therefore, the council would every year allocate a certain amount of money for the needs of the Chief of Police, his squad, and the infrastructure of urban security from the town budget – that is from the annual income of the town (formed by local taxes, wine monopoly money, and various payments owed by residents, such as for the rent of properties and spaces belonging to the town, fees for the annual valuation of houses). This section examines these complicated financial interrelationships – partnership, rivalry, and disputes – looking at negotiation between the councils and the Chief of Police's office when discussing various questions related to financing of the urban police in the years of peace and during wartime.

The Gdov council's negotiations with the Chief of Police's office during the months of 1812 are a good example of how perplexed relationships between them were: the interests of council and communes, urban finances, and security matters in the town were inextricably intertwined.

On 1<sup>st</sup> February 1812, Gdov council received a message from the Chief of Police's office. The Chief of Police 'asked' the council to construct a new guardhouse 'near the salt warehouses, as in the present guardhouse the walls have collapsed near the stove, narrowly avoiding a fire, and now the soldiers – privates, who are at his command, have to

constantly endure the cold weather'.<sup>3</sup> The council, however, replied that the guardhouse was not erected from the town council's budget, but was constructed from 'state funds' – and it was therefore not the council's responsibility to repair it.

On 8<sup>th</sup> April the Chief of Police asked the council 'to clean the roads and firebreaks belonging to the city' (the order to do so perhaps received from the higher authorities): the council replied that the cleaning of roads was not the responsibility of the council, but that of the Chief of Police's office.

On 5<sup>th</sup> April, the Chief of Police had sent another message to the council, this time requesting the addition of three new men to help man the urban police. The council duly discussed the matter, resolving that, since there were already four policemen paid by the council at the disposal of the Chief of Police (3 *desiatskii* and 1 *sotskii*), it would sanction the hiring of only one new man instead of the three requested.<sup>4</sup>

While discussing the hiring of new men, members stressed that the town was spending 500 roubles annually on the urban police. In the years before 1812 the annual income of the town council budget amounted on average to 1,500 roubles: the council was thus spending one third of its income on the police. It is thus understandable that council members would always be reluctant to fulfil many of the new requests of the Chief of Police,<sup>5</sup> even openly rejecting them when additional funding was required. By contrast, when in June 1812 the Chief of Police requested Gdov council to undertake certain repairs in the town centre, necessary for 'the convenience and security of the residents', the

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<sup>3</sup> The council about the request of the Chief of Police, 1.02.1812. TsGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 342. L. 17v.

<sup>4</sup> On the request of the Chief of Police to hire 4 more policemen from the town's budget, 5.04.1812. TsGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 342. L. 41-41v; On the request of the Chief of Police on cleaning roads and firebreaks, 09.04.1812. *Ibid.*, L. 43-44v.

<sup>5</sup> Gdov council on the yearly allocation of money to the police, 18.03.1812. TsGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 342. L. 35-35v.

council promptly agreed (the work required 'repairing a bridge in the town centre; to erect a flagpole, new railings, and a new bulletin board on the town square').<sup>6</sup>

In October 1812, the Chief of Police requested Gdov council to erect two new turnpikes, with guardrooms, at the exit roads from the town: these orders (issued during the occupation of Moscow by the French army) had been received everywhere, in order to reinforce local security measures – including, among other things, the need to check the documents of every man passing the town. The Chief of Police also asked the council to authorize the hiring of two more new policemen. Even now, during the most difficult months of the war, the town council refused these requests, its members citing in justification the edict of the State Council from the 15.07.1812 'On mobilization of the State Income', prohibiting all unnecessary construction in towns<sup>7</sup> – and adding that Gdov was supposed to have only one guardroom, and that there was no money in the town budget to build any new ones.<sup>8</sup>

As we can see, the commonly held view in the existing historiography that represents Catherinian urban self-government based on the councils as weak, lacking initiative, with a very limited range of action,<sup>9</sup> and almost entirely subject to the crown or the Chief of Police's office in the district centres – an opinion also replicated in the works of 19<sup>th</sup> century commentators and critics, as well as in the literature of the period – needs correcting.<sup>10</sup> Even during the most difficult months of the 1812 war, the councils could still reject requests from the Chief of Police, just as they were sometimes able to thwart, often

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<sup>6</sup> The Chief of Police on the necessary improvements in the city, 20.06.1812. TsGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 343. L. 25-25v.

<sup>7</sup> On mobilization of the State Income, 15.07.1812. TsGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 341. L. 112.

<sup>8</sup> The Council on the Chief of Police's request, 19.10.1812. TsGIA SPb. F. 881. Op. 1. D. 344. L. 21-21v.

<sup>9</sup> Hittle, *The service city*, p. 237-239.

<sup>10</sup> A. I. Gertzen, *Byloe i dumy* (Moskva: Detgiz, 1970); M. E. Saltykov-Shedrin, *Istoriia odnogo goroda* (Moskva, Detgiz, 1972).

repeatedly, the requests for more conscripts or money from the governor during the militia levy of 1812 – as in Novaia Ladoga in August–October 1812 (see Chapters 2-3; the council agreed to supply only half the required militiamen, repeatedly rejecting requests of the governor for more men, whilst the merchant commune of the town in 1812 only provided one-third of the money donation it had promised<sup>11</sup>).

## **5.2. Relationships during military levies: cooperation**

More important than financial disputes for understanding the true positions, roles, and capacities of the councils and the urban police is an analysis of their relationships during recruit and militia levies. The contacts of commoners with the Chief of Police's office during the levies are discussed below: the focus is on the organization of cooperation during the regular levies, outside the levy months, and especially during mobilizational militia levies, which furnishes us with the most illuminating example. The analysis of practices employed by the councils and urban police when seeking nominees (recruits), collecting and safeguarding money, provisions, weapons helps answer broader questions about the range of actions and capacities enjoyed by commoners, councils and the Chiefs of Police, and the limitations imposed upon them, and enables us to see how they changed during the period in question.

### **5.2.1. Nominees**

An examination of the documents emanating from the council archives of the towns reviewed has demonstrated that, in the 1790s–1810s, the councils and the urban police

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<sup>11</sup> Governor Bakunin to the Novaia Ladoga council, August 1812. TsGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. L. 101-101v, 117.

would always work in close cooperation during regular levies and militia call-ups: the problem was that the councils and communes invariably lacked the means to enforce the decisions of the commune meetings. The town commune would always need help with finding evaders – those men nominated, but attempting to avoid service – as well as with the urgent task of raising money for the equipping of a new set of recruits. During the two militia levies there was even more need for help from the police: to round up the vastly increased number of nominees, to raise money from the families of *meshchane* and merchants, and to help collect and store donations for the militia – whether for weapons, provisions, or other kinds of equipment.

There was never enough men or money at the disposal of the *meshchane* commune to permit a sufficient number of ‘investigators’ – the men who were supposed to search for evaders, and to guard recruits so as to prevent them from fleeing before they were handed over to the recruit office in St. Petersburg (a part of the provincial governor’s office). Each year the commune would find itself able to afford to hire no more than a few investigators from among local *meshchane* families, just for the levy months. But recruits would often be held in towns – many under guard – for many weeks before the recruit party left for St. Petersburg, and the expense for the *meshchane* commune was high: it had to pay the investigators, provide recruits and investigators with food, firewood while they were in the town, and cover all expenses for travel to St. Petersburg (transport, provisions, overnight stays on the way and in St. Petersburg; medical help, if needed; substitution of one recruit by another: see Chapter 3). Even more expensive were attempts to search for evaders outside the town – in the district or across the province: as a result, communes seldom chose to send their investigators out on such searches.

Invariably, therefore, in order to assist the communes in this business, councils during the levies would resort to the assistance of the urban police: in all towns reviewed, the office of the Chief of Police deployed policemen, if not the entire squad (which could happen during the months of the militia call-up; see below), to seek out nominees who had gone into hiding in the town or those heads of families nominated to provide men who failed to turn up in the council's premises at the first call. The police collected subscriptions from the nominees, their fathers, and guarantors. It detained evaders and helped to guard the men nominated as recruits and militiamen before they were sent to the capital. It seems that during the regular annual levies recruits in most years were guarded and delivered to St. Petersburg by the investigators of the commune, while during demanding wartime levies, especially the two militia call-ups, the nominees would be kept under lock and key in police guardrooms, or at the local police station.

Such cooperation was at its height during the period of heaviest demand – the militia call-ups. On receipt of the Emperor's decree on Militias, the councils would organize meetings of the *meshchane* communes to nominate recruits and determine the money to be raised from *meshchane* families to equip them (see Chapter 3): at the same time the councils would write to the office of the Chief of Police asking for assistance, and he would from the start provide the policemen required to search for evaders, and to collect money from *meshchane* families refusing the levy, and help the councils and communes in other ways if requested. In all towns this cooperation was vital for the timely preparation and dispatch of the groups of militiamen, within the short time-frame allowed. We have already seen in Chapter 2 the case of Serpukhov in 1806-1807, when the Chief of Police had to spend months helping the council to check on 'large families', who had been nominated to provide recruits but were violating their undertakings (with neither recruits nor their

fathers or guarantors presenting themselves to the town councils, unless detained and delivered up by the men of the Serpukhov Chief of Police).

Another illustration of this kind of productive cooperation was Novaia Ladoga during the summer–autumn months of 1812: from the very first days following the arrival of the decree on the second militia, the council constantly resorted to the help of the Chief of Police, for the purpose of finding nominees, raising money, and performing other tasks. On the 28<sup>th</sup> July the council also wrote to the Chief of Police requesting the presence of several men to guard the council building, where 'now the first floor is crowded every day at all times and quarrels could easily occur'; the council also asked him to provide another bailiff to help find those men who were evading the duty; the Chief of Police Unkovskii replied that he only had two bailiffs who were busy all the time, but he assured the council that the police would do everything to assist the *meshchane* commune, if the council provided the names of the evaders.<sup>12</sup> Within a few days Unkovskii was providing the council with his report – listing the men who were sought by the council and commune, stating which of them had been found and apprehended by the police, which of them had gone into hiding, fled the town.<sup>13</sup> By the 2<sup>nd</sup> August Unkovskii was informing the council that two of his policemen, who 'were securing the guardroom and the fire security instruments near the shopping arcades' had been mobilized for militia service; he therefore requested the council and the *meshchane* commune to provide him with 'two new men, fit and healthy, and not too young nor too old', for the needs of the urban police.<sup>14</sup> In Novaia Ladoga in the months before the war there were also disputes between the council and the Chief of

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<sup>12</sup> The Chief of Police of Novaia Ladoga Unkovskii to the council, 28.07.1812. TsGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. L. 45-45v.

<sup>13</sup> Unkovskii to the Novaia Ladoga town council, 29.07.1812. TsGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. L. 56.

<sup>14</sup> Unkovskii to the Novaia Ladoga town council, 02.08.1812. TsGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. L. 93-94v.

Police's office, regarding the financing of the police – as in the case of Gdov (such disputes seem to have been commonplace in district towns) – but the coordination of effort between the council and the Chief of Police's office during the militia levy of 1812 was remarkable.

But it would be wrong to argue that the role of the Chief of Police during the levies was limited to enforcement operations. There were many situations, when the Chief of Police could help, which have so far received very little attention. For instance, in Sofia during the Russo-Swedish War of 1788-1790, the Chief of Police together with the council organized the acceptance of volunteers for temporary army service. The council files state that the Chief of Police Tokarev was involved, perhaps by virtue of some personal contacts ('through the mediation effort of the Chief of Police'), in sending 21 Sofia men for service to the elite *Preobrazhenskii* Life-Guards regiment (see Chapter 4).<sup>15</sup>

### 5.2.1. Collections

Besides using the police to help find nominees and prevent them from fleeing, councils would resort to the Chief of Police's office on other occasions during the levy months: during regular levies they would seek help to raise money from the *meshchane* families for the equipment of recruits. The collection of money from merchant and *meshchane* families was even more important during the mobilization of militia levies, when the police also helped to collect, guard, and secure various donations from the families and communes of merchants and *meshchane* – money, provisions, clothes, and weapons – which had to be duly recorded, checked, and later handed to the authorities;

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<sup>15</sup> Sofia council about the role of the Chief of Police Tokarev, 13.06.1793. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 3286, L. 11-12v; The Preobrazhenskii regiment to Sofia council, 01.10.1790. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 138. L. 1-3.

such collections were of necessity organized fast and *ad hoc*, especially during the 1806-1807 militia levy. The joint effort of the councils and the Chief of Police's office played a great role in the success of such collections as they occurred in the district town.

This mobilization of money, provisions, weapons during the two militia levies was another good example of the close cooperation between these two major urban institutions: both in 1806-1807 and in 1812 the councils together with the Chiefs of Police raised mandatory (communal) money contributions from merchant and *meshchane* families; collected, checked, and stored the munitions, weapons, provisions, clothes bought by the *meshchane* for the militia – as well as collecting the individual voluntary donations made by various families for the militia.

The preparation of weapons in district towns during the militia levy may serve to illustrate the process. During the 1806-1807 call-up in particular, the councils and Chiefs of Police of Sofia, Gdov, and Novaia Ladoga accepted a lot of weapons – muskets and pistols, sabres, epees, pikes – from the *meshchane* and merchant families as gratuitous donations for the equipping of the militia. According to the orders received from the governor, any donations of weapons from local families were especially encouraged; the weapons were to be brought either to the council or to the office of the Chief of Police. The councils together with the Chiefs of Police accepted and tested the weapons, meticulously recording every donation, and the Chiefs of Police were then required to send reports to the governor and militia commanders every week or fortnight.

Besides individual donations, the *meshchane* communes also embarked on the methodical purchase of weapons for the militiamen they were fitting out: in Novaia Ladoga at the beginning of 1807 the commune purchased 46 muskets with bayonets (in the initial

orders of December 1806, the town had been called on to provide 46 militiamen);<sup>16</sup> in Sofia the *meshchane* bought 38 pikes for their men.<sup>17</sup> The office of the Chief of Police assisted the communes in collecting and vetting the weapons.

In Spring 1807, the provincial militia commanders would arrive in the district town – to check, inspect, and collect the provisions, money, equipment, and weapons prepared for the militia. (These inspections would usually require more than one visit, with the days of such visits arranged in advance with the councils and the Chief of Police’s office.) At the end of these inspection visits, the Chiefs of Police together with the council members would preside over the delivery to the militia officers of the weapons and other supplies (clothes, provisions, munitions).

It needs to be noted that storage of the supplies prepared during the first militia levy, and their delivery to the authorities, was an especially important operation, where the coordination of effort between councils and the Chief of Police was essential. Apart from weapons, there were many other supplies to be handed over: both the provisions and munitions purchased by the *meshchane* communes for their militiamen, according to the number of men required, and also the provisions, clothes, equipment, money donated by the merchant and *meshchane* families. During their visits to the towns in the Spring months of 1807, the militia officers only took with them what had been prepared by the communes for their militiamen. The prescribed set of articles included money (3 roubles per militiaman), provisions for three months (rye flour, buckwheat), and certain clothes and basic equipment (hats, trousers, coats, belts, satchels).<sup>18</sup> All these supplies, it may be

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<sup>16</sup> The *meshchane* commune of Novaia Ladoga on weapons and equipment, which had been purchased for the militiamen, 06.09.1809. TsGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 206. L. 100-100v.

<sup>17</sup> To the Sofia council on weapons prepared for the militia, end of 1806 – early 1807. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 907. L. 23-24., 63.

<sup>18</sup> Edict with the list of munition prescribed for militiamen, 30.11.1806. RGIA. F. 488. Op. 1. D. 907. L. 2-5.

noted, had been collected according to the number of militiamen initially requested in December 1806 – that is, 1 in every 16 men – although in March 1807 only 1 in 57 were required (see Chapter 2).<sup>19</sup> The militia commanders also collected all modern muskets suitable for army use, including both those bought by the communes according to the number of militiamen required, and those donated by local families. In Spring 1807 the town councils and the Chiefs of Police handed over to the militia commanders all these supplies, and in most cases, as noted above, there were ultimately three times more sets of equipment and provisions handed over, as well as three times as much recruit money, as the towns actually supplied during the militia levy.

But many supplies – including some prepared by the *meshchane* communes, but mainly those donated by merchants and *meshchane* families – were not collected by the militia commander, and were left in towns after the end of the first militia levy in 1807. (The organization of the collection of supplies for the first militia from towns and villages had been several times revised in 1806-1807, and there were a lot of omissions in orders from the authorities.) Much coordination of effort was therefore needed between the council and Chief of Police's office to make a good use of the remaining stores.<sup>20</sup> The individual donations of families which remained in towns included various clothes, provisions, and weapons, as well as a certain amount of unwanted munitions and arms purchased by the *meshchane* communes. The Chiefs of Police were made responsible for the often quite large stores of items that remained in towns. It was only many months after the end of the militia levy that orders finally arrived from the governor: in 1808, at the request of the office of the Chief of Police, the councils were to prepare the lists of 'the

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<sup>19</sup> PSZ-1. V. 29. №22496.

<sup>20</sup> The Chief of Police to Novaia Ladoga council on the sale of the remaining provisions for militia at auction, Sep. 1809. TsGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 206. L. 98-102v.

remaining supplies from the past militia', noting if some of them were 'subject to spoilage' (provisions) or 'subject to rotting' (belts, bandoliers).<sup>21</sup> Orders were then received that the remaining munitions, provisions, and weapons were to be sold at auctions specially organized in the towns for this purpose, with the money then being sent to the treasury. The Chiefs of Police were made responsible for these auctions. In Novaia Ladoga, for example, there were several such auctions organized by the council at the request of the Chief of Police: as it turned out, most of the remaining supplies (clothes, provisions, some munitions) were sold by the end of 1809.

Finally, the merchant communes also would frequently need the assistance of the Chief of Police's office. The commune had invariably to ask the urban police to assist in the search for those merchant families who evaded paying taxes, such as the annual guild fee charged on the family's declared capital. During the regular recruit levies the Chief of Police and his men helped collect regular payments for recruits – the mandatory payment during every levy required of all families, including members of the merchant commune. Especially significant was the help of the Chief of Police's office during the militia levies, when there were merchant families in every town who tried to avoid paying the mandatory share they were obliged to contribute to the communal donation, raised by all merchant families of the town (see Chapter 3).

### **5.2.3. Contacts outside the town**

But it was far more difficult for the councils and the Chief of Police to reach men – those evading service, or those owing money – if they or the family sought for were not in

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<sup>21</sup> On the munitions left from the past militia, Correspondence of the Novaia Ladoga council and the Chief of Police, June 1808. TsGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 215. L. 84-86v.

the town: and many merchants and *meshchane*, as noted above, were often absent for months; they could be in other towns of the province, in St. Petersburg, or in the countryside – whether staying there for a short time, or working and living for many months – whether legally or not. During the levies, when councils and communes were obliged urgently to provide men, and to collect money, buy, and prepare provisions, clothes, munitions for recruits, the absence of many *meshchane* and merchant families from the town turned out to be a very serious problem, especially apparent during the more demanding militia levies (see Chapter 2).

From council records and documents of the governor's office, it appears that there were far fewer means available to the councils and the office of the Chief of Police, if the men they were looking for were hiding in the district, or had moved to other towns, in particular St. Petersburg. As several case studies in the previous chapters have demonstrated, it can be argued that the town councils, communes, and the Chief of Police were largely powerless, when they needed to apprehend someone or to collect money (taxes, shares in merchant donations for militia) in the event that that person was not in the town. In all towns reviewed, there were men, both from *meshchane* and merchant families, who would hide for months, even years, in order to evade military duty, or the payment of taxes, recruit money; others might have been working in other places, whether with or without documents, for a very long time. In such instances, it was very rare that councils, communes, or the Chief of Police were able to apprehend such men.

It seems that the main problem was that the coordination of contact between various branches of the authorities – the towns, the district, the provincial, and central authorities in St. Petersburg – was poorly organised, even in the capital province; it remained so even through the war years of the 1800s-1810s. If it could be established

where a particular man could be found – such as if he was in another town of the province – the council and Chief of Police would just write to the council and Chief of Police of that town, asking them to send home the man they were searching for, or to collect money from the evader: but this very rarely brought results (as, for example, when the Novaia Ladoga and Sofia town councils and the police occasionally discovered their men in St. Petersburg or in Schlisselburg). Less frequently, the councils and the urban police sent out across all towns of the province lists of names of those men from the town who were evading the service, payment of taxes, recruit money. (In 1812 such lists with the names of the *meshchane* families reported missing and the names of merchants who had failed to pay their share of the communal donation for the militia, circulated across the towns of St. Petersburg and those of the Moscow province.) The noble police in the districts (*Nizhnii zemskii sud*) and the head of the provincial police in St. Petersburg (*Ober-politsmeister*) seem to have provided limited support in searching for the evaders, or collecting monies due, though they would promise all the support needed – as during the demanding months of the winter and spring of 1807.

It can be argued that the poor coordination of such efforts during the levies can partly be explained by a more global problem in Russia – the chronic lack of local bureaucracy, and of crown administrators, including those with enforcement functions, especially at the lower and middle levels (that is, in the districts and provincial towns); whilst the provincial authorities were quite far from the district towns and rarely provided sufficient support. The council archives and documents of the governor's office indicate that even during the most demanding militia levies, both in 1806-1807 and in 1812, the cooperation of councils, communes, and police with the authorities outside their town remained limited.

It should be noted that, among the contacts of the councils – apart from the governor, his office, and the St. Petersburg police board – could be various ministries or state agencies in the provincial capital, and other crown officials. An interesting case of cooperation between the councils and the officials from St. Petersburg took place in Novaia Ladoga in the wake of the first militia levy. In December 1806, one of the merchants of the town donated two cannons – an unusual donation for a small district town during the first militia.<sup>22</sup> After they had been accepted by the council, a long correspondence was initiated between the council, the Chief of Police, and the governor. Once the militia levy was at an end, the Chief of Police, as indicated above, ordered the council to compose ‘the lists of the remaining supplies from the past militia’ (June 1808), to be sent to the governor.<sup>23</sup> At the end of 1808 the governor’s orders arrived, ordering the handover of the cannons to the St. Petersburg and Kronstadt Steelworks Board (*Sankt Peterburgskie i Kronstadskie Liteiinie Zavody*); according to the correspondence, Ober-Hauptmann of the 6<sup>th</sup> Class Fulon, the head of the St. Petersburg and Kronstadt Steelworks at that time, was to accept the cannons from the town.<sup>24</sup> Fulon himself was in correspondence with the council in January 1809, asking them to provide him with a description of the cannons. The council duly sent the description, based on an examination of the cannons carried out together with the Chief of Police (‘two cannons; without carriages; both of the same calibre, and both weighing 8 *pudov* 11 *funtov*; the length of the barrel is 5 *chetvertei arschina*, the diameter is 2 *vershka* and inside 1 *vershok*’; evidently these were small cannons).<sup>25</sup> In September

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<sup>22</sup> Bessonov, *Kaluzhskii krai*, pp. 43-49; *Gornovskii*, *Sto let Nazad*, pp. 535-550.

<sup>23</sup> On the munitions left from the past militia, Correspondence of the Novaia Ladoga council and the Chief of Police, June 1808. TsGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 215. L. 84-86v.

<sup>24</sup> Correspondence about the two cannons contributed by the Novaia Ladoga merchant, 1808-1809. TsGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 206. L. 94-97v.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, L. 97.

1809 the council approved the delivery of the cannons to Fulon.<sup>26</sup> However, the cannons were not dispatched (or no one came for them) until the start of the 1812 war: in July that year, as the new mobilizational militia levy was announced, the Chief of Police Unkovskii asked the council to check if there were any remaining weapons and munitions ‘from the first militia’. The council replied that there were still two cannons and 46 bayonets in storage – which were now to be delivered to the Chief of Police’s office.<sup>27</sup>

In sum, it can be concluded that the provincial town, in the way it emerged as a political and functional entity in the 1780s-1790s, performed its main military duty – that of carrying out the levies – fairly effectively, in view of the vastly increased demands of the 1800s-1810s: councils and communes provided, usually on time, the recruits, equipment, money, and provisions requested.

Close cooperation between the councils and the Chief of Police’s office was at the centre of this efficiency. Despite often complicated financial relationships and the various disputes that emerged between councils and the urban police in the towns reviewed, these two main urban institutions worked in constant and effective cooperation during the regular levies and much more burdensome militia call-ups.

When it came to searching for nominees, securing contributions from those who evaded payment, helping to collect and store munitions and donations, weapons, provisions – the help of the Chiefs of Police and his men was crucial.

Meanwhile, during the period in question, the towns were largely incapable of establishing any significant contacts – during the levies and outside the levy months – with

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<sup>26</sup> Novaia Ladoga council to Chief of Police on selling the remaining stores left from the militia, 6.09.1809. TsGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 206. L. 100-100v.

<sup>27</sup> Chief of Police Unkovskii to the Novaia Ladoga town council; the council to Unkovskii, 24-25.06.1812. TsGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 500. L. 21-22v.

the authorities in the district or in the provincial capital, the provincial and central offices, the St. Petersburg police: the proceedings during mobilizational militia levies have illustrated this fact best of all (most especially, the troublesome experience of the first militia in 1806-1807).

### **5.3. Disputes and conflicts: billeting of army troops in towns**

Below, in the first subsection, an overview of the billeting duty, the role of the councils and the Chief of Police, is given, and in the second subsection a case study is analysed in detail – the long and difficult dispute from the early 1820s, which took place between the council of Novaia Ladoga and the Chief of Police regarding billeting of the Lifeguard cuirassier regiment in the town.

#### **5.3.1. The organization of billeting in the district town**

The organization of billeting in Russian provincial towns – of the contacts and conflicts between commoners, councils, and the Chief of Police, the colonel and officers of the regiment, and the rank and file – is a subject that has never been properly studied, especially for the early periods such as the one in question. Meanwhile, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, billeting remained the main form of stationing the regiments; the construction of barracks and the introduction of special military infrastructure had already begun in towns, but such provision was expensive, not always effective (often living conditions in barracks for the rank and file were worse than in the private houses of villages and towns), and in the Northwest in the 1790s-1810s it was largely limited to St. Petersburg and areas nearby.

Part of the difficulty is that local sources regarding billeting in towns and villages, especially those derived from the council archives of small and medium-sized provincial towns, have never been properly examined. However, they offer rich material about billeting, relationships in those towns, and the disputes which the billeting duty could cause. These documents can help us to understand better the relationships at local level between the commoners, the town council, and the office of the Chief of Police: though fewer files in the council archives reviewed are dedicated to billeting as compared to the amount of material available on recruit and militia levies, the study of the files on billeting issues, coming from the council archives and partly from the governor's office, can expand our picture of the relationships between the commoners, their administrative institutions, and the office of the Chief of Police during the period in question and enable us to see how they evolved – how positions and practices, actions and motivations of the commoners and councils, the Chiefs of Police and the army officers changed during these decades of increased demand.

The council archives show that situations of conflict could involve particular commoner families – those *meshchane* and merchants (merchants more frequently paid off the duty) who were, for example, dissatisfied with the decision of the billeting commission to select their household to provide rooms for officers or the rank and file, or to allow their stables to be used for military horses. (In such cases families would complain direct to the council.) But very often disputes regarding billeting involved the entire town, which would then act as a single political entity of communes and families of commoners, headed and represented by the town council. The most notable case took place at the end of the period under review, in the early 1820s, when some squads of the Life-Guard Cuirassier Regiment were stationed in Novaia Ladoga and in the villages of the district. The

town council took an extraordinary decision, which triggered a long discussion, lasting for more than a year, and resulted in a great conflict between the council and the Chief of Police, which also involved the provincial governor, the nobles of the town, and the regiment's senior officers.

The next section, based on this case study of the relationships, disputes, and conflict between the commoners of Novaia Ladoga and the Chief of Police's office, explores the most obvious components of the billeting duty: the allocation of 'flats' in the houses of residents for officers and the rank and file, and the collection of the 'billeting money' for the needs of the regiment. The remaining, but equally important part of the billeting duty – that is, the allocation of various building spaces and warehouses in the town for the needs of the regiment, its workshops, and other facilities (this was done by the council rather than the billeting commission), along with the interactions and disputes – between council, commoners, and the officers of the regiment – related to this side of the duty, will be explored in Chapter 6.

### **5.3.2. Novaia Ladoga in 1823-1824: the conflict the council and the Chief of Police**

At the centre of this section are the relationships between the council – as a representative of the commoner families of the town – and the office of the Chief of Police, when allocating officers and rank and file to the houses of local families and raising billeting money. The disputes and conflicts which could arise are studied in relation to a particular case, which took place in Novaia Ladoga in 1823-1824, when a great dispute between the council and the Chief of Police regarding the billeting duties of the residents took place.

In the early 1820s, one of the two Life-Guard Cuirassier regiments was stationed in the villages of the Novaia Ladoga district, with the regiment's headquarters, senior officers,

as well as regimental hospital, workshops, warehouses, stables and other facilities located in Novaia Ladoga.

By this time, the billeting duty in Novaia Ladoga was organized in the usual way. First, the officers and the rank and file would be billeted to rooms (*pokoï*) in the houses belonging to the commoner families of the town, predominantly those from the *meshchane* commune. The billeting commission, which had the registers of all property-owners of the town, would appoint the households for this. This direct billeting duty was quite burdensome: records examined show that often those families who could afford it would even build separate buildings elsewhere on their property, designed specifically for housing officers or members of the rank and file.

Second, those families who were richer, rather than letting the cuirassiers into their houses, would often prefer to pay the billeting money: this money, raised every year, was used by the council to buy various supplies for the regiment, usually provided to the regiment on a monthly basis ('for renting a building for the cuirassiers' regimental hospital (*lazaret*), for the light, and the heating of the buildings used by the cuirassiers').<sup>28</sup> This part of the duty was also quite burdensome: the billeting money, raised annually from the commoners' families who preferred to pay, amounted to significant sums: by 1823 it had risen to the considerable sum of 4,000 roubles a year. By way of comparison, in the same period the commoners of Novaia Ladoga raised 5,000 a year for the urban police, and 1,000 for fire safety 'instruments': thus, 10,000 roubles a year was spent on security and military-related expenses, almost one half of which went on the cuirassiers.

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<sup>28</sup> The council of Novaia Ladoga on the houses belonging to nobles and *raznochintsy* within the township and allocation among them of the town's expenses, 1.05.1823. TsGIA St. Petersburg. F. 685, Op. 1. D. 926. On the stationing of the Life-Guard Cuirassiers in Novaia Ladoga and allocation of billeting duties among the houses of nobles and *raznochintsyi*. 1823-1825. L. 6.

As the council reported to the governor in May 1823, most commoner families of the town, families of merchants and *meshchane*, were very much burdened either with the billeting or with raising money for the needs of the cuirassier regiment. Eventually, when a new squadron of cuirassiers arrived in the town in early 1823, it became extremely burdensome for the councils and commoners' families to provide lodgings and raise the money. In April 1823 the council therefore referred the matter to the billeting commission of the town, requesting the commission to provide it with complete registers of all private buildings in the town. Having received the lists, the council was able to establish that in the 'quarters of Novaia Ladoga' there were 54 houses belonging to the noble and *raznochintsy* families. Among the noble property owners listed were families mainly of retired junior officers or officers' widows – that is lower rank families, according to the Russian Table of Ranks (there were only several houses belonging to persons of the rank of major or higher in the town). And among the *raznochintsy* property owners – who owed the majority of those 54 houses – most were secretaries, clerks – that is junior personnel of the state offices located in the town (almost all of them belonging to the lowest 13-14 ranks of the Table of Ranks), as well as families of the retired rank and file – that is soldiers, sergeants (*unter-offizery*), soldiers' wives, and widows (retirees and widows would often be involved in small businesses, offering rooms for rent).

The council now resolved that these 54 households should be required to undertake billeting duty, with the heads of the 54 households supposed either to offer lodgings to the officers and rank and file of the cuirassiers, or to be liable for the raising of billeting money for the provisioning of the regiment. The same rules were to be applied to them as to commoners' families: the positions of the noble and *raznochintsy* families – property owners of the town – were thus to be rendered no different from the position of

commoner families. Most of these noble and *raznochintsy* families, understandably, were neither willing to provide rooms in their houses, nor to pay the money required. In its resolution, the council had alluded to the Emperor's decree of 1797 regulating the billeting duty in Moscow, although this did not directly imply that noble and *raznochintsy* families were to be excluded from the billeting duty – that is, from providing lodgings or paying an equivalent sum (only the families of priests were officially excused the billeting duty, just as they were excused conscription).<sup>29</sup>

In early May 1823 the council applied to the Civil Governor's office, asking him to ratify the decision to expand the billeting duty to the 54 property owners from the noble and *raznochintsy* families.<sup>30</sup> After some time, the governor's office (*gubersnoe pravlenie*) approved the council's decision, with the official decree from the governor's office being sent to Novaia Ladoga town council in September 1823. The decree stated that 'not to overburden the residents of the town' (the commoner families), the council was allowed and encouraged to apply the billeting duty to all noble and *raznochintsy* households, who were now obliged either to provide lodgings to the cuirassiers or to join in the provision of billeting money 'for the regimental hospital, building smithies, workshops, and everything what was needed for the regiment'.<sup>31</sup>

Having received the governor's approval, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October the council instructed the Chief of Police and the billeting commission of the town to start allotting the billeting duty to include the 54 new houses. However, the office of the cuirassier regiment soon informed the council that the Chief of Police (and very likely the noble member of the

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<sup>29</sup> The Novaia Ladoga council on His Imperial Majesty's decree to the Moscow Governor General Dolgorykov of 6.07.1797, 11.04.1823. TsGIA SPb. F. 685, Op. 1. D. 926. L. 4-4v.

<sup>30</sup> The Novaia Ladoga council's decision, 01.015.1823. TsGIA SPb. F. 685, Op. 1. D. 926. L. 6-7.

<sup>31</sup> The ukase of the St. Petersburg governor's office to the council of Novaia Ladoga, 15.10.1823. TsGIA SPb. F. 685, Op. 1. D. 926. L. 14-16.

billeting commission) refused to allocate the cavalry men from the arriving squadron to any of those 54 houses.<sup>32</sup> The regimental office sent to the council a copy of the reply of Chief of Police Luk'ianenko. Luk'ianenko – whom the council had also informed of the decree of the St. Petersburg governor's office approving its decision – nevertheless 'disobediently' thwarted all attempts to allocate the cuirassiers to any of the 54 houses – as well as refusing to raise the billeting money from those households. To justify his refusals, Luk'ianenko in turn alluded to the 1808 'Rules of the billeting commissions', where nothing was said about billeting duty – providing lodgings or paying an equivalent – applying to property-owners from noble and *raznochintsy* families.

Both the council, referring to the positive decision of the governor's office, and the Chief of Police, supported by the nobles of the town, continued to maintain their positions. In October 1823 Luk'ianenko again refused to allocate the new squadron of cuirassiers to any of the 54 houses, or to raise money from the noble and *raznochintsy* families (the council was by now concentrating on raising money from them as from commoners' families: apparently this was easier than trying to make them accept lodgers). Instead the Chief of Police sent the new squadron to the commoner families, that is to *meshchane* households, where the cavalrymen of the regiment were already stationed.

The Chief of Police had his reasons: in his response to the regiment and the council he stated several of them. First, there were no official decrees or edicts requiring noble and *raznochintsy* families to take part in the billeting duty by providing lodgings or paying money. He went on to note that many of those 54 property owners were employed at government offices and were 'earning their living by salary and were living in their houses

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<sup>32</sup> The Life-guard cuirassiers regiment to the council of Novaia Ladoga regarding the refusal of the Chief of Police, 23.10.1823. TsGIA SPb. F. 685, Op. 1. D. 926. L. 18-19v.

themselves' (that is, they were not rentiers, did not let rooms); other houses belonged to the widows of officers and soldiers, or to noble families who received their incomes from their estates in the hinterland and therefore did not properly belong to the town. Thus, many of those 54 families, so the Chief of Police maintained, simply could not afford to accept lodgers or pay the money – or were under no obligation to assume the duty, unlike the commoner families. (There were other reasons, Luk'ianenko also mentioned, such as the fact that several houses 'were standing not on town ground, but on ground belonging to the Ladoga Canal office'.)<sup>33</sup> In this regard, it seems that one of the most important arguments of the Chief of Police was that the billeting duty was supposed to apply only to families 'engaged in *meshchane* activities' (*zaniatykh meshchanskimi promyslami*) – that is crafts, small trades, work in the tertiary sector, employment as day labourers. (In his view, it seems, the occupation of a family was the characteristic that distinguished those who were liable for billeting duties: the distinction lay between those families who were engaged in 'lower order' activities and those who were not. State officials and clerks, landowners, and retirees from the rank and file, as well as widows, were thus to be excused the provision of lodgings or paying the billeting money.)

But the council, still alluding to the approval of the governor, continued to request from the Chief of Police that the duty should be applied to all houses including the 54 owned by the nobles and *raznochintsy*. On 19<sup>th</sup> October 1823, Chief of Police Luk'ianenko came to the council himself with a report, again refusing the requests of the council; during his visit – according to the complaint sent by the council to the governor – 'twice in the presence of the Emperor's portrait (*zetsalo*) he cursed and pronounced malicious words

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<sup>33</sup> Chief of Police Luk'ianenko to the town council of Novaia Ladoga, 22.10.1823. TsGIA SPb. F. 685, Op. 1. D. 926. L. 19-20v.

aloud, and with mischief, threats, and reprimands swore that he would never allow soldiers in the houses of nobles of the town or raise money from those households for billeting.<sup>34</sup> (Evidently Luk'ianenko was most concerned with the noble property-owners among those 54 families, rejecting every attempt to impose the duty on them.) By the following year, 1824, the governor's office had chosen to support the protests of the Chief of Police and revoked its decision allowing the council to impose the billeting duty on the 54 houses. (Perhaps, over the many months of the dispute, the Chief of Police had been able to employ various connections among the nobles and higher provincial authorities.) However, in other towns of the province, such as in Schlisselburg (see below), proposals by the council to spread the billeting duty equally were eventually ratified by the authority and entered into force.

It seems that there was indeed some lack of clarity in the existing legislation regarding billeting, which both sides referred to during this protracted dispute. But the dispute is important in signaling the increasing determination of the commoners and councils of provincial towns to secure their rights in the 1810s-1820s. It seems that after the end of campaigning in 1814, and especially by the 1820s, the opinion had begun to crystallize in the communes of the Russian town, among the families of merchants and *meshchane*, and their representatives – the council members and communal magistrates – that all residents of the town should be considered if not equal than at least deserving of similar treatment when it came to performing such duties as offering lodgings to officers or soldiers, or paying billeting money. In this regard it can be argued that the unwavering position of the Novaia Ladoga council and commoners of the town through the many

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<sup>34</sup> The report of the council of Novaia Ladoga to the Civil Governor on the disrespectful conduct of the Chief of Police when delivering his report, 25.10.1823. TsGIA SPb. F. 685, Op. 1. D. 926. L. 21-22.

months of this protracted dispute is illustrative of a broader issue. Evidently, the point of view of the council and commoners, as they persisted in requesting the Chief of Police to observe their decision – as sanctioned by the governor – was that the communes of *meshchane* and merchant families should not be perceived as something different, and unprivileged, when compared to the families of nobles or *raznochintsy*.

This dispute between the Novaia Ladoga council and the Chief of Police in 1823-1824 was not the only incident of its kind recorded in these years in St. Petersburg province. The same issues – regarding the equal imposition of billeting duties by local authorities, or pressing for equal taxation for all urban residents – were being raised in other towns by the end of the period in question. On the 25<sup>th</sup> October 1823, the council of Novaia Ladoga wrote to the governor, in a fresh attempt to overturn the position of the Chief of Police, citing the example of ‘that excellent town Schlisselburg’ (*primernyi gorod*) which ‘has introduced the billeting duty for all residents...in Schlisselburg all families, even those of the *stab-* and *ober-officers* (*senior officers*) owning properties in the town now bear the billeting duty together with the commoners, fairly and equally’.<sup>35</sup>

Such billeting disputes, it may therefore be claimed, can be considered an episode in the widening attempt by urban commoners and their self-government institutions to establish greater rights and privileges in the decade following the war. In Novaia Ladoga, in particular, the dispute in the early 1820s about the billeting duty of the 54 houses was only one of at least two problems related to increasing attempts by the town council to equalize the status of its residents, as between the commoners’ families of *meshchane* and merchants and those of the nobles, *raznochintsy*, and even the families of churchmen. The

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<sup>35</sup> The council of Novaia Ladoga to the governor, suggestions, 25.10.1824. TsGIA SPb. F. 685, Op. 1. D. 926. L. 21-24.

council of Novaia Ladoga in these years also attempted to level up the system of local taxation by suggesting the reform of the main urban taxes. In its first letter to the governor in May 1823, the council not only asked him to ratify the decision to impose the billeting duty on all 54 non-commoners' houses; it also asked him to approve a second decision by the council, a global and quite radical reform of local taxes. In order to make the system more equal, and spread the burden of taxation across all families resident in the town, the council suggested the introduction of a universal land tax, to be raised from all property owners in Novaia Ladoga, depending on the value of their property. This universal land tax, the council suggested to the governor, would take the place of three burdensome taxes which were now 'unjustly' paid only by the commoner families – for billeting, for the urban police, and for fire precautions (4,000, 4,000, and 1,000 roubles a year respectively). The land tax that would replace these three separate liabilities, which were a considerable burden for commoner families, would be raised from all families in the town, equally and fairly – that is from commoners, nobles, and *raznochinsty*. The council even proposed taxing properties belonging to the church and priests in the town, as there was a lot of land in their possession. (As mentioned above, properties belonging to the church and churchmen were the most privileged category; and priests and 'priest's sons' were considered exempt from billeting.<sup>36</sup>)

It is difficult to understand from the surviving sources how the land tax was supposed to be organized in Novaia Ladoga (as regards the valuation of properties, for example, or the raising of money): the governor's office rejected the council's suggestion from the

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<sup>36</sup> Priests and priests' sons were also exempt from most taxation and civic duties, such as the poll tax, and participation in the recruit levies. As this category grew more numerous, attempts were made, from the 1790s, to conscript at least those priests or their sons who did not hold any post in the church, or did not possess the required educational qualification. Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armiiia i flot v XIX veke*, p. 70.

start; it was only disposed to support the council's second proposition, requiring the 54 noble and *raznochintsy* families to provide lodgings or pay the billeting money. But the very fact that such proposals – such as for tax reform at the local level – were now emerging from the councils of provincial towns, is particularly illuminating: demonstrating the new level of self-consciousness, of demand, that characterized the commoners, and their institutions, at the end of the period in question. As mentioned above, some of these proposals, such as the reform of billeting in Schlisselburg, spreading the duty equally among all residents of the town, including the noble and *raznochintsy* families, would eventually be sanctioned by the provincial authorities. (Unfortunately, records of the Schlisselburg council and magistracy do not survive.) Evidently these problems – equalizing the positions of families in the town with regard to billeting duty or urban taxation – occupied a lot of the attention of council, communes, and families of many towns in these years.

Given the new suggestions coming from councils even of small provincial towns, it is not surprising that by the early 1820s projects for the state reform of urban society and its various aspects were constantly emerging; there was evidently a growing awareness in the central authority that the economic, social, and political foundations of the Catherinian town now needed reform. The most notable attempt came with the 1824 Kankrin reform of the merchant estate and of the entire system of trade taxation in towns.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Among other things the reforms aimed at equalizing the opportunity across all categories to conduct official trade business in towns, through the introduction of a system of 'trade licence certificates' which the so-called 'training peasants' and *meshchane* families could buy, to start trading and paying taxes for this activity officially. Although the licences were expensive and the system was revised several times, the formal monopoly on trade activities, which for many decades had belonged solely to the merchant class, was being gradually removed in the 1820s. Ryndziunskii, *Gorodskoe grazhdanstvo*, pp. 45-52.

It remains to explore what were the deeper, underlying reasons behind these new requests, these acts of self-assertion by councils and urban commoners that manifested themselves by the early 1820. More broadly speaking, what stood behind this new level of awareness, the new demands of urban commoner groups and their institutions in the 1810s-1820s? To try to understand this, it is necessary to explore changes in the cultural life and mentality of the commoners in provincial towns that had taken place by the end of the period in question. Although this thesis is predominantly built on the analysis of social practices, everyday life, and political culture of the urban commoners, the next section – the last part of which is dedicated to popular protest in the Russian town (the cholera riots of 1831 in Staraja Rusa, another town in the Northwest) – will try at least partially to approach these cultural questions: how the war period changed the cultural milieu of the Russian town, the mentality and perception of the world of the commoner families of merchants, *meshchane*, and urban magistrates; how the views about power, state, duty changed; and how the attitudes of families, communes, and councils towards their superiors – military officers, the police and the nobles, government officials – evolved.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter allowed us to better understand the complex relationships in provincial towns between the families and communes of *meshchane* and merchants, represented by the town councils, and the urban police – the office of the Chief of Police – as these appeared on the ground. Based on several case-studies, the three sections of the chapter have examined, separately, the negotiations between the council and the Chief of Police in regard to questions of financing the urban police; the cooperation between them during recruit and militia levies; and finally, the disputes and conflicts related to the billeting duty

in towns. The chapter has demonstrated the trends which developed during the period in question, the 1790s – 1820s.

Although the relationships between the office of the Chief of Police and the town council, the communes, and the families of commoners have attracted a certain amount of attention in 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century historiography, the positions and roles of councils and the Chiefs of Police, especially those related to military duties during the levies or when resolving billeting issues, have never been explored on the ground.

Meanwhile questions of cooperation, negotiation, dispute, and conflict between councils, urban commoners, and the police and other authorities with whom the commoners might come into contact under various circumstances relating to their duties – both in peacetime at times of war, and during mobilizations – offer an important and productive new theme. The study of relationships with the police in district towns has significantly broadened our understanding of the real positions of town councils and communes, their motivations, interests, and the scope of their actions – as well as those of the urban police and other state officials. This study has helped to explore their true roles, capacities, concerns, and limitations, and to see the influence of the years of increased demand.

After Catherine II's reforms of the 1770s-1780s, the Russian town emerged as a comprehensively revised functional, social, and political entity. It was a distinctively new social and political system: a system, which proved its sustainability and efficiency in the decades of increased military demand that followed.

The recruit levies and other duties of commoners grew, which put a lot of pressure on the recently reformed system of self-government by council and communes, as well as

on the urban police, and the towns' connections with other authorities – both at district and provincial level.

For the purposes of the study, local sources have been employed: mainly documents from council archives describing proceedings in the towns during recruit and militia levies, and when resolving billeting issues. These documents have demonstrated, that one of the most important characteristics of the system of commoner self-government based on the town council, and its relationships with other authorities – the police in the first place – was the inherent deficiency of both. This was nonetheless remarkably well compensated for by effective cooperation at the town level.

Cooperation between the councils, communes, and urban police – as represented by the office of the Chief of Police – was the central, essential element responsible for the effectiveness of local government in most situations of peace and war, when dealing with matters of local security, the raising of taxes, or – most importantly – the performance of military duties: in particular, the provision of men, money, and supplies during recruit or militia levies.

Annual expenditure on the Chief of Police's office, policemen, and buildings accounted for a large proportion of the town's budget – those funds raised from commoners' families – and these expenses only grew in the period under review, which gave rise to numerous disputes in council.

The position of councils, however, was very different from what has commonly been assumed in the existing scholarship: they were far from being powerless, and would often openly reject any new requests from the Chiefs of Police for additional funding – for hiring more men, repairing police buildings – even at times of crisis, such as in the difficult months of 1812.

At the same time, councils and communes had very limited means of enforcement, and so in most situation they had to rely on the urban police. The need to cooperate was especially evident during the recruit levies and extraordinary militia call-ups, when the police were required to help search for men nominated as recruits or militiamen, collect money, raise supplies, and guard men and equipment prior to delivering them over to the authorities.

Thus, we may speak of the mutual interdependency of the municipal self-government and the urban police: the post-Catherinian town, despite the lack of financing and the absence of many offices taken for granted in the towns of Western Europe, was a balanced political organization, where negotiations between commoners, councils, and the urban police played the key role. This urban system proved its efficiency during the period of unforeseen demands of 1805-1813.

Far less successful was the cooperation and negotiation of the councils with institutions outside the district town: despite promises of help and support, officials from St. Petersburg or the district authorities (largely controlled by the nobles) rarely provided any significant help. The militia levies of 1806-1807 and 1812 showed that coordination of effort remained very limited, and not much changed in the ensuing decade.

The ineffectiveness of contacts and cooperation outside the town can be seen as part of bigger problems within the Russian empire at this period, among which were the chronic lack of crown officials at the lower and middle levels, the paucity of state finances, a lack of educated professionals,<sup>38</sup> and an absence of detailed manuals and regulations regarding many processes.

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<sup>38</sup> Hartley, *Russia, 1762–1825*, p. 3-4.

Billeting in this period was another complicated military duty of the urban commoners, which put a lot of pressure on families, communes, and their institutions, the town councils. The billeting duty involved close cooperation between commoners, councils, and the Chief of Police's office; it also involved the regimental commanders, sometimes the nobles of the town (a representative of the nobles sat on the billeting commission together with the Chief of Police and a representative of the commoners), as well as – in difficult situations – the governor of the province.

An analysis of the practices employed has shown that there were three aspects to the billeting duty: first, providing flats in the houses of local families for the officers and rank and file; secondly, paying the billeting money (paid mainly by those who could afford it to avoid having any of the military billeted on them: from this money the council supplied the regiment with all necessary provisions, usually on a monthly basis – such as firewood, candles, paper); and, lastly, the provision of warehouses and other buildings belonging to the town or to richer families to serve as the regimental hospital, workshops, stables.

Study of the first two components – providing lodgings and paying the billeting money – has demonstrated that these would often cause dissatisfaction among commoner families and councils, giving rise to disputes, and even open conflict, with the Chief of Police, the billeting commission, and the regimental officers. The governor might act as mediator in some of these disputes, sometimes supporting the decisions of the town councils; but the positions of the Chief of Police, as well as of the noble families of the town, who would often unite in opposing the commoners, remained very strong.

By the end of the period in question, however, the situation had begun to change, and by the early 1820s new developments were afoot. Attempts were made by the councils and commoners of provincial towns to reform both aspects – the provision of lodgings and

the payment of billeting money – by expanding this duty to include both noble and *raznochintsy* families, and thus rendering their status equal to that of commoner property owners, the *meshchane* and merchant families. This happened in district capitals of St. Petersburg province, in the decade after the war's end in 1814. In some cases, it could be successful (as in Schlisselburg); in others, the governor either did not support, or at some point decided not to support, the position of the council and commoners of the town (Novaia Ladoga).

But these requests – to extend the billeting duty or payment of billeting money to the non-commoner families – should be seen as part of a wider process of change: in the same years, councils were mooted with the governor the wholesale revision of the local taxation system – as in Novaia Ladoga in 1823 – by replacing the separate charges for police, fire safety, and billeting, burdensome for commoners' households, with a universal land tax for all property owners of the town.

Such proposals are indicative of the growing changes within the cultural and political milieu, and in the mentality of the urban commoners. Important shifts were taking place; such developments as we have noted from the end of the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century could hardly be imagined in the 1780s-1800s.

The next chapter will offer some answers as to why this was happening, looking in particular at the role played by this period of increased state and military demand in the evolution of the perceptions, views, and attitudes of the urban commoners, the families of *meshchane* and merchants, their communes and councils, to the military – those officers billeted in the town – as representatives of the state; and broadly speaking, such analysis will try to show how their positions vis-à-vis the state, the government, and the military had changed.

## **Chapter 6.**

### **Urban commoners and the military in provincial towns**

The focus of this chapter shifts from the relationships between the councils and the office of the Chief of Police, to an equally important and so far almost unexamined theme: disputes and conflicts on the ground, in provincial towns of the Northwest, between the commoners, councils, and the military– the regimental commanders, officers and soldiers of the army or militia.

#### **6.1. The commoners and the military in the provincial town**

##### **6.1.1. The state of the problem**

The central question of this chapter is to examine the positions and attitudes of urban commoners and the councils towards the military – the regiments billeted in their towns, the officers and rank and file, the militia commanders, and the authorities of the military colonies – and to see how these attitudes and positions changed over the period described. As the military – the officers – were perceived as ‘superiors’, as representatives of the state, such study partly helps in analysing the positions and attitudes of the urban commoners to the state and its policy.

The aim of the chapter is to explore instances of possible disputes and conflicts, casual and systematic, between the commoners – individuals, families, the communes of merchants and *meshchane*, and their magistrates and councils – and the regiments’ Colonels, officers of the army and militia, soldiers, and the military authorities. It looks at various situations, during the peace years and in wartime, and analyses the triggers occasioning disputes and conflicts, as well as the deeper, underlying grounds for these – and how these changed.

The objectives are to study: 1. the catalysts and deeper reasons for various disputes and conflicts; 2. the positions of the commoner families, communes, and town councils, in casual and in more serious disputes and confrontations with the military, and how these positions, as well as those of the military, evolved; 3. how various conflict situations were resolved, and the role of negotiation between the commoners and the military in this process; whether the involvement of the provincial authorities was needed and if it helped, and how the situation changed; 4. to explore the attitudes of commoners and councils towards the officers, the army, and, more broadly, to their superiors, and thus to the state and its policy, and how these evolved from the 1790s to the 1820s, during the period of increased military demands and burdens, and what the reasons behind these changes.

The focus of the analysis are the disputes and conflicts between the *meshchane* and merchant families, magistrates and town councils, and the military (largely officers of the army), in the provincial towns, the district capitals of the Northwest, in the 1790s–1820s. The chapter concentrates mainly on several case-studies in various towns of the Northwest – Novaia Ladoga, Gdov, and Sofia–Tsarskoe Selo – but also from Kronstadt and Staraia Rusa (the latter was an important district capital of Novgorod province and one of the centres of the military colonies). The focus is both on personal cases, involving families and individuals, and those involving entire communes and their councils.

The second section begins by exploring casual everyday conflicts between merchants, *meshchane*, and the officers and rank and file. Cases range from conflicts in Kronstadt in the late 1780s–1790s to the conflicts between commoners and militia commanders during the militia levy of 1806-1807. The third section focuses on billeting disputes: both personal conflicts between officers and commoner families when it came to billeting in private houses, but also more illustrative, broader disputes between the council,

representing the communes and commoner families, and the regimental commanders – for example, when commanders demanded that the town provide houses for the regimental hospital, stables, and warehouses. Several examples of such altercations are explored in detail, notably from Novaia Ladoga in the late 1800s-1810s, when the infantry or cavalry regiments were often billeted in the town and nearby villages. The fourth section explores a rare example of organized unrest – a riot by urban commoners against the military authorities – which remains almost unexplored: two so-called cholera riots in Staraia Rusa in July 1831, when many merchants and *meshchane*, including those of the urban elite, and major magistrates of the town – along with rank and file stationed in the town – were actively involved in the riot against the military authority, the officers of the headquarters of the military colonies located here. (The military colonies and their organization in villages have been examined by several researchers.<sup>1</sup>) In a broader sense, it was the first serious, fairly organized riot of urban commoners against their superiors: officers, officials, and the police (the most recent instance of unrest on this scale being the plague riot in Moscow in 1771).

### 6.1.2. The sources

Various types of sources are used. Several cases are taken from council archives, such as discussions related to billeting duty in Novaia Ladoga in the 1800s-1810s.

Some disputes have been found among legal cases in the *magistraty* archives (the *magistrat* performed the function of the initial court of justice for urban commoners): one

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<sup>1</sup> On military colonies see: A. Bitis, J. Hartley, 'The Russian Military Colonies in 1826', *Slavonic and East European Review* Vol.78 (2) (2000), pp. 321-330; Hartley, *Russia, 1762-1825*, pp. 190-208; R. E. Pipes, 'The Russian Military Colonies, 1810-1831', *The Journal of modern history*, Vol.22 (3) (1950), pp. 205-219.

of the few surviving *magistraty* archives, in Kronstadt, has been studied, but only cases between 1780 and 1800 are available.<sup>2</sup>

Some disputes and conflicts between commoners, councils, and the military have also been taken from the provincial governor's archive.

Several important cases have been used from the RGVIA archive: in the section of the archive relating to the military colonies, a collection of files has been discovered,<sup>3</sup> previously unexamined by historians, belonging to a special commission, which was responsible for the investigation and trial (August 1831-January 1832) of the rioters from Staraia Rusa. Among these files are testimonies of merchants, *meshchane*, council members, and priests, as well as those of the officers, policemen, and witnesses. These files help establish various versions of the events, and allows for a better understanding of both the triggers occasioning the riot, and of the deeper causes behind the actions of various people, including the magistrates and the council – enabling us to explore the deeper concerns of the merchant, *meshchane*, and local urban elites, as these crystallized by the early 1830s.

In addition to these, some 'regimental' histories' (*polkovye istoriii*) from the RGVIA archive have been used as a supplementary source: most of them are unpublished.<sup>4</sup> This type of source is often employed by military historians, with most attention devoted to the history of the Lifeguard regiments or those from St. Petersburg and Moscow. Other accounts have been employed, which throw light on various issues related to the officers and rank and file of the regiments billeted in Novaia Ladoga, which help expand our

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<sup>2</sup> TSGIA SPb. F. 1718. Kronstadt town *Magistrat*. Op. 1. D. 236, 243, 374.

<sup>3</sup> F. 405. Op. 2. Files of the Investigation commission in Novgorod and Starai Rusa on rioters, 1831-1832, in: D. 5572, 5573, 5575-79. F. 399. Op. 1. D. 161-166. On the return of convicted rioters to Staraia Rusa, 1841-42.

<sup>4</sup> RGVIA. F. 2575. Op. 1. D. 657, 659. The regimental history of the Lifeguard Grenadier regiment.

understanding of the nature of everyday contact, billeting issues, and possible disputes and conflicts between the parties.

### 6.1.3. The literature

Everyday contacts between commoner families, their institutions, and the military, and the disputes and conflicts between them, have been explored disproportionately, especially with regard to provincial towns of the 18<sup>th</sup> – early 19<sup>th</sup> c. – with most attention dedicated to the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. For the early period, however, few studies in Russian and in Western languages are available, examining relationships between commoners and councils, and the officers and soldiers of the regiments, and the everyday interaction and conflicts that resulted during the levies, when resolving billeting issues.<sup>5</sup> The few works on the subject have become classics, e.g., E. K. Wirtshafter's study of the rank and file of the Russian army, in which the author, among other things, explored the contacts of the regiment with civilians, and the mechanisms of the 'regimental economy', such as cooperation between the military and civilians (hiring artels of soldiers for some work in the area where the regiment was stationed<sup>6</sup>).

The problem of contact and conflict between the military and the commoners should also be seen through the lens of the billeting duty. The theme of billeting in towns during this period has so far received little attention (see Chapter 5). In recent times, attention has started to focus on the problems connected with the construction of barracks and other special military infrastructure in towns during these decades; but inevitably, larger

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<sup>5</sup> Lapin, 'Reforma postojnoj povinnosti'; Pleshakov, 'Saratovskaia kvartitnaia komissiiia'; L. E. Iakovleva, 'Razvitie postojnoj povinnosti v Rossii v XVIII-XIX vv.' (Candidate of Sciences thesis, Saratovskii godudarstvennii sotsialno-economicheskii universitet, 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Wirtshafter, *From Serf to Russian Soldier*, pp. 75-90.

centres such as St. Petersburg and Moscow have always received most attention. Billeting and the construction of barracks should be seen as parts of a broader theme, of the demarcation of civilians from the military in towns. Such segregation of civilian life in towns from that of the military was an important problem for many European countries during the transitional period at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup>–early 19<sup>th</sup> century. V. Princi has recently studied billeting reforms, and the introduction of barracks and military infrastructure in towns – together with the regularisation and legalisation of relationships between the regiments and town councils (regarding the use of town properties, land for drills) – in the case of Italy in the period of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars.<sup>7</sup>

With regard to towns of the Russian Northwest, E. Iurkevich has recently turned his attention to the beginning of the process of the planned separation of the military from civilians at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, studying the systematic building of barracks and entire regimental neighbourhoods in St. Petersburg, which began in Catherine II's reign, but became far more organized in the reigns of Paul I and Alexander I.<sup>8</sup> But for provincial, small or middle-sized towns, there is next to no research which might shed light on the themes considered here: the billeting of regiments, the housing of its possessions, stores, workshops using the buildings and spaces belonging to local families and the town, and the construction of barracks and other buildings for military use (often executed by the commoners). The relationships between the regimental commanders and the council, and between the officers and particular families, are explored in the third section.

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<sup>7</sup> V. Princi, 'Militarised Cities? : Housing and Garrisoning the French Empire's Troops in the Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy' (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> E. I. Iurkevich, *Voennyi Peterburg epokhi Pavla I* (Moskva: Tsentrpoligraf, 2007).

The events in Staraia Rusa in July – August 1831, the cholera riots, and the broader problem of popular unrest in provincial towns against the military and other authorities is another important and largely unexamined area for this period. The classic work on the Staraia Rusa riots is that of P. P. Evstaf'ev', but the focus has always been on the actions of those rioters from the rank and file located in the town (the 10<sup>th</sup> worker battalion),<sup>9</sup> whilst the actions, motivations, and role of the *meshchane*, the merchants, and their magistrates remain almost unresearched. The study of these two small, but violent riots of commoners and soldiers against local military officials, which posed a great danger to the authorities, should be seen in a broader perspective: from the Northwest to the Volga region, there were other early cases of mass unrest in provincial towns, which are largely unexplored: including protests against conscription (the best known episode being the riot of militiamen in Perm' in 1812<sup>10</sup>), and the cholera riots of 1830-31, which swept across Russian towns from Sebastopol to Tambov and to St. Petersburg. Even so, the problems of organized protest, riot, and such themes as dissatisfaction among urban commoners and the local communes with the authorities – the military, police, and state officials – and with the policy of the government in the war period and the decades immediately following it – have so far been largely neglected by historians, even of the Soviet historical school with its interest in class struggle.

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<sup>9</sup> Evstaf'ev, *Vosstanie voennykh poseliiian*. pp. 113-165, 224-235.

<sup>10</sup> S. V. Belousov, 'Volneniia ratnikov Penzenskogo opolcheniia v dekabre 1812 g'.', in A. V. Gorbunov (ed.), *Otechestvennaia Voina 1812 goda: istochniki, pamiatniki, problemy: materialy XIV vserossiiskoi nauchnoi konferentsii Borodino, 4-6 sentiabria 2006* (Moscow: Poligraf Servis, 2007), pp. 107-125.

## 6.2. The urban commoners and the military: everyday disputes and conflicts

This section examines various everyday disputes and conflicts between individuals: merchants, *meshchane*, and officers and soldiers of the army and militia.

### 6.2.1. Commoners and the military in the everyday life of the Russian town

How close were the contacts, and thus the conflicts between the civilians and the military in provincial towns, during the period in question? Commoners in district capitals might encounter those officers and the rank and file of the infantry and cavalry regiments billeted in their town and in villages around it; but the billeting was restricted only to larger towns, and not in all years. Alternatively, merchant and *meshchane* families might come in contact with officers visiting the towns during the military levies, although this happened rarely: as previous chapters have shown, the council and communes were largely autonomous in supplying recruits during regular levies. The exception were wartime months, such as during the war with Sweden in 1788-1790, and especially during the militia levies: in 1806-1807 the militia commanders – elected by the local nobility (usually from those who had served as army officers) – would visit district towns to inspect men, and to check and collect weapons and supplies.

As has been argued by J. Hartley, everyday contact between the military and civilians – the commoner families – was not in fact as intense and burdensome as might be assumed (many ‘would never see a soldier in their lives’).<sup>11</sup> Recruit levies, though a burdensome duty for communes and families, established a sharp division between the military estate and civilians, as only a fairly small number of men were called up for military service. Likewise,

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<sup>11</sup> Hartley, *Russia, 1762–1825*, p. 16-20.

the burden of everyday contact, of the presence of the military – officers and rank and file of the regular army – in the life of peasant and urban communes, as when troops were billeted or passing through the town, was in reality also limited. In this period, the burdens of civilian–military interaction were more significant in the countries of Western and Central Europe, where governments struggled with waves of conscription and demobilization, crime among contracted and conscripted soldiers, and vagrancy among retirees, and had to provide some care to a growing number of veterans, especially invalids.

The Northwest – St. Petersburg and Novgorod provinces – was one of the most important parts of the empire in military terms: a border region, the presence of the military here was always higher than in the central provinces of Russia. In 1788-1790, 1806-1807, and in 1812 it was in the direct vicinity of the main theatre of war, and there was clear danger of the enemy reaching the capital. Naval bases were located here, the largest of them Kronstadt (see below); and from the reign of Peter I, important military enterprises developed here, especially in St. Petersburg province, serving the needs of the army and navy (for which the Olonetsk mines supplied resources, with enough timber, water, and coal available to support military enterprises). However, in district towns and villages of the Northwest, the presence of the regular army – officers and soldiers of the infantry or cavalry – in the everyday life of commoner families was in fact very limited, even during the most critical years of the Napoleonic Wars. Even in St. Petersburg province, the most militarized area of the empire, most military men and enterprises (the army and guard units, naval facilities, military and military-related enterprises, along with their offices and warehouses) were concentrated in St. Petersburg, Kronstadt, and in the immediate vicinity of the capital, as far as Sofia–Tsarskoe Selo. E. Iurkevich justly names St. Petersburg ‘the

military-administrative capital', as the largest military cluster.<sup>12</sup> But by the time one comes to Novaia Ladoga or Schlisselburg, a day or two's travelling from the capital, there might be only a few squadrons of the regular army stationed (billeted) there, and during the period in question not every year. In Novaia Ladoga, the second largest town of the province, there was only one permanent military squadron, 'the company of the Ladoga canal' (*komanda kontory Ladozhskogo kanala*).<sup>13</sup> It appears that it was a small, semi-military unit, like garrison troops or invalid squadrons; sources in the council archive show that it never played a significant role in the town: during the levies, the commander of the Canal company – the second military official in the town after the Chief of Police – is only mentioned in the documents a couple of times (during the militias). In Gdov, there were no permanent squadrons, and army troops were not billeted here before the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. According to the files examined, matters related to billeting, the passage of troops, or escort of POWs occupied the attention of council and communes far less than the levies. (Such documentation – and then not every year – features correspondence with the Colonels of regiments regarding the billeting of officers and soldiers, the provision of workshops, stables, and the supply of firewood, candles, paper, etc.)

Many of the disputes and situations of conflict between civilians and the military uncovered in the files thus tend to be related to everyday quarrels or occasional insults, occurring in certain towns of the province and involving particular persons – merchants and *meshchane*, officers, sergeants, or soldiers of the army, and more rarely of the navy. They were not part of a systemic issue, as might be the case in confrontations during

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<sup>12</sup> Iurkevich, *Voennyi Peterburg*, pp. 157-174.

<sup>13</sup> The entire squad of the Canal numbered 123 men in 1803. They had a building in Novaia Ladoga (stands today, on the embankment of the Canal); they also seem to have had another office in Schlisselburg, and, probably, some cabins along the canal. Novaia Ladoga council to the Governor suggesting to use the hospital of the Canal Squad for *Tengenskii* regiment's infirmary, Oct. 1803. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 156. L. 15-17v.

billeting between councils and regimental commanders. Nonetheless, study of these personal conflicts allows us to see the nature of relationships between civilians and the military in provincial towns of the period, to examine the position of commoners, officers, and the rank and file in these various disputes, to see how they were resolved, and what changed over time. Several examples of casual conflict, on different occasions, are analysed below.

### **6.2.2. Casual conflicts between commoners and military: Kronstadt**

The only town of St. Petersburg province where the interaction between commoners and the military was always very intense, with disputes and conflicts between individuals taking place every day, was Kronstadt. The largest naval base of the Baltic fleet was located on the island of Kronstadt. But west of the military base, there was also a small and vibrant civil community: the district town of Kronstadt. It had all the attributes of a typical district capital: the town was governed by its council; there were communes, though not very large, of merchants and *meshchane*, and the families of professional craftsmen were also registered in a separate commune (annual tax registers show that many craftsmen families had foreign names, mostly German). Many commoners living in Kronstadt were employed in the military enterprises, construction works, harbours, and shipyards of the town. (In addition to a military harbour and wharfs, there was also a large civil harbour on the island.) Among them were many skilled workers, such as gunpowder makers, engineers, or 'mechanics' (e.g., technicians servicing the steam power machines; the navy was one of the first to import them to Russia). But there were a lot of families of civilian professions here also: apothecaries, insurers, bakers, tailors. The island was not only a military base, but also a large and important foreign trade entrepot, 'the gate' to St. Petersburg: foreign

ships arrived at Kronstadt, unloaded goods to smaller vessels, which were then delivered to the capital. There was thus a small, but vibrant and prosperous merchant commune here, which included families of the 2<sup>nd</sup> guild, a few from the 1<sup>st</sup> guild, as well as in most years a couple of foreigners (with British or German names) in the lists of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> guilds. Some of these might be involved in military provisioning and supplies (running gunpowder factories, steelworks, or rope-making enterprises), or involved in construction contracts for the military and navy; but many merchants seem to have been linked with the export and import trade. There was also a customs office in Kronstadt, and an insurance office, which would render its services to Russian and foreign merchants and skippers.

Picture. A. G. Denisov, *Sailors in a shoemaker's workshop*, 1832 (The State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg).



The magistrate of the town of Kronstadt dealt with trade-related disputes and conflicts among the commoners. But conflicts involving commoners and the military or the navy – whether with officers, soldiers, or sailors – would be resolved by the military Commandant of the island (with more serious cases referred to the Criminal Chamber). Several interesting cases survive in the Kronstadt archive from the 1780s-1790s, showing that the position of the Commandant was finely balanced, with decisions often favouring the commoners, rather than the officers or soldiers involved.

Several of these interesting cases took place during and after the Russo-Swedish War of 1788-1790. One of them came to the attention of the Commandant in December 1790. One Jurgen Martinson, the owner of a tavern in Kronstadt, had been detained, accused of assaulting 15 naval marines and their sergeant. According to testimonies,<sup>14</sup> the soldiers were 'carrying bombs from one battery across the street and stopped to rest in Martinson's yard'. In the course of doing so, they broke some of the fences in the yard. According to the testimony of the soldiers and sergeant, Martinson, who saw this, rushed out of the inn, shouting at them to get out of his yard, and throwing stones at them; he then shouted to the servant to bring him a musket and then 'took that shotgun and started firing at them', slightly wounding one of the soldiers 'with several pellets in his calf-muscle'. The men ran. Shortly afterwards the sergeant (*unter-ofizzer*) and one of the soldiers returned and entered the tavern, the sergeant asking Martinson why he had assaulted his men; in response, Martinson again shouted, took the shotgun and fired, 'with several pellets penetrating the sergeant's greatcoat and the soldier's hat'. The sergeant and his companion retreated, Martinson shouting after them, 'I will beat you just as the Swedes have beaten you!' Martinson, his wife, and servant were also questioned, their testimony giving a very different account. Apparently, soldiers passing in the street would often break into Martinson's yard and his house, stealing his corned beef and, on a previous occasion, even beating his wife. On that occasion, Martinson had already approached the Commandant, and the Commandant promised justice, telling Martinson next time to bring the assailants to him. That, so Martinson and his servant Rodion testified, was what the innkeeper had now wanted to do. With only a cudgel in his hand, Martinson had grabbed

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<sup>14</sup> Testimonies of Martinson and other persons involved, Dec. 1790. TSGIA SPb. F. 1718. Op. 1. D. D. 243. L. 1-15.

one of the soldiers in his yard in order to take him to the commandant, and he only called for the musket when other soldiers began to throw stones at him. Eventually, having spent two months in custody, Martinson was released without charge.<sup>15</sup>

Another case took place in January 1790, with the merchant Shukin, who was a member of the Kronstadt *magistrat*, submitting a plea to Commandant Berchman – Shukin complaining that he had been assaulted by *Plats-Major* Shults.<sup>16</sup> Shukin had allegedly beaten one of his servants (*sidelets*), who complained about it to the *plaz-major*: on 8<sup>th</sup> January, three soldiers and a corporal arrived at Shukin's house, to take him to *Plats-Major* Shults for questioning. At first Shukin refused to appear, then began to offer various excuses, saying he was ill and would come to Shults later himself. Eventually the soldiers, 'having frightened Shukin's old mother and his widowed sister and her children half to death', took Shukin away with them; on the street, while escorting Shukin to the *Plats-Major*, one of the soldiers 'tore his coat and tore off a button, others trying to grab him by his hands'. At the Commandant's office, Shukin had demanded to see the *Plats-Major* requiring an explanation for his mistreatment. Instead, he was left to spend a night in a cell 'with the criminals in chains' (*s podlymi lud'mi v okovakh*), and it was only the following morning that *Plats-Major* Shults came to question him. Evidently highly indignant at his treatment, Shukin refused to say anything when confronted by Shults about his conduct towards the servant he had allegedly beaten, and called for a senior member of the *magistrat* to be summoned. Being himself a member of the *magistrat* (he was a burgomaster), Shukin continued to thwart all Shults's attempts to question him, stating that according to the supreme decree, he could not be questioned unless in the presence

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<sup>15</sup> The decision on the case of Iurgen Martinson, Jan. 1791. TsGIA SPb. F. 1718. Op. 1. F. 243. L. 54.

<sup>16</sup> The plea of merchant Ivan Shukin on mistreatment by *Plats-Major* Shults, 10.07.1790. TSGIA SPb. F. 1718. Op. 1. D. 236. L. 10-10v.

of another member of the *magistrat*. Refusing his request, the *Maior* threatened to employ force to question Shukin, but finally, 'having come to his senses', sent a man to the *magistrat*. About one o'clock *ratman* Krasilnikov arrived and took Shukin away. Shukin immediately made his way to the Commandant, to whom he complained about violent behaviour of *Plats-Major* Shults and his men, showing the torn coat and button, and saying 'he would not hesitate to complain in any other instance where such injustice needed reporting'.<sup>17</sup>

### 6.2.3. Conflicts of commoners with officers during levies

In more typical district capitals, the presence of the military men was less pronounced than in such places as Kronstadt. Besides the billeting duty, officers and soldiers occasionally visited district towns during wartime, in particular during demanding militia call-ups. These levies represent a special case: not only were many more men urgently required, but a large number of supplies – money, provisions and clothes, munitions and weapons – had also to be collected and prepared for delivery as soon as possible. (The organization of supplies of manpower, provisions, and weapons was constantly revised, especially during 1806-1807.) Commanders of the provincial militia visited district towns in the Spring of 1807, acting as extraordinary governmental and army agents during militia months. These officers would check recruits, and inspect the provisions, munitions, and weapons purchased for recruits by communes or donated by families. Some militia officers would take militiamen with them; more often they took the recruit money offered by communes in lieu, as well as equipment, firearms, and provisions,

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<sup>17</sup> Burgomaster Merchant Ivan Shukin to Commandant of Kronstadt, 8.07.1790. TSGIA SPb. F. 1718. Op. 1. D. 236. L. 8-8v.

issuing receipts of acceptance for men, money, and supplies (which now form an important resource in the council archives, allowing us to reconstruct proceedings in towns during militia levies), or ordering the delivery of supplies from the towns.

In February–April 1807, these visits by district and provincial militia commanders were at their most frequent. An illustrative case took place in Serpukhov. In May 1807, when militia officers were visiting the town, the town head merchant Mazurin received an urgent complaint from the *meshchane* headman, *meshchanin* Ikonnikov, asserting that he had been threatened and even assaulted by the militia officer. Ikonnikov declared that for the next visit of ‘the militia commander Blokhin’ (an officer of the militia from among the nobles) on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May, ‘he had prepared 11 militiamen, duly equipped and provided with all the equipment that had been prescribed’. (Ikonnikov especially stressed that he had provided the men with shoes, and that the shoes and clothes were all new). Ikonnikov had also prepared 275 roubles (25 per man) to be handed over, together with men, to the militia officer. On the day of Blokhin’s visit, continued Ikonnikov, he brought the men and money to the lodgings of the militia commander. However, the officer began to demand from Ikonnikov 10 more roubles per man; and to pressurise him, the officer refused to let him out and ‘held him in his lodgings under guard’. The officer then began to threaten Ikonnikov and even ‘hit me a couple of times very painfully on my chest with his stick, demanding I pay him the money’. Ikonnikov tried to resist, but eventually he had to give the militia officer 50 roubles. According to the report, having taken the money, the officer pushed Ikonnikov out into the yard ‘where the militiamen stood lined in a row’, and ordered Ikonnikov to stand in line with the men. Ikonnikov continued: ‘being afraid that he would take me with them from the town to the militia I rushed away (*dal utecku*) out of the yard’. Concluding his report, Ikonnikov asked the town head to reimburse him the 50

roubles by retrieving the money from the officer Blokhin – and to provide him with protection from him.<sup>18</sup> From the documents in the file, it is unclear whether the town head and the council managed to retrieve the money from the militia officer Blokhin, although they evidently tried to; Ikonnikov, however, was thereafter protected from the arbitrariness of the militia commander, and remained in the town.

In conclusion, it is evident that discussion, altercations, conflict between commoners and officers or the rank and file, occurred periodically in Russian provincial towns, from the small district capitals, the port towns such as Kronstadt, to large and rich mercantile centres. There could be various reasons behind: personal insults, quarrels, abuse of authority by officers (such as during levies or when it came to billeting).

But cases examined demonstrate, that commoners and councils were not as powerless as often imagined. Especially secured were merchants and town magistrates, and they tried to protect the people of the town. The Governor or Commandant often solved disputes and conflicts, which arose between commoners and army officers, and often they were resolved not in favour of the military; even the military authorities were capable of balanced decisions.

### **6.3. Billeting disputes in district towns**

In most small and middle-sized provincial towns, such as the district capitals of the Northwest reviewed here, disputes and conflicts between commoners, councils, and the

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<sup>18</sup> The report to the town head Mazurin of the *meshchane* headman Ikonnikov, who was beaten and threatened by the militia officer, May 1807. TsGA g. Moskv. F. 1036. Op. 1. D. 107. L. 154-154v.

military were largely related to various controversies which took place during the conduct of the billeting duty. This section looks at both personal conflicts between merchants, *meshchane*, and officers, and at disputes which involved the entire town, between councils and the regimental commanders – examining the grounds for conflict, negotiations, and outcomes.

Billeting disputes and conflicts between commoners, councils, and the regiment's office, officers, and soldiers have never been properly studied, especially for the early periods. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, billeting remained the main form of stationing the regiments; the construction of barracks, and introduction of special military infrastructure, had begun only in large towns, was expensive, and not always effective, and in the 1790s-1810s was largely limited to St. Petersburg and the nearby areas. (Conditions of living in barracks could be worse than in private houses; commentators saw other benefits in billeting, too, in giving soldiers a break from the burdens of service.)

### **6.3.1 Billeting: relationships between commoners and the regiment**

When an infantry or cavalry regiment arrived to the district (according to current 'maps of billeting' by the Ministry of Internal affairs), it was largely stationed in the countryside: the companies were scattered across villages, and only the central office of the regiment was located in the town, with the Colonel and senior officers billeted in the houses of residents, and the town accommodating the regiment's workshops, warehouses, stables, hospital. Normally companies or squadrons arrived to the towns from villages on a rolling basis. The entire regiment would only assemble in the summer for checks, drills, and military games, usually spending weeks in a summer camp outside the town.

The billeting duty had individual and 'communal' sides: officers and soldiers were to be allocated to the properties of particular families, largely those of the *meshchane* (Chapter 5); the council and communes had to provide communal or private buildings or spaces for various regimental facilities, such as warehouses; thirdly, the town often provided the regiment with various everyday supplies (such as firewood), usually on a monthly basis. Both relationships – of council and regiment, officers and families – would often give rise to disputes and conflicts.

In theory, even in the absence of barracks, billeting implied separation of military and civilian life. Billeting regulations of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century required regimental commanders, officers, and NCOs to strictly monitor the soldiers, who were supposed to spend time only in the houses and places designated for their stay. The rank and file were usually only allowed to visit town in groups of at least 2-3 men, wearing tidy uniform and wigs, always accompanied by a sergeant and preferably only on weekends or holidays, such as religious feasts. Officers and NCOs were obliged to ensure that soldiers had as few contacts with commoners as possible, both in the houses where they were staying (they were supposed to live separately and not to disturb the host family) and when being in the town. (The reality often differed: in the 1780s the commanders of the Lifeguard grenadier regiment,<sup>19</sup> billeted in Novaia Ladoga, often complained of 'grenadiers often wandering about the streets, in untidy dress, alone, many drunk, some even lying in the road'.)

The billeting commission (from 1808 this included the Chief of Police and representatives of commoner and noble families) would choose families to provide part of their buildings as 'flats' (*pokoi*) for 1-2 officers or several from the rank and file, whilst the

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<sup>19</sup> Regimental orders: Colonel on discipline in the town. 15.03.1788. RGVA. F. 2575. D. 659. L. 102-102v.

council would discuss directly with the regimental office – the Colonel or Major General of the regiment – the provision (or building) of houses for the regiment’s facilities, as well as delivery of monthly supplies. The commanders would demand buildings for the hospital of the regiment, its workshops, stables, bakery, baths: the entire regimental establishment which could be dispersed, allocated to commoners’ houses, such as the bigger properties of some merchants and *meshchane* (richer families would even erect special buildings on their properties for military use). Or, it could be agreed between the regimental commanders and the council that certain buildings, for various military purposes, would be built anew, often specifically for this regiment. The construction of such buildings was often in the interests of the council and communes as well. But for small provincial towns the construction of military infrastructure was a complex issue (posing problems of financing, workforce) which the council, the regiment, and often the governor, had to negotiate.

In addition, throughout the year the council was often required to provide the regiment with certain supplies, including firewood, candles, and paper: normally the Colonel would write to the council monthly stating the amounts needed, with more usually required in winter. For these monthly supplies the regiments were to pay: at least after 1802 the regiments received money for this purpose. But payments to councils often met with delay. As a result council and communes would often have to raise a certain amount of ‘billeting money’ from commoner families (as discussed earlier, in Chapter 5).

The next two sections are dedicated to the relationships (6.3.2) between the council and the regiment’s office (regimental commanders), and to (6.3.2) the relationships of particular families with the officers. Several files from the archive of the Novaia Ladoga council are used, including correspondence between the council, and the offices of the

commander of the regiment, the Chief of Police, and the governor, on the above-mentioned matters. Further documents relate to disputes arising between the council and the commander of the regiment on major issues related to the regiment: in particular, the allocation of buildings for the regimental hospital, stables, and warehouses – usually being the larger and better buildings of the town or of the wealthier families. The Novaia Ladoga files also describe very well the negotiations regarding the construction of buildings for military purposes. In conclusion, several files on billeting are dedicated to disputes and conflicts related to particular families.

### **6.3.1. The Novaia Ladoga council and the Tengenskii regimental office in the 1800s: construction of military buildings and provisioning of the regiment**

Illuminating examples of the relationship between council and commoners and the military are provided by the dealings of Novaia Ladoga council with the Tengenskii infantry regiment in the 1800s, and with the Lifeguard Cuirassier regiment in the 1810s.<sup>20</sup> In the first case, three main issues occupied the regimental commanders and the council: providing accommodation for the regiment's infirmary and stables; building places for these facilities when it became evident that allocation of them to private houses was not possible or desirable; and the monthly provisioning of the regiment.

In April 1803, the commander of *Tengenskii* infantry (musketeer) regiment, Major General *kniaz'* Scherbatov, supported by the Chief of Police, requested the council to build two new outhouses, with wooden floors ('owing to the absence of paving, the regiment's

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<sup>20</sup> TSGIA SPb. F. 685. D. 117, 156, 158, 159, 337; 435, 604.

carts are rotting in mud and dampness'), as well as several other buildings – notably to house the regimental infirmary.<sup>21</sup>

The town headman, the merchant *Sharov*, replied that at the moment the regiment – both the men, as well as all regimental facilities (warehouses, stables, carts, infirmary, workshops) – are stationed in 'private buildings' – that is, are scattered across the houses of commoners, 'which causes very little problems to the military'; the townhall, he went on, cannot build a hospital and any other building specifically for the regiment, unless the governor sanctions such construction. The last time that buildings had been erected specifically for the military, he noted, had been for the *Suzdalskii* regiment, and the council had then been reimbursed for the construction; but that was in the 1770s, and those wooden regimental buildings were by now 'all dilapidated'.<sup>22</sup>

It seems that the hospital building was needed more urgently than any other. As early as January 1803, Scherbatov and the Chief of Police Unkovskii informed the town council that the number of soldiers allocated to private houses who had fallen ill, was increasing. It was essential, so they argued, to allocate 'more flats for the sick in houses nearby' – that is to provide more houses of the commoners for the infirmary.<sup>23</sup>

But the council refused to allocate new flats in the commoners' houses for the infirmary, to house some 60 more sick from the rank and file as requested by the regiment (80 sick men were already allocated to private houses), citing the regulations, which forbade them to take any action which might harm the residents.<sup>24</sup> In reply, the commander submitted a request to the council to build a new hospital building for his

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<sup>21</sup> Novaia Ladoga council to the governor, 23.06.1803. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 156. L. 4.

<sup>22</sup> The town council to the Chief of Police, early 1803. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 156. L. 3-3v.

<sup>23</sup> The governor to the council, 14.08.1803. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 156. L. 8.

<sup>24</sup> The council on the requests of the regiment, 23.06.1803. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 156. L. 4-5.

infirmary – ‘a solid building in a convenient place and not far from the houses where the men of the regiment are billeted’.<sup>25</sup> This would be more convenient for both regiment and commoners rather than allocating the sick men to private houses.

The council and the headman Sharov then wrote to the governor about the entire situation: the regiment, they said – senior officers, infirmary, two companies of soldiers, the regimental workshops and stables – were all allocated to private buildings, which was fairly burdensome for the commoners, as the houses of the *meshchane* were ‘almost all small and consist of a single flat’ (*pokoi*). The council was concerned with the regiment’s infirmary as well, as up to 80 ill soldiers are in the houses of residents, many of whom are suffering from ‘contagious diseases’. (Especially burdened was one merchant Bazarov – who had 30 sick soldiers billeted on him.)<sup>26</sup> At the same time, the council added, the commoner families of the town were having to pay for the *Tengenskii* regiment’s monthly supplies – ‘firewood, candles, paper’.

Referring to military regulations – the manual of 1797<sup>27</sup> – which stated that ‘when possible, billeting should be restricted to public buildings’, the council asked for the governor’s help. The council did not want to allocate more flats for the infirmary, but neither could it afford to build a new hospital and other buildings for the regiment. As regards the infirmary, the council suggested the governor allow a hospital building belonging to the Ladoga canal squadron, which stood almost empty (‘the small squadron hardly needed it’) to be allocated to the regiment. The council also asked the governor to

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<sup>25</sup> The regiment’s office to the council, 29.08.1803. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 156. L. 9-10.

<sup>26</sup> Governor to the council, 14.08.1803. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 156. L. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Army regulations of 1797, part 11, 5th chapter, section 4. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 156. L. 4-5.

provide the town with money support, as commoners' families were finding it difficult to pay for the regiment's monthly supplies.<sup>28</sup>

The governor S. Kushnikov did not sanction the allocation of the Canal Squadron's hospital to the *Tengenskii* regiment,<sup>29</sup> but he did support the council's other requests: the regiment, he pointed out, should be able to buy all the monthly supplies it needed, as according to the regulations of 1802, regiments now received money from the Treasury for this purpose; and the *Tengenskii* regiment had already received the money for the year. The Emperor was well aware of the fact, he stressed, that many military commanders were ignoring the regulation of 1802,<sup>30</sup> and still demanding supplies from the councils and commoners whilst recompensing them with delay or even avoiding payment. The governor assured the council of Novaia Ladoga that the town would be paid in full for the supplies provided, and made it clear that the town was only to fulfil the legitimate requests of the regimental commander. In August 1803 the governor suggested to the council, that if commoner families were indeed burdened with the billeting of the regiment and its facilities, then the council indeed should consider construction of the buildings requested by the regiment – a hospital, stables, workshops, storehouses – choosing together with the regiment the best place, bearing in mind that the new military neighbourhood and its aspect 'should not affect the town's agreed plan'. Nonetheless, the governor left it to the council to decide whether the town built the new buildings for the regiment or preferred to continue with billeting.

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<sup>28</sup> The Governor to the council, Jun. – Jul. 1803. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 156. L. 16-16v.

<sup>29</sup> It was small, for 14 men only, and the Ministry of Water Communication refused to give up its building ('which could be needed for our men'). The Governor to the council, Jun. 1803. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 156. L. 15.

<sup>30</sup> The Emperor's decree of 12.02.1802; the decree of the Minister of Internal Affairs of 7.12.1802, Jul. 1803. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 156 L. 6 From 12.02.1802. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 156 L. 16.

The council members did not oppose the idea of erecting the new military buildings. It duly organized meetings of the communes of the town, at which it was decided that ‘though the construction would be a heavy burden’, it would be better if the town constructed the necessary buildings (stables, storehouses, hospital) away from the commoners’ houses than continue housing the regiment and its facilities in these people’s private homes. Evidently, the council, communes, and families – as well as the regiment – saw the benefits of keeping the military, with their sick, their horses, workshops, and warehouses, in a section of the town designated for the purpose.

At the centre of construction plans involving the town, the regiment, and the governor, was the question of finance: how to pay for the buildings (materials, workforce). The discussion was long, but agreement was eventually reached.

The council suggested to the governor that it build the buildings required, and the money for this then be reimbursed to it. But it seems that the regimental office was not willing to pay for the construction work, at least not in full. The council thus suggested to the governor that the money come from ‘the residents of that half of the district who are free from billeting, as they live very scattered and paying this money would not be a great burden to them’<sup>31</sup> (the council was doubtless referring to many commoner families in the district who did not bear billeting duties at all: many villages and smaller centres in the North were excused billeting). The council asked the governor to approve this idea, and if it happened that the governor could not approve it, then the council asked him to approach the Minister of Internal Affairs for approval. The Chief of Police Unkovskii also wrote to the governor, supporting the suggestion that the money came from the district.<sup>32</sup> This plan

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<sup>31</sup> The council to the governor, 23.06.1803. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 156 L. 4-4v.

<sup>32</sup> The Council to the Chief of Police, 17.09.1806. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 190. On construction on buildings for billeting of the army troops, March 1805 – June 1807. L. 17-18v.

seems to have been supported by the governor: on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1803 he wrote to the council to draw up designs and make calculations, and provide estimates for the construction work (hospital, stables, storehouses), with an indication of how much of it the council could cover from its own money – so ‘as I know what amount to request from the district when writing to the marshal of the nobility of the Novaia Ladoga district’.<sup>33</sup>

The commander of the *Tengenskii* regiment *kniaz*’ Sherbatov, and later Colonel Ershov, happened to be fairly cooperative. Eventually it was agreed that the regiment and the town would build the buildings together. First to be erected was the new hospital building (with bathhouse): the regiment provided the workforce – 12 master craftsmen from the rank and file (carpenters, locksmiths) – and the council provided the material (1,000 logs).<sup>34</sup> After the hospital, it was decided to build other buildings along similar lines (bakery, stables, outhouses for carts, workshops, etc). Construction of the buildings for the regiment took many months, but was finished by 1806-1807.

### **6.3.3. Personal disputes and conflicts during billeting**

The regiment and its facilities could also be the subject of various disputes and conflicts with particular families of merchants and *meshchane* in the town. These might be related to housing of officers or the rank and file (see Chapter 5 for the Novaia Ladoga case study), or to housing of the regimental facilities. For instance, the tavern-owners of Novaia Ladoga complained to the council in the summer of 1804 that because the *Tengenski* regiment had assembled for military games, 15 taverns were ‘all the time burdened with

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<sup>33</sup> The governor Kushnikov to the council of Novaia Ladoga, requesting the provision of design plans and costings for the new military buildings to be constructed, 20.01.1804. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 156. L. 18-19v.

<sup>34</sup> Novaia Ladoga council to Colonel Ershov on material for the construction of the hospital and baths, 1805. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 190. L. 3-6v.

baking bread for the regiment and thus suffer losses as they cannot bake bread and sell it freely to residents of the town'.<sup>35</sup> The council and regiment agreed to resolve the issue by building a bakery 'near the military buildings where all bread for the regiment is to be baked, so that the tavern-owners of the town do not suffer'.

A couple of interesting cases survive in the Novaia Ladoga council archive, with disputes related to families of merchants and *meshchane* who belonged (were registered) to the communes of the town, but lived in the countryside – that is in the villages of the district. The study of such cases throws into relief various problems – of status, land ownership, and the duties of commoners.

In particular, a large commune of *meshchane* and merchants of Novaia Ladoga lived in the large village Staraiia Ladoga ('Old Ladoga'), 10 kilometres to the south of Novaia Ladoga up the river Volkhov. This had been a prosperous urban centre since Middle Ages, before Peter I created a new town on the shore of the Ladoga Lake. One of the disputes involving the residents of Staraiia Ladoga and the regiment took place in 1816-1817. In October 1816, the council of Novaia Ladoga received a complaint from the *meshchanin* Petr Mikhailov Anan'in that the captain of the Lifeguard cuirassier regiment had occupied the inn belonging to Anan'in in Staraiia Ladoga, which was 'his sole income and brought in 500 roubles a year'. (Evidently, the Anan'iny was one of the richer families in Staraiia Ladoga.<sup>36</sup>) The captain was housing 30 horses in the inn – to the despair of the owner – and was now planning to rebuild the inn, and turn it into stables. Asking for help, Anan'in noted to the council that there were about 20 *meshchane* houses in Staraiia Ladoga which

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<sup>35</sup> The Chief of Police to the Novaia Ladoga council on complaint of the local bakers, 30.05.1805. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 190. L. 8.

<sup>36</sup> Novaia Ladoga council on the complaint of *meshchanin* Petr Mikhailov Anan'in, 17.10.1816. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 604. On the complaint of the *meshchane* of Staraiia Ladoga about the cuirassiers. L. 1-2v.

undertook no billeting duties at all. Soon another, collective complaint arrived from several *meshchane* families living in Staraia Ladoga, composed by a *meshchanin* by the name of Kal'azin. In this petition, the *meshchane* wrote that two platoons of cuirassiers had been stationed in their houses, which are 'their only sources of income, and thus they are brought into a desperate state'.<sup>37</sup> The *meshchane* presented their argument to the council, that they should be freed from the duty to house the cuirassiers, because this duty was to be borne only by residents of the district, the villagers (that is by peasant households), and not by *meshchane* families living in the countryside – as they already 'duly contributed all the town taxes and duties of the town of Novaia Ladoga'. The council, upon examination the status of the *meshchane* families from Staraia Ladoga, resolved in their favour. In the opinion of the council and the *meshchane* of Staraia Ladoga, they – the *meshchane* – were only liable for town billeting duties similar to those families who had houses in Novaia Ladoga – that is, for paying the billeting money, which the families living in Staraia Ladoga did duly and on time. But offering their house to cuirassiers – that would mean that the *meshchane* from Staraia Ladoga would bear the billeting duty twice; only peasant families living in the district were thus required to provide houses or stabling for the military.

The council wrote to the governor, alluding to these arguments. It stressed that the *meshchane* from Staraia Ladoga should be considered as a separate small commune of residents of the town Novaia Ladoga, and should thus not be treated as 'residents of the district', like peasant families; these *meshchane* lived in Staraia Ladoga as a self-contained commune, in their own houses, standing on land belonging to them; they were living separately from 'residents of the district' as there were no peasant households in their

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<sup>37</sup> Novaia Ladoga on the complain of Kal'azin and other *meshchane* from Staraia Ladoga, 9.11.1816. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 604. L. 6-7v.

commune; also, the council pointed out, those families in Staraiia Ladoga made their living by 'town business' (small trades, crafts, owning inns and taverns), and not by agriculture. As a result, stressed the council, they belonged properly to the town of Novaia Ladoga and not to the district ('they did not enjoy any benefits of the residents of the district and so were not to bear any duties of the villagers such as notably offering their houses for billeting...they paid their billeting money duly in Novaia Ladoga').<sup>38</sup>

The regiment also wrote to the governor, arguing that the actions of the cuirassiers in Staraiia Rusa, in taking the houses of the *meshchane* living there, were lawful. Despite the attempts of the council to persuade the governor otherwise, after long consideration and various checks, in July 1817 the governor's office decided to refuse the complaints of the *meshchanin* Anan'in and the collective complaint of the *meshchane* from Staraiia Ladoga, ruling that those families should bear the duty of billeting as if they were residents of the district.<sup>39</sup>

In 1818, on similar grounds, the complaint was rejected of a *meshchane* family from Novaia Ladoga who were living in the village of Krennitsy (nowadays a suburb of Novaia Ladoga).<sup>40</sup> It seems that such disputes about the status of families of *meshchane* or merchants, registered to urban communes but living permanently in the countryside (even if owning land and houses, and conducting business there) were quite commonplace: in the Gdov council archive, a couple of cases have similarly been found, concerning the

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<sup>38</sup> The council of Novaia Ladoga on the status of its residents in the district, 18.11.1816. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 604. L. 10-10v.

<sup>39</sup> Governor to Novaia Ladoga council on *meshchane* from Staraiia Ladoga, 26.07.1817. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 604. L. 11-13v.

<sup>40</sup> The plea of *meshchane* from Krennitsy, 25.06.1818. TSGIA SPb. F. 685. Op. 1. D. 604. L. 435. On the complaint of the *meshchane* from Krennitsy to free them from burdensome billeting duty, 1818. L. 3-5v.

duties and rights of several families of merchants and *meshchane* owning property and living permanently in the village of Kobyl'ee Gorodishe, 50 kilometres away.

To conclude, the third part of the chapter has focused on regular contacts between councils and the regimental office, related to billeting: problems of billeting were often the focus of correspondence between the council and the regimental office and the Governor. However, billeting did not apply to all towns, nor in every year, so this duty was less burdensome than that of the levies.

The regiments' Colonels would require councils to provide houses of commoners for the officers and rank and file, as well as find accommodation for various regimental facilities (infirmary, stables, workshops); monthly supplies for the everyday needs of the regiment could also be requested, as also the construction of buildings, such as barracks, warehouses, or a regimental hospital, if no private houses were available.

In most cases councils, often by appeal to the Governor, sought to protect the interests of commoner families. The role of mediator in disputes and conflicts between commoners and army officers or the police was played by the Governor.

Most disputes with the regiments were resolved by negotiation, often through collaborative effort: e.g., council and commoners would raise money and provide materials for military buildings, whilst the regiment provided the workforce (builders, carpenters). Councils often secured at least partial compensation for this.

In the 1800s the construction of barracks and military infrastructure began even in the smaller district towns of the Northwest, correlating with the experience of towns in other European countries, where separation of the military, together with their buildings, from civilian life, became an acute problem.

#### **6.4. Organized revolt: the commoners of Staraiia Rusa in the cholera riots of 1831. Their roles and motivations**

This first section offers a brief outline of the problem, describes the town Staraiia Rusa in 1831, and shows the sources used. The course of events – especially during the first riot, on 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> July – is reviewed in the second section; the third section shows the investigation and trial of those involved, with some figures offered. The fourth section focuses on the actions of individuals and the explanations they gave, throwing light on various personal triggers, and drawing attention to deeper concerns: the reasons for dissatisfaction among commoners regarding their superiors.

##### **6.4.1 The Staraiia Rusa riots of 1831**

The focus of this section are the actions of merchants and *meshchane*, and the town council of Staraiia Rusa, a district capital of the Novgorod province, in the tragic events which took place in July 1831: two cholera riots by soldiers and commoners against the military authorities in the town. (The Plague riot in Moscow in 1771 had been the only other episode in the recent past of riots on such a scale.)

The events in Staraiia Rusa in 1831 are less examined than the more widely known cholera disturbances in St. Petersburg in 1831; the Staraiia Rusa riots (11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> July) have often been seen as an episode in the series of incidental cholera riots, which swept across some towns of European Russia during the 1830-1831 pandemic. The Staraiia Rusa riots had certain features in common with disturbances in other Russian towns in 1830-1831 (such as St. Petersburg, Saratov): these riots had been occasioned by the acute, but spasmodic dissatisfaction of the commoners with the anti-cholera measures of the authorities (strictly enforced quarantines, fumigation of buildings). But most of these riots

could be characterized as short popular disturbances, with few victims; the commoners and councils did not prepare for them, nor tried to organize the riots after they began; and order was restored in a couple of days by the authorities, the police and the army.

But the Staraia Rusa riots can with some justice be considered the first instance of mass and, to an extent, fairly organized rioting in the provincial Russian town in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Staraia Rusa riots involved battalions of the rank and file both in the town and in villages. The 10<sup>th</sup> military workers' battalion in Staraia Rusa largely initiated the riot in the town on 11<sup>th</sup> July; and before long riots had spread across villages of the military colonies, with many merchants and *meshchane* (at least a couple of hundred men and several women), including town council members and the headman, playing a very important role, along with commoners, in the first riot.

The subject of this section are the deeper concerns, the reasons for dissatisfaction among merchants, *meshchane*, and their magistrates, with the military authorities, the officers, police, and various officials – and more broadly speaking, with their superiors and the policy of the state. The files of the investigation and trial, which are examined here, allow us to reconstruct particular triggers for the events and far more profound, underlying concerns. The question is how, and why, the nature of dissatisfaction among provincial urban commoners had changed by the early 1830s.

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Staraia Rusa, one of the district capitals of Novgorod province, was a traditional, fairly prosperous middle-sized centre of the Northwest; it was larger than Novaia Ladoga, but smaller than Novgorod. The economy of the town largely relied on the production of salt, manufactured in both large- and small-scale enterprises (there was a salt lake and salt sources almost within the town limits) – the industry here dating back to as early as the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century. In the first decades of the

19<sup>th</sup> century, the salt business began to decline but there were still fairly large, vibrant communes of merchants and *meshchane* in the 1820s, with many families involved in salt production or the salt trade, including merchant families of the 2<sup>nd</sup> guild, and several men of the 1<sup>st</sup> guild also. An influential council presided over the town.

But in 1825 an edict of Alexander I turned the town into a centre of the Staraiia Rusa district of the military colonies; after Novgorod, the town became the second administrative centre of the northern military colonies, located in the areas around Lake Ilmen. (Novgorod was a centre of the colonies in the northern areas of Lake Ilmen; and Staraiia Rusa was made the centre of those in the south.) For Staraiia Rusa and its commoners, the decree of 1825 meant that over a couple of years, the offices of the higher commanders of the military colonies were moved to the town, with a lot of military personnel – senior and junior officers, clerks, soldiers – duly arriving and workshops, stables, and warehouses being located in the town.

However, it was decided to preserve the civilian part of the town: after 1825, the town council and town head continued to oversee the merchant and *meshchane* families of the town; commoners retained their communes; there were still elections of magistrates; most families continued with their usual occupations and business. But inevitably, the everyday life of Staraiia Rusa, the economic activity of the people, the decisions of the council and communes from the mid-1820s onwards, were heavily influenced by the constant presence of the colony's commanders, officers, and soldiers, its military offices and facilities. In political terms, the life of the commoners was made subject to decisions of the military commanders: indeed, it can be said that Staraiia Rusa became the first Russian town brought under the control of the military authorities. In the 1830s-

1840s, the economic activity in the town shrank:<sup>41</sup> local industry often failed to compete with military enterprises (e.g., the military largely took control of the grain trade; established their own sawmills); evidently, many commoner families now often had to fulfil the needs of the officers and soldiers, with the military commanders often setting prices. (The military were only removed from the town in 1859, following the liquidation of the military colonies.)

As mentioned above, the role of the commoners in the tragic events has so far received little attention, with most scholarship focused on the role of the soldiers, especially the riot of the 10<sup>th</sup> worker battalion (*rabochesodatskii batalion*), which has been seen as the main instigator of events on the night of 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> July. However, the commoners and the council of the town played an equally important role. The work of P. P. Evstaf'ev is practically the only research to explore the particular actions of individuals, and the town council, during the riots – though not drawing attention to deeper concerns among the commoners.<sup>42</sup>

The materials of the special commission – the military investigation and trial of the merchants and *meshchane* involved – include<sup>43</sup> protocols containing interrogations of the rioters (*buntovshiki*) of *meshchane* and merchants, of the officers and policemen injured, of witnesses, as well reports of the generals and colonels who restored order. The most important sources are the interrogations of those arrested, of the victims, and the immediate reports of the military commanders who arrived in the town to suppress the riots. Most of these documents have never been examined, with most attention, in the

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<sup>41</sup> Pyliaiev, *Staraia Rusa*, pp. 43-48.

<sup>42</sup> Evstaf'ev, *Vosstanie voennykh posel'ian*, pp. 224-235.

<sup>43</sup> RGVIA. F. 405. Op. 1. D. 5572, 5576, 5577, 5578, 5579.

Soviet period, focused on the trial on the 10<sup>th</sup> worker battalion. Meanwhile, many merchants and *meshchane* involved were detained and questioned: 139 were sentenced to various penalties, according to the severity of the crime committed; these were graded 1 to 4, with 1 being the severest charge and penalty. (See Appendix for the list of those sentenced.) A file on the rioters from the Staraia Rusa council archive has also been examined.<sup>44</sup>

#### **6.4.2. The riots of the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> July**

In the two days prior to the riots, two incidents had taken place which caused alarm among the commoners and soldiers, and occasioned the riot. On 9<sup>th</sup> July a boy, the servant of a captain, was walking down the street with a bundle of salt in his hand. The *meshchanka* Sikavina saw him near the well; she threw away her buckets and shouted that he had just put a pinch of poison into her buckets, following orders from the officers; a lot of people assembled. On 10<sup>th</sup> July, the *meshchanin* Vorob'iev saw a lieutenant walking near the river, around 8 in the evening; Vorob'iev grabbed him by force and took him to the Chief of Police Mandzhos, telling everybody on his way that he had 'captured a poisoner' who was poisoning the water, to kill commoners and soldiers. Mandzhos freed the officer and arrested Vorob'iev – occasioning great discontent among the commoners.<sup>45</sup>

Soldiers and commoners were concerned about 'strange' anti-cholera measures being taken by the military authorities, and about what was happening in the hospital. The commission later established that the riot was not pre-planned, but had been occasioned by strong rumours that had been circulating that 'treacherous' officers were poisoning

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<sup>44</sup> RGANO F. 773. Op. 1. D. 8. Town council on riots in July 1831 and rioters, Jul. 1831 – Jun. 1832. L. 1–101.

<sup>45</sup> Evstaf'ev, *Vosstanie*, p. 113.

soldiers and commoners. ('Excitement grew in the town...merchants and *meshchane* were gathering on the town bridge [near the square], in the square, on the street, passionately discussing something'.)<sup>46</sup>

On the day of 11<sup>th</sup> July, soldiers of the 10<sup>th</sup> worker battalion refused to go to bath, as officers ordered to fumigate the baths. The first riot began in the late evening of the 11<sup>th</sup> July: following the evening signal, the 10<sup>th</sup> battalion, stationed in a suburb, rioted; soldiers beat up one of their captains, with other officers fleeing. Many commoners, having heard noise, began to assemble on the road leading to the soldiers' suburb. A police bailiff, Savost'ianov, having spotted the attack on the captain, tried to rescue him but was also severely beaten, this time by both soldiers and commoners. The crowd of soldiers and commoners now began to move to the centre of town, to the main square (the Cathedral Square) where the council offices were located, on the lookout for 'their superiors and all suspicious men'. Most events that night and during the next day took place on the square and in the quarters around it, within 10 minutes' walk of the square. During the night the crowd split up, with part of it smashing the empty police station and other council offices. The riot spread: the bell rang, the pharmacy was ransacked, the pharmacist killed. The rioters were avidly hunting down anyone official – the Chief of Police, policemen, clerks (they took no money from any of the offices they entered).

The Chief of Police Mandzhos was fairly unpopular, known for his brutal treatment of people ('he arrested men and kept them for days on bread and water'). But he was a resolute man: he assembled the policemen, fireteam, and called on some merchants' sons, one of whom was sent to the town head Sever'iakov for help. But the town head, when he

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

saw what was happening, fled from the town, 'hiding in the forest for three days in great fear'. (Interestingly, the witness described the town head as 'a malicious old believer'.) Mandzhos told his men and some commoners who had arrived, to take up cudgels and walk with him to face the rioters; but his attempts to get the commoners to arm failed, with one of them openly abusing the Chief of Police and refusing to help. Mandzhos then walked with his squad to face the crowd; but when he saw the number of rioters, he ordered his men to hide; he himself was spotted hiding in a merchant's backyard, where a *meshchanka* noticed him and shouted 'Here, here!' The rioters – commoners and soldiers alike – dragged Mandzhos to the square, beating him to death. His body was left lying there, and the next day some commoners, 'old men from the Old believers', were seen 'coming and kicking the body'.

Meanwhile, the highest officer who happened to be in the town, the head of the construction office General Major Meves (the regular battalions were in summer camp 50 kilometres away) rode to the square in parade uniform, addressing the crowd and almost persuading it to disperse; but someone cried 'Take him!' – and the General, 'a kind polite old man', was soon dead.<sup>47</sup> The rioters continued hunting down officers, some of whom hid or fled (helped by the commoners with whom they lived). Many, however, were found, arrested, and brought to the square, where they were put under lock and key, awaiting 'a trial', which took place the next day; many were beaten.

Part of the crowd of commoners, some 30-40 men, was passing the monastery: the archimandrite Serafim tried to speak to them from a window; for some time the crowd listened to him (the archimandrite noted that 'there were no soldiers, only merchants of

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<sup>47</sup> Evstaf'ev, *Vosstanie*, p. 113-146.

the 3<sup>rd</sup> guild, *meshchane'*, servants'). When asked who they were looking for, the merchant Zakharov told Serafim 'excitedly' about the *meshchanin* Vorob'iev capturing the poisoner; and now Vorob'iev was held by the Chief of Police who was threatening him (*raspravoi*); 'angry voices from the crowd were saying they were looking for the Chief of Police and superiors'. Then a young *meshchanin* shouted: 'Don't listen' (to the archimandrite), 'or we won't get anywhere!' – and the angry crowd continued walking to the centre.

All night there was riot in the town – sounds of the bell, cracking wood, breaking glass, shots and whistles, the cries of people being beaten and killed. About 5 a.m. several elite merchants came to the archimandrite to seek his advice on stopping the riot. The military authorities in the town were in hiding or imprisoned by the rioters; the town head had fled. Serafim advised them immediately to send to General Leont'iev at summer camp asking him to send up the regular battalions.

Soon the main events of that day began to unfold on the town square - commoners, council, and soldiers acting together. About 7 a.m. a messenger came to the archimandrite, with a request from the merchant elite asking him to go immediately to the square, to take part in the trial of the officers on charges of treachery and poisoning: 'everything was prepared there: tables, paper and ink, samples of poison'.<sup>48</sup> Though the archimandrite tried every means to refuse, it became evident that the town elite was with the riot; new messengers arrived, threatening that unless he attended, a force of worker soldiers would come and drag him. The archimandrite and his priests had to put on their robes and accompany them.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 121-124.

In a religious procession (*krestnii khod*) – it was Sunday, and a religious feast – the clergy arrived at the square and held their church service; after the service, Serafim noted, the priests and some elite merchants had slipped from the square. He later claimed that he had only come to stop the riot, but was forced by merchants and soldiers to take an active part in the ‘trial’, being made a chairman of a jury, which included the main merchants of the town, several *meshchane*, a sergeant and a scribe of the 10<sup>th</sup> battalion. They sat at a table covered with red cloth, brought to the middle of the square from the town council building. The commoners made Serafim smell ‘various powders which made him feel badly’. The jury questioned the officers, one by one, as they were brought from the prison, securing testimony from each of them and an admission of guilt: that they were plotting against the commoners and rank and file, to poison and kill them. Serafim tried to take no part in the questioning, but was forced to do so by the rioters (‘we will crush the entire town’): he persuaded the army doctor Bogorodskii to sign a confession, but the doctor had been so badly beaten he was unable to sign. Importantly, the officers’ testimonies were signed not only by the jury but by many merchants and *meshchane* from the square (e.g., Bogorodskii’s testimony was signed by 12 merchants and 31 *meshchane*). The officers were then placed under lock and key, guarded by soldiers and *meshchane*.

The riot now assumed a more orderly character: bloodshed and pogroms stopped; merchants of the local elite and the town headman merchant Solodovnikov took command, assisted by several *meshchane* and soldiers. Solodovnikov ordered guard posts manned by *meshchane* to be set up at all exit roads from the town, allowing no one in or out. (When a local noble Bolotnikov rode to the town not knowing about the riot, he was arrested by *meshchane*, questioned on the square and placed under lock and key.) Solodovnikov also ordered certain officers to be put in chains. By now the rioters had freed

*meshchanin* Vorob'iev, whose mistreatment by the Chief of Police had largely occasioned the riot. Solodovnikov also sent Vorobi'ev with soldiers to check the food in the hospital: they tried to arrest the doctor, who was only saved by his patients, who stood up for him saying that 'he cares for us like our own father'. Some worker soldiers and *meshchane* went out to nearby villages, and the riots began to spread rapidly in districts of the military colonies.

General Leont'iev, when informed at camp of the riot, dispatched the carabinieri battalion of Major Iasinskii, instructing him to restore order 'not by force'; and himself began marching towards the town with more troops. The head of the military colonies General A. Kh. Eiler also sent more forces from Novgorod. Some villages of the military colonies supported the riot, but many did not, and the generals were disposed to restore order without force, in particular as many reliable, regular army troops were away. But orders then arrived from Nicholas I, requiring 'all necessary measures' to stop the riot at once. The tsar also ordered them to inquire into its immediate causes ('whether the unpopular anti-cholera measures of which I heard' could have inflamed it) and whether 'there were also deeper grounds'. Interestingly, he also ordered a search for possible instigators, who might have come from St. Petersburg.<sup>49</sup>

On the late evening of 12<sup>th</sup> July Major Iasinskii arrived with his carabinieri (meeting outside the town the archimandrite, who had fled after the trial); after a couple of minor incidents they reached the square, freed the arrested officers, 'cleared the square without force of commoners and soldiers, who were there in great number despite the late hour'; carabinieri were then posted at main points of the town. Major Iasinskii, with one

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<sup>49</sup> Evstaf'ev, *Vosstanie*, p. 129.

company, then approached the town council, where, around midnight, he found a meeting of some 20 merchants and *meshchane* of the local elite, headed by the merchant Solodovnikov – who met Iasinskii in the doorway, saying that they were discussing how to restore order. The Major sent everyone home, requesting Solodovnikov to stay behind ‘for future orders’.<sup>50</sup>

Over the next few days troops arriving in the town behaved quietly, disarming smaller groups of rioters coming from the villages, but not risking any attempt to disarm the worker battalion in the town. General Leont’iev then arrived with more troops, but like Iasinskii he obeyed the order of the commander of the colonies to avoid using force. The commoner families had calmed down, but almost none of the rioters from merchant and *meshchane* families had been arrested. Although the riot in the town seemed to have stopped, disorder continued in the villages of the military colonies – with regular disturbances, and officers killed. The riot had spread. The situation in the town was also tense, with many of the troops there not wholly reliable.

Then General Eiler, commander of the colonies, arrived at the town; but after four days he left, encouraging further discontent among soldiers and commoners. By 19<sup>th</sup> July it was evident that a new riot could be expected in the town: not having enough forces, the military authorities could not risk arresting the instigators or disarming the worker soldiers, let alone restoring peace in the nearby villages. The situation in the town was becoming alarming: in the extreme July heat, soldiers of the battalions that had arrived started talking to commoners and worker soldiers, and disaffection spread. General Leont’iev sent repeated requests for reliable troops and cavalry: 23 officers had already

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

been killed in the town and villages, with 'rioters plotting to kill him and his officers'. In the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup>, a second riot began, largely involving soldiers and villagers (*poseliane*) from the military colonies who had arrived at the town, with the rioters demanding that the General and all officers be handed over to them. Despite the officers promising to allow representatives of the rioters to go to St. Petersburg to meet the tsar, the rioters searched out the officers, arrested and beat them, including General Leont'iev, who died the next night. By the end of the day, many rioters had returned to their villages, leaving all the offices round the square wrecked. For two more days Staraia Rusa stood silent and empty; commoners bolted their doors and windows; merchants and council members were nowhere to be seen; officers hid.

After several days, loyal troops – the cavalry under the command of General Mikulin – arrived, restoring order in the town; the General was met by 'a delegation of the frightened merchants of Staraia Rusa'; on 27<sup>th</sup> July the 10<sup>th</sup> worker battalion was finally removed from the town. It took several weeks to pacify the riots in villages. Once these were suppressed, a special military commission was set up in Novgorod and later also in Staraia Rusa, to investigate the actions of all those involved.

#### **6.4.3. Accusations, motivations, and deeper concerns**

The investigation, trial, and punishment of soldiers and villagers, as well as the merchants and *meshchane* of Staraia Rusa, ended by January 1832. There were 4 categories of charges. All categories implied punishment – confinement to the army for a full term of service (to Finland or to worker battalions) – but categories 1 to 3 also implied heavy corporal punishment, especially grave for categories 1 and 2 (beating by knout, or the *spitsruten*, often leading to death).

With regard to the commoners of Staraia Rusa, the actions of many men were examined during the investigation, and some merchants and *meshchane* were let go. Ultimately the actions of 139 commoners were scrutinized by the commission. Appendix, based on the latest list of the commission, shows the charges and short testimonies of those accused. Among 139 names there were 45 merchants (three of them witnesses, who helped the officers and policemen attacked, and met with no charge) and 94 *meshchane*. Also among the 139 were 7 women,<sup>51</sup> who faced charges for minor crimes such as helping to spot the officers hiding, or reselling looted goods; they were sent to the civil governor; their future fate, if they were punished, is not known. (At the same time, several commoners (merchants) were commended for their actions in helping officers and their families to hide or flee from the town.)

The 42 merchants who faced charges were all eventually sentenced to 1<sup>st</sup> category punishments. Of the 94 *meshchane*, 7 of those most seriously involved (as confirmed by many witnesses, in the beating of officers, or spreading rumours about decrees from the tsar ordering the killing of all superiors) were sentenced to 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> category punishments; 61 were sent to the army (4<sup>th</sup> category); 26 were freed.

Table 1. Merchants and *meshchane* of Staraia Rusa, found guilty and convicted for their actions in the 1831 riots.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> 4 *meshchane* wives, one merchant's wife, a soldier's wife and a soldier's widow.

<sup>52</sup> The table is based on: RGVIA. F. 405. Op. 1. D. 5575. The list of commoners whose actions are investigated.

| Found guilty:       |                     | Category   | Punishment                                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|--|--|
| Merchants           | <i>Meshchane</i>    |  |  |
| 42                  |                     | 1  | beaten (knout); sent to army                   |
|                     | 5                   | 2  | beaten ( <i>spitsruten</i> ); sent to army     |
|                     | 7                   | 3  | beaten ( <i>spitsruten/rod</i> ); sent to army |
|                     | 61                  | 4  | sent to army without beating                   |
| <b>In total: 42</b> | <b>In total: 73</b> | Total punished (of <b>139</b> considered): <b>115</b> ;<br><b>freed 24</b> |  |

The actions of merchants and *meshchane*, as can be seen, were treated very differently. The most frequent charge was that of signing the testimonies of the officers questioned on the square. The *meshchane* who signed were all designated 4<sup>th</sup> category, and some were freed; merchants who signed the testimonies, however, received severe 1<sup>st</sup> category punishment. Another frequent accusation was that of ‘running across the town with cudgel [*s kolom*] shouting like a villain’; for such actions, *meshchane* only received a 4<sup>th</sup> category sentence; the merchants a 1<sup>st</sup>. Even those *meshchane* most severely accused – of beating superiors, or spreading false rumours about imperial decrees – did not receive 1<sup>st</sup> degree punishment (even if witnesses testified against them).

It seems that merchants were seen by the authority as the main component of the town’s stability; as previous chapters have shown, merchant families were held responsible for collections and donations, and would often provide additional help for *meshchane* communes. Punishment for them was therefore all the more severe, whatever the charges were – from the actions of the town head Severiakov, or those who beat officers, to those

who signed testimonies along with the *meshchane*, or who simply joined in the general clamour of the crowd.

Altogether, the official version of the investigation confirmed that the riotous actions of the commoners, as of the soldiers, was of a sporadic nature. The trigger was dissatisfaction with unpopular anti-cholera measures, and wide-spread rumours prior to the riot – among ‘easily deceivable commoners and the rank and file’ – regarding the poisoning of people by officers and superiors.

The most frequent accusations have already been mentioned: signing the officers’ testimonies (many of those accused, especially *meshchane*, said they were ordered to sign by merchants on the council, or that they did not understand what they were signing, some being illiterate); running with a cudgel; shouting ‘like a villain’. Most of those accused blamed merchants from the elite – members of the council on the square, in particular the town head Severiakov – saying it was on their orders that the ‘crimes’ were committed.

Some of the charges give us a closer glimpse of conflicts in the town, and the deeper grounds of dissatisfaction among the commoners.<sup>53</sup> Many, it seems, had grievances against the police; some merchants (I. Ptitsyn, M. Shaposhnikov) allegedly ran along shouting, ‘Kill, hang all policemen!’; another testified that a bailiff had arrived at his home before the riot and, hearing the merchant’s complaints about billeting, said: ‘If we order it, you’ll house 10, 20, 50 soldiers!’ When flogging officers on the square, another merchant A. Vasiliev was heard to say: ‘We feed you, take you into our house, and you poison us!’ The commoners were deeply dissatisfied with the whole body of officers, police, local authorities, doctors – the rioters calling the whole body of them ‘cholera’ – to be killed.

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<sup>53</sup> Based on the files with testimonies of those accused: F. 405. Op. 1. D. 5576 - 5578.

Several cases may be specifically mentioned, as helping us to see the underlying attitudes of commoners – in particular, in relation to several men in Staraiia Rusa and in the villages around, who spoke of secret decrees allegedly issued commanding the common people to kill their superiors. Two *meshchane* from Staraiia Rusa, Aleksandr Teslov and Vasil Khlebnikov, were known to have travelled across the villages, igniting people to riot by showing and reading to them some papers from the higher authority, which they allegedly received in Novgorod, and which ordered them to rise up against their superiors. A couple of other cases, mentioning readings of a similar sort to people in the villages of Lake Ilmen's military colonies, were also reported. Not surprisingly, Nicholas I ordered a search for the instigators, who it was thought could have come to Staraiia Rusa and the surrounding villages from St. Petersburg. Several commoners of the town testified that among the rioters an active part was played by a certain 'tall *meshchanin* who said that he had come from St. Petersburg, where he had taken part in the riot' (the Cholera Riot of the 22<sup>nd</sup> June); this *meshchanin* allegedly questioned the officers, and beaten them; but he was never found.<sup>54</sup>

It is possible to argue that commoners and soldiers alike believed that the officers and their superiors – but not the central authority, the tsar – were evilly disposed towards the common people. Many testimonies reveal distrust, suspicion, and open hate towards the officers – the 'German' (or 'Pole') generals, colonels, and medics (many officers, medical specialists, had German names) – who commoners collectively called 'the cholera'.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> The accusation and testimonies of A. Teslov and V. Khlebnikov. Oct. - Nov. 1831. RGVA. F. 405. Op. 1. D. 5575. L. 2-4.

<sup>55</sup> *Meshchanin* Vorob'iev was also accused of perching on the phaeton of the nobleman Bolotnikov, as he arrived in town and transported him to the square, shouting, 'Here is a true Pole, a poisoner!' One of the

Evidently, many actions, speeches, and motivations of the rioters, revealed during the investigation, were frequently occasioned by the dramatic circumstances of the cholera pandemic; the riots also took place in one of the centres of the military colonies. But it might be said that by the 1830s there was a marked distrust, and ensuing discontent, among commoners – merchants, *meshchane* families, and magistrates of the provincial towns of the Northwest – with army officers and the police (tensions frequently occasioned by billeting disputes, conscription, and everyday conflict). This dissatisfaction of commoners with their superiors, and the policy of the state in general, had, it seems, grown through the 1820s.

The cases mentioned above, involving falsified orders from the central authorities to kill all superiors, can be correlated with other similar instances in the post-war decades: various popular rumours, for example, had circulated in many parts of Russia, regarding secret orders left by Emperor Alexander ordering the authorities to extend freedom to the people – that is, first of all, to emancipate serfs; and also to grant commoners certain ‘freedoms’ and privileges, if not to raise them to the level of the privileged estates. Files can be found in Russian archives noting rumours of such ‘secret decrees’, or men captured in various provinces, accused of publishing them; it seems there were many such cases in the 1820s and early 1830s, spiking in critical years, such as during the cholera pandemic. These popular rumours were even reflected in oral culture: a popular ‘song about Decembrists’ began to circulate after 1825 about the alleged intention of the central authority to give ‘freedom to the people’ – an intention which had been thwarted by their

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officers, a captain Khobot, who had a Polish name, was also treated by commoners as a poisoner; they also accused the captain of having ‘an indecent relationship’ with his major. The accusation and testimonies of U. Vorob’ev, Oct. 1831. RGVIA. F. 405. Op. 1. D. 5575. L. 4-5.

superiors. The song circulated widely among the commoners, with its variations recorded from the North to the Volga region, and as late as the 1930s.<sup>56</sup>

It can be argued, with some reservations, that this growing dissatisfaction with the police, army, and the authorities – and feelings of more general resentment among commoners in towns and villages at the policy of the central authority – manifested itself in the first couple of decades after the wars ended in 1814, because of expectations among the commoners that the people would be rewarded for their service and their losses during the war years. An interesting case took place in Staraiia Rusa: a certain *meshchanin* Ivan Lapin, arrested in Staraiia Rusa as one of the main rioters (he had allegedly beaten the police bailiff, and ‘provided fetters for officers’; see Ap. 1), held the medal of the Order of St. George, the Russian highest military award; an investigation was made into how he had acquired it, as he had never served in the army; it was discovered that Lapin received the order – which was fairly unusual – for his deeds in the militia in 1812, being personally awarded it by the commander. The court decided to sentence Lapin to the army, stripping him of his insignia; as a holder of the St. George medal, however, he was excused corporal punishment.

It has been noticed that in the revolutions of the 1820s, and the 1830 revolution in France, and not only among the membership of secret societies in towns, there were, in many European countries in the 1810s-1830s, a lot of veterans – former soldiers and sergeants – who had served with distinction in the 1800s-1810s campaigns, and now played an active role in popular movements.<sup>57</sup> Whether there was a direct correlation in

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<sup>56</sup> M. V. Nechkina, *Dekabristy* (Moscow: Nauka, 1984). pp. 142-147.

Songs about Razin and Pugachev also circulated. E. Guillourel, D. Hopkin, W. Pooley (eds), *Rhythms of revolt: European traditions and memories of social conflict in oral culture* (London: Routledge, 2017).

<sup>57</sup> E. Guillourel, D. Hopkin, W. Pooley (eds), *Rhythms of revolt: European traditions and memories of social conflict in oral culture* (London: Routledge, 2017).

Russia also, between commoners – men who returned from military service in the 1810-1820s, such as from short-term militia service – and those who took part in various protests, including popular disturbances such as the cholera riots, is a question which needs further investigation. But we can assume that there was a growing self-awareness among urban commoners in the 1810s-1820s, a growing understanding of their role and position in the state – and much of that was owed to their massive involvement in the campaigns of the 1800s-1810s.

This theme, of the growing awareness and, very probably, the growing popular dissatisfaction at the policy of the central authorities in the post-war decades, in view of certain expectations that the commoners had, is very important and has not yet been researched in detail. In her work on the Decembrist revolt, M. Nechkina stressed that the role of the commoners of St. Petersburg in the tragic events of 14<sup>th</sup> December 1825 has been very poorly studied; that there was a fair degree of support for the revolt demonstrated by the ‘crowd’ on the square, on the day of the riot and in the night after, is evident.<sup>58</sup> Some commoners were reported as throwing logs at officers of Nicholas I’s entourage<sup>59</sup> (prince Eugene von Wurtemberg mentioned the workers employed in construction of the Isakievskii Cathedral). The most notable episode was the aggressive behaviour, demonstrated both by the soldiers and the crowd on the square, towards the clergy – the metropolitan and his companions who arrived at the square in an attempt to talk to the rioters. Likewise, on the night following the revolt, a couple of officers found shelter in a commoner’s house; the host, most likely a merchant, showed a certain

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<sup>58</sup> M. V. Nechkina, *Den’ 14 Dekabria* (Moscow: Mysl’, 1975), pp. 195-209.

<sup>59</sup> Prince Evgenii Wurtembergskii wrote that the workers working on the construction of the Isakievskii Cathedral, tried to throw logs into the Emperor’s suite; one was taken by the prince and said to him: ‘the people were just playing’. Nechkina, *Den’ 14 Dekabria*, pp. 209-210.

sympathy to their cause, and fairly good understanding of the situation in the country, he too complaining about the policy of the authorities.<sup>60</sup>

Two documents have been found in the RGVIA archive, from the early 1840s, which shed light on the destiny of several men sentenced in Staraia Rusa for the riot. Families – usually sons or wives – petitioned the authorities in 1840-1841, asking for their men to be transferred to military units closer to home.<sup>61</sup> About 10 such petitions have been discovered. Most men served in Finland; a couple in the navy. It seems these petitions were all approved, and the men were transferred to finish their military service, almost all to local invalid squads – most to the 41<sup>nd</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> invalid squads in Staraia Rusa. (In 1842 the authorities complained that the men who returned and were now serving in invalid squads ‘have relaxed to such a degree that they wear civilian dress every day though it was only allowed on holidays’.<sup>62</sup>) Among the men who returned, most were *meshchane* who had received lighter punishments, but there were at least two merchants, who had been active rioters in 1831: K. Solodovnikov and I. Sumriakov. Kozma Solodovnikov was town headman in 1831 and one of the main accused (having ‘gathered people, been first to sign testimonies, forced others to sign, sent for fetters’):<sup>63</sup> he had survived both the punishment and the years of service. As educated men, both Solodovnikov and Severiakov enjoyed promotion in the military, serving by the early 1840s as NCOs (corroborating material presented in previous chapters, showing that merchants, as literate men, often enjoyed good careers in the army and military offices). Likewise, Ivan Sumriakov, once his

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 323-324.

<sup>61</sup> Petitions of the families of the men accused in 1831-1832 for the riot in Staraia Rusa, 1841-1842. RGVIA. F. 399. Op. 1. D. 161. L. 1-28v.

<sup>62</sup> Major General Nabokov on behaviour of the men, returned from Finland to serve in invalid squads, ca. early 1842. RGVIA. F. 399. Op. 1. D. 166. L. 11-11v.

<sup>63</sup> Petition of K. Solodovnikov’s son, 1841. RGVIA. F. 399. Op. 1. D. 161. L. 3-4v.

wife's petition was approved, was sent to continue service close to home, being 'seconded to the central offices of the military colonies'.<sup>64</sup>

To conclude, in the 1820s, a growing demand for the equalization of duties and taxation among commoners and their magistrates became apparent: town councils began to submit proposals to governors for equalizing the billeting duty, suggesting that it should apply as well to noble property owners and the educated professions; or suggesting the introduction of equal land taxation in the town. It can be argued that the contributions made by commoners and their communes in the 1800s-1810s, together with the hardships of war and the burden of increased military and civil duties, stimulated a new level of consciousness, a new self-awareness among provincial commoners.

In this regard there were also signs of growing dissatisfaction with officialdom, which manifested itself, e.g., in cholera riots, such as the two violent upheavals in Staraia Rusa. Many merchants and *meshchane*, including those of the local elite, the council, were involved in the violent events of July 1831. The participation of commoners in these two riots has not been studied before now, the focus having been on the actions of soldiers of the military colonies who began the riot in the town.

The riots, poorly organized though they were, were occasioned by the unpopular anti-cholera measures of the authorities of the military colonies who were stationed in the town. But the special commission later investigated the actions of 139 commoners, and established that there were deeper grounds of dissatisfaction among merchants and

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<sup>64</sup> Petition of I. Sumriakov's wife, 1841. RGVIA. F. 399. Op. 1. D. 161. L. 9.

*meshchane* – with the local police, government officers, and the hardships accompanying billeting duty in the town.

There were, moreover, other underlying concerns among commoners, revealed by the case of some commoners caught reading out to the people decrees supposedly from the central authorities, ordering them to riot and kill their superiors. Similar cases were reported in other provinces in the 1820s-early 1830s. Evidently, there were growing concerns and disaffection among urban commoners in the post-war period, much of it derived from the losses experienced in the 1800s-1810s, for which the people expected compensation, or at least recognition of equal rights with more privileged groups.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has examined disputes and conflicts between urban commoners and their councils, and the military – above all, army officers and the military authorities, as well as militia commanders and the rank and file. Based on various sources, which describe contacts on the ground, this chapter has examined sporadic controversies in the everyday life of provincial towns: the disputes between council and regiment related to billeting, and the organized riot of urban commoners against the military authorities and their superiors.

It seems that everyday disputes, conflict, and mistreatment of commoner families by officers or the rank and file, was a regular feature in provincial towns, from the small district capitals of the Northwest to larger and richer centres such as Serpukhov. There could be many reasons for such casual controversies: personal insults and quarrels, injustice and mistreatment of commoners, abuse of authority by officers (such as during the difficult months of militia mobilizations). But cases from Kronstadt and Serpukhov

demonstrate that very often commoners – especially the magistrates of the council and *magistraty*, and merchants – were able to repulse these threats, withstanding the pressure of the officers or militia commanders even in wartime. The councils and *magistraty* would attempt to protect the people of the town. Moreover, it seems that the military authorities were capable of balanced decisions, often coming down in favour of commoners in their disputes with the military.

The second part of the chapter has focused on regular contacts between councils and the regimental office, related to billeting. According to council archives, three themes emerged most often for discussion: provision of houses belonging to the town or to families for regimental facilities; the construction of new buildings for the regimental facilities, if no houses could be found; and provision of various supplies for the regiment, usually on a monthly basis.

The councils would actively try to defend the interests of commoner families and communes, and the finances and positions of the entire town, as is evidenced by several case studies about billeting in the 1800s-1810s in Novaia Ladoga – a large and prosperous commune.

When it came to providing supplies for the regiment – either monthly (firewood, candles, oil, paper) or on request (straw, buckets, tubs) – the council would usually agree to provide them; but at least after 1802, the council would always insist for supplies to be paid accordingly by the regiment. (The council would appeal to the governor for support if the regimental office failed to pay.) Supplies were bought using the money raised from families, and these and these could entail heavy expenditure each year; the councils thus would always try to receive compensation from the regiment in the shortest possible time – even refusing requests for new supplies.

Longer and more serious negotiations would often be initiated when councils received requests from the regimental office to accommodate the regimental facilities – hospital, warehouses, stables, workshops. Such situations could be resolved in various ways: the regimental facilities could be put out to commoner families' houses, especially the richer and larger households of *meshchane* and merchants; but this could not only burden the families, but also prove inconvenient for the regiment (for instance, if the infirmary, stables, or workshops were spread across private buildings). Sometimes, buildings more appropriate for the purpose could be found belonging to the town or various institutions (e.g., the Ladoga Canal Board).

In some cases, a solution was found in building special military infrastructure: the construction of houses for the rank and file, along with stables, regimental bakery, baths and other facilities, would match both the interests of the council, families, and the regiment. (It seems that, especially from the 1800s, such works were carried out in many towns, even in small district capitals of St. Petersburg province – though these, of course, would often be simple, wooden buildings.)

The main problem would be financing. Solutions which satisfied all parties could be reached during negotiations: for instance, the regiment would provide the workforce, the town council money and materials – for which the town would later receive partial, if not full compensation. It seems that the role of the Governor of the province, as a mediator between the council and the regiment, and the district (noble) authorities, was significant, and grew in importance in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as many practices became systematic and standardized. The Governor's office would very often support councils' suggestions and proposals regarding billeting, though ultimately it would aim to satisfy both the town and the regiment.

Smaller billeting disputes, related to allocation of the regimental facilities, often took place between officers and particular families of merchants and *meshchane*. Families would first of all apply to the council for help, and less often to the Governor. Often disputes and conflicts could be solved by the council and commune: when the regiment assembled in Novaia Ladoga for the summer games overwhelmed 15 bakeries with orders, it was easier for the council and commoners to build a bakery for the regiment – a better solution for all.

But in some cases, the council and families, even after appealing to the Governor several times, failed to secure their rights: notably when disputes emerged between the regimental office, officers, and merchants or *meshchane* who lived in the villages. Though urban commoners could legally buy land (after 1801),<sup>65</sup> and build properties on it, the status of such residents, registered to urban communes but living in villages, was still under discussion by the authorities – especially when it concerned their duties (taxes, billeting). (For example, a commune of merchants and *meshchane* from Novaia Ladoga lived in the village Staraia Ladoga; many Gdov families owned land and houses in the remote village of Kobyl'e Gorodishe.) The problem was not only the lack of clarity regarding their legal status and rights; the range of action, and capacity of councils outside the town, when dealing with the authorities, to protect the interests of urban commoners, was limited.

The provincial town – the commoner families and communes, presided over by the council and its magistrates – could act as a single political entity when it came to civic disturbance. The last section has examined the events in Staraia Rusa in July 1831, during the cholera pandemic, which can be characterized as very probably the first serious,

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<sup>65</sup> This right – to buy and own land – was extended from nobles to merchant, *meshchane*, and state peasants by the decree of 12.12.1801.

massive, and fairly organized (after its sporadic beginnings) anti-governmental riot of soldiers and commoners in 19<sup>th</sup> c. Russia. It took the form of a local 'anti-military' riot: initially, the target of the rioters were the authorities of the military colonies, located in the town; but in due course the entire caste of their superiors fell victim to them – officers and military clerks, the Chief of Police and his bailiffs, doctors and surveyors. (There were even reports of assaults on the clergy serving the military.) The riots in the town were duly curbed, but riots of soldiers and peasants continued in villages of the military colonies for several weeks.

The special commission considered the dissatisfaction of urban commoners and the rank and file with the anti-cholera measures of the military authorities as the main ground for the riots. But unusual, 'strange' actions, enforced with strictness by officers and police, only acted as a catalyst. From the documents of the commission and trial of the commoners, it is evident (and it must have become apparent to the investigators) that there were deeper reasons of dissatisfaction among commoners with the military, police, and civil authorities, and with the policy of government in general. This dissatisfaction, occasioned by growing taxation, conscription, billeting and other duties (see Chapter 5) manifested itself in the 1810s-early 1830s in many provincial towns, though it rarely if ever came to open riots.

It seems that there were also deeper, more profound concerns and underlying perceptions behind this dissatisfaction. We can hypothesize that provincial urban commoners – merchants, *meshchane*, and magistrates – in the first decades after the end of campaigning in 1814, had felt some disappointment that the war losses – the contribution they had made and the economic burdens they had suffered – had not been properly appreciated by the authorities. Taxation, duties, and economic difficulties

continued to affect families, communes, and councils in the 1810-1820s; and no significant privileges were extended to commoners. This study has shown that the case of the Staraia Rusa riots can be seen to fit in a broader perspective, which includes the cholera riots in other towns, the actions of commoners in St. Petersburg during the Decembrists revolt, and other episodes. Notably, 'secret decrees granting freedom to the people' had been discovered circulating several times during the riots in Staraia Rusa, and were also detected in many provinces in these decades – which seem to confirm that we can speak of signs of popular dissatisfaction among commoners in towns and villages. Some studies have assumed traces of it in the oral culture of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But further research is needed.

Even so, the potential for protest in provincial towns in the first third of the 19th century should not be exaggerated. Urban commoners, communes, and councils rarely demonstrated open resistance (as in 1831) for another 70 years, until it came to the civil unrest and disturbances of Tsar Nicholas II's reign.

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## CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined the impact of growing military demands in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and notably during the period of the Napoleonic Wars, on the evolution of urban commoners' social groups in provincial towns of the Russian Northwest, largely focusing on changes in social and political culture, and traditions of self-government.

Towns in this area of Russia remain less examined, except for St. Petersburg and a few developed centres, such as the port towns. Most towns in the Northwest were district capitals, less important in economic terms if compared to towns of the Central Economic Region or the Volga, and their communes were smaller. Still, as M. Hittle has noted,<sup>1</sup> most towns here evolved historically as both economic and administrative centres (while, e.g., in the South and East of Russia towns were often less organic – to adopt the terminology of C. Evtuhov<sup>2</sup> – with the administrative and military functions often predominant.) The communes in towns of the Northwest, though, had their characteristic features when compared to larger towns in the provinces around Moscow (fewer merchants of the upper guilds; smaller families). They represent a valuable object for a fairly representative study, from which findings could be extrapolated, with some reservations, to urban communes of St. Petersburg, Novgorod, and Pskov provinces.

The choice of area should also be explained by the fact that towns of the St. Petersburg and partly the Novgorod provinces belonged to one 'integral economic and historical region';<sup>3</sup> historically, the region saw the development of the same trades and industries (grain, timber, salt trade, brickmaking), while the towns were interconnected by three important, actively developing waterways systems, connecting the Volga region and

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<sup>1</sup> Hittle, *The service City*, pp. 26-29.

<sup>2</sup> Evtuhov, *A portrait*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>3</sup> Belov, *Reforma*, p. 7-10.

Central Russia with the Baltic Sea ports. The military factor likewise played an important role in the urban communes here: with the Northwest remaining largely a borderland area in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the presence of the military in towns and ports was greater than elsewhere in Russia; in the 18<sup>th</sup>–early 19<sup>th</sup> century, support structures for the army and navy and other military enterprises developed more actively in and around urban centres there than in other towns of the empire, including Moscow.

The object of the research were the communes of several district capitals of St. Petersburg province – Novaia Ladoga, Sofia-Tsarskoe Selo, and Gdov. Located not far from the military-administrative centre of the empire, St. Petersburg,<sup>4</sup> these towns differed in size and economic background, but their communes demonstrated similar trends. For purposes of comparison, a number of other district towns have been examined: notably, Kronstadt from St. Petersburg province, Staraia Rusa from Novgorod, as well as Serpukhov from Moscow province.

The focus of the study were the communes of merchants, *meshchane*, and the town councils – their actions, practices, and the motivations behind these – and the changes they underwent during the decades of increased demand: the 1790s-1820s.

Chapters 2-4 have explored how in the first two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century increasing military demands – regular recruit and militia levies (conscription of men and collection of money, provisions, and donations) – impacted the positions of *meshchane* and merchants' families and communes, and their town councils, with the focus on the changing social relationships and political culture of the communes and the town, and on the economic impact on families, communal, and council budgets.

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<sup>4</sup> Iurkevich, *Sankt-Peterburg*, p. 112.

The impact of increased conscription has been studied in detail in Chapter 1: at the centre were the relationships in communes of *meshchane* – the low and middle-income families, which constituted most of the commune of the provincial towns. The actions of individuals, families, and communes in three towns have been studied during the months of increased military levies of the 1790s-1810s, and especially 1805-1813, when in addition to rising requests for recruits every year, two mass mobilizations – the militia levies of 1806-1807 and 1812 – took place. The practices employed by the communes during regular levies and militia call-ups of the Napoleonic Wars period have been correlated with the practices they resorted to before, in the late 1780s-early 1800s, and after, in the 1820s. The aim was to establish how the increased demand led to changes in practice, and what was the role of these changes for the transformation of social relationships and political culture in *meshchane* communes in the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

It has been established that by then there had been fairly serious changes, which can be observed if we compare the recruitment process in towns in the late 1780s–early 1800s, and from around 1810 and later. The watershed moment seems to have come in 1806-1807. The requests for recruits increased from 1805, but the first militia levy, organized *ad hoc* in late 1806–early 1807 (which remains largely overlooked in the existing historiography<sup>5</sup>), came as an especially critical test, which challenged many principles of the traditional system of nomination for army service by decision of the communal meeting – by verdicts of the *meshchane*.

In previous decades, the communes of *meshchane* largely nominated as recruits those members of the commune who were deemed most expendable: in particular,

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<sup>5</sup> Gornovskij, *Sto let nazad*, pp. 534-536.

debtors and bankrupts, men from small families and singles, those from among the poor, and recent newcomers. In doing this, they would resort to the traditional practice of nomination on grounds of 'dissolute behaviour': most recruits supplied to the army from towns in the late 1780s to the early 1800s were sent as dissolutes, with communes often nominating them throughout the year and supplying them in advance of the new levy (communes would accumulate receipts of acceptance for such men, presenting them during the next levies). The priority was to secure stable families, who contributed most taxes, disposing of less needed members – logical priorities, since at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century *meshchane* communes, like those of peasants, were still bound by collective responsibility for state and local taxes, and military duties – of which the supply of recruits was most crucial and dramatic. More comparative research with nomination in villages is needed, but it seems that *meshchane* had resorted to nomination for dissolute behaviour at least no less than peasant communes in this period, partly because migration to towns intensified at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and with the growth of pauperization it would be in the interests of the commune to constantly cleanse the town, removing less wanted members. Nomination, in particular on grounds of dissolute behaviour, would be the best way to do it. As A. Smith has demonstrated, it was here that interests of communes and the government began to diverge at the turn of the century.<sup>6</sup> The communal principle of using nomination as a means of cleansing the town of undesirables had its drawbacks, including the age of recruits from towns (on average close to 30 in the 1790s-early 1800s) and their moral qualities. Not all men accused as dissolutes were as guilty as verdicts implied. In nomination – a traditionally organized practice inherited from the peasant

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<sup>6</sup> Smith, *For the Common Good*, pp. 73-82.

commune (many small Russian towns, district capitals, stood not very far from the villages, and many families from the towns were employed in agriculture) – local, communal elites would dominate: and thus there were frequent cases of abuse, discrimination – especially against the poor, singles, or recent newcomers – by magistrates of the *meshchane* commune and its richest families, as well the town authorities. The authorities at different levels must have been aware of the disadvantages of the system of communal nomination (especially provincial Civil Governors, whose offices constantly received appeals from families), but were reluctant to make changes. As long as the system provided enough recruits, and provided them on time, the local elites were left free to exercise their powers.

But we can argue that the first militia levy became a critical test, which the system of communal nomination failed to withstand: several times more men were requested than even during most burdensome wartime levies (even though in March 1807 the initial request for militiamen was lowered, in St. Petersburg province, from 1 in 16 men to 1 in 57). Everywhere, communes struggled to find nominees; in the absence of enough singles, dissolutes, or newcomers to fill the nomination, protracted disputes and conflicts between large and small families, and previously unseen level of evasion and violence were reported in all towns reviewed, from Novaia Ladoga to Serpukhov. This procrastination, the waves of appeals and delays faced by communes, led to the supply of recruits for the militia and for their equipment being much delayed – which played a significant role in the largely unsatisfactory experience of the first militia.

Of course, drawbacks to communal nomination were only one of the factors behind the problems and failures of organization of the first militia. But it was because of the first militia that the government turned its attention to nomination in communes – as the preamble to the new legislation, which appeared in the wake of the militia, implicitly

stated. First, strict new rules for nomination on grounds of dissolute behaviour were implemented in 1808-1809, which lent this traditional practice a quasi-judicial aspect; then with the Recruit manual of 1810 a system of official recruit family groups was introduced. These measures helped to lessen significantly the number of protracted disputes, by reforming the process of nomination and putting the practices of communes on a stable legal footing. Already during the recruit levies of 1810-1812 the business of nomination in *meshchane* communes proceeded more rapidly, with the second militia levy causing noticeably less procrastination, and fewer problems and delays, even though more men were requested – 1 in 10 (though, doubtless, there were additional factors behind the success of the 1812 militia levy).

Nomination began to look increasingly more regulated in the 1810s and 1820s; the age of recruits decreased, with on average 18–25-year-olds conscripted in the 1820s, and many traditional practices such as nomination on grounds of dissolute behaviour, purchase of receipts for recruits, or the creation of reserves of tickets, had almost ceased by the 1820s. (But evidently, the bulk of recruits would still come from families of low- and middle-incomes, richer households having the option to officially pay off the duty or hire a substitute.) In this regard, we can say that the increased demand of the war period at the beginning of the century had an important modernizing, and pacifying, effect on social relationships and political culture in the *meshchane* communes of district towns. In addition to this, it can be assumed that regularization of nomination is likely to have had a demographic impact, as the improved position of small families could often become an important incentive for larger *meshchane* households to split.

The impact of the increased duties and war burdens of this period on communes of merchants, the urban upper class in Russia, was also very significant. The communes of

merchants were smaller than those of *meshchane*, and there seem to have been more difficulties in their regard, as in the correlation between occupation and legal status. In particular, some merchants of the lower 3rd guild, to which most families in district towns of the Northwest were registered, were in fact closer to upper *meshchane* families, and there was a certain mobility between these two groups. (It seems that merchant status was considered a privilege for a family, as it gave freedom from recruit levies.)

The study of the organization of military duties, notably of fundraising in communes during levies, has shown how important were the communal elites – those few families of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> guilds, and of the upper 3<sup>rd</sup>. In the towns reviewed, these families would hold all posts in the town government – members of the council, the town head, and town headman – for many years. (High qualifications applied, thus almost all magistrates of the town would come from the merchant elite.) Many of these families appear on the tax registers from at least the late 1780s. During the levies, or when performing other duties such as billeting, they acted as administrators of merchant communes and of the entire town. Local elites organized fundraising from merchant families, oversaw the nomination of recruits, and the collection of money and other supplies among the *meshchane* communes. In merchant communes, these local elites played a crucial role in the performing of military duties: they defined the amount of recruit money to be raised during levies, and especially the amount of ‘donation’ requested on special occasions, notably during militias. It was the communal leaders (not the Governor or the commune members), who defined the donation that merchants of the town would offer in support of the militia, and also prescribed how much every family in the commune was to give. Interestingly, similar decisions were made during militia levies in all the towns reviewed, with merchants requiring similar shares from all males in the families. B. Mironov was right to argue that

political culture and social relationships in merchant communes were more progressive at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>7</sup> than those in *meshchane* communes, as in 1775 the merchant estate was excused collective responsibility and recruitment, thus growing increasingly more individualistic. But some communal practices were still there, such as raising equal shares from all men, without taking into account the prosperity of the family, its occupation, or real capital size.

Thus, it can be said that in the provincial town, mercantile elites largely controlled the communes and oversaw most local business; these families were very influential in town and in the merchant commune. These elites, it may be noted, were not wholly self-serving: they would often help out the communes of merchants and *meshchane*, often making additional contributions – of money, provisions, and clothes – during the militia levies: and in some towns reviewed these additional contributions were larger in 1806-1807 than in 1812. Not surprisingly, the authorities always would hold the merchant elite responsible for the town, and for communal duties (they were to lead by example during militia levies), and also for order in the town: it was thus merchants, including magistrates and the head men of the town (far more than *meshchane*), who were severely punished in Staraia Rusa for the cholera riots in July 1831.

With this we come to the question of the relationship of urban commoners with other powers: in the town, the district, and in the provincial capital. The relationships of individuals, communes, and councils have been considered with 1. the office of Chief of Police in the town; 2. the Civil Governor's office in St. Petersburg; and with 3. the military, notably, army officers when they were in the town, such as when a regiment was billeted

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<sup>7</sup> Mironov, *Sotsial'naia Istoriiia*, Vol. 1., p. 496-499.

there. Correspondence was studied between councils and the Chief of Police, Civil Governor, officers, Commandant and regiment (especially in Chapters 5 and 6), with files considered relating to recruit and militia levies, billeting, and everyday contacts, which include accounts, lists, reports and pleas of councils, orders of the Governor, requests of the Chief of Police, army and militia officers, the regimental office, as well as specific cases – pleas of particular merchants and *meshchane*.

The role of the town councils – the urban elites from merchant families – was crucial here. Both in the town, and outside of it, in peace years or wartime, town councils played the most important role, representing commoners of the town, and protecting the interests of communes and families of merchants and *meshchane*. In the district town, of particular importance were relationships between the council and communes on the one hand, and the Chief of Police's office – the main crown administrator here – on the other. The councils would also be in regular touch with the provincial authorities in St. Petersburg: on most occasions with the Civil Governor's office. Their contacts with officers, with district or provincial police, and other authorities were less frequent.

The analysis has demonstrated, primarily, that the popular view, both in Russian and Western historiography, that the Catherinian municipal self-government, based on councils, was largely powerless and restricted to local businesses (local taxes, infrastructure, security, schools and orphanages) needs to be corrected. In fact, councils actively represented the interests of the town to the Chief of Police and to the Governor; they were not just subject to their superiors – to crown officials, the police, other officers; in various situations, they were able effectively to protect the interests of merchants and *meshchane* families, communes, and of the entire town.

In particular, requests from the Governor for more recruits or money could be openly thwarted by councils (as during the 1812 militia levy in Novaia Ladoga, a second town of the province, but fairly small when compared to towns in Central Russia). The Governor's office, as part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, sent orders ('propositions') to councils, but it seems that, to a degree, relationships between councils and Governor resembled a process of negotiation. This mutual dialogue was very important for Governors and the councils, that is for local elites, when effective performance of military duties – notably, during recruit and militia levies – was desired. It was not surprising, therefore, that in December 1806 the Civil Governor Pasev'iev should invite delegations from the district towns to meet with him in the St. Petersburg Council Chamber: it was these men from the local elites – council members and town heads of district towns – who, having listened to the governor, would sign up to provide large voluntary donations from merchant communes for the organization of the militia. Of course, the degree of these negotiations, the capability of the councils to withstand orders and pressures from above, should not be overestimated; on most occasions, the councils – local elites – tried to do everything in their power to follow the decrees and orders received, and to fulfil the requests of the authorities. But cooperation between the provincial authorities and the local elites lay behind the remarkable success of the most demanding wartime levies: the supply of recruits, money, provisions and equipment from towns was a largely stable, orderly, and effectively organized process. Despite the lack of civil and military bureaucracy on the ground (a chronic problem of Russian administration), councils, upon receiving orders, acted almost autonomously, ensuring on most occasions stable the supply of manpower and resources. Governors also resisted pressurizing councils too much, partly because they were not equipped to do so, since – between autonomous councils and communes in

towns and the provincial authorities – there were no civil or military administrators (except for the Chief of Police in towns) to control conscription, collect taxes and money during levies, or superintend billeting duty in towns.

Altogether, it can be argued that, by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a unique correlation had been formed in Russian towns between the higher authorities and the local administration, based on the councils: though the latter were, in legal theory, politically deficient and subject to orders, in reality they acted as fairly effective autonomous units, being often able to do more than they were designed for. This effective cooperation between local, council government, and the higher provincial authorities, based on orders but also on negotiation, taking into account mutual interests, played an important role in the successful performance of military duties during the turbulent war period of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Inside the town, the key element responsible for sustainability and efficiency – during levies, billeting, and the performance of other duties, including raising taxes – was the coordination of effort between the commoners, represented by the council, and the office of the Chief of Police. The crucial fact in this cooperation was that these two branches of power, councils and communes, and the Chief of Police, needed each other: there were inherent deficiencies in both urban self-government and the urban police, in the way they had emerged during the reforms of the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In particular, the office of the Chief of Police was largely financed by the town council. Every year this could involve a significant charge on the town budget: in effect, commoner families paid for the police. As a result disputes often emerged between the council and the Chief of Police regarding financing – with councils often refusing requests for more funding, such as to finance new police buildings or hire more policemen. But the cooperation between

councils, communes, and the Chief of Police during the war was remarkable, especially during the levy months: for the town to supply the required number of recruits, along with money and equipment, and to raise donations for the militia, the assistance of the Chief of Police was crucial – with the police providing men to chase up evaders, families refusing to pay, or merchants not contributing their donation. The collaborative effort of councils, communes, and the Chief of Police went a good way to compensating for the deficiencies of the Russian administrative system.

But this cooperation seems to have been largely restricted to the bounds of the provincial town: the connection of councils with authorities in the district, and with the Police and other institutions in the provincial capital (other than the Governor and State Chamber) was fairly limited. Study of the supplies of provisions, weapons, and other equipment during militia levies has shown that, in Russia in the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the coordination of operations between various institutions was irregular, even in the capital province. The help that district and provincial authorities could provide to councils – in searching for evaders or raising money from men not living in their own town – was fairly limited, even during demanding wartime levies. (It was likewise difficult for councils to protect the families of *meshchane* and merchants of the town, who were living in villages.) The contacts could be more effective [if exercised] between councils of one province and between the Chiefs of Police; even so, it was difficult to find evaders, or those avoiding military service or payments, if they were not in their own town.

In this regard one more important observation can be made: the mobility of townspeople, *meshchane* and merchants, was perhaps greater in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century than it has been assumed. In the Northwest, many individuals did not necessarily seek to evade duty, but lived and worked in other places - in bigger towns,

notably St. Petersburg or the port towns. In Novgorod, during the first militia levy in December 1806, it was revealed that out of 107 *meshchane* nominated, 38 were away. This mobility may well have been a discovery for the authorities; it was not considered a problem until manifesting itself at a time of mass levy, such as the first militia. G. Munro has stressed the importance of migration of the workforce to St. Petersburg in the reign of Catherine II.<sup>8</sup> However, the specifics of migration between towns in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century deserve further examination: who were the *meshchane* who lived and worked in other towns such as in St. Petersburg, were they skilled workers (carpenters, roofers, tilers) or day labourers, for how long were they away, had they left officially, obtaining a passport from the commune, or not?

Another important field for exploration are contacts between urban commoners and the military in provincial towns. A study of contacts, negotiations, disputes, and conflicts between families, communes, and councils on the one hand, and officers, the rank and file, army and militia commanders, regimental officials and the military authorities on the other, has been undertaken here. It has helped clarify the real positions of commoners and councils, and thrown light on the attitudes of urban commoners towards the army, their superiors, the authorities, and the policy of the state in general. Chapter 6 has shown how at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup>–early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the positions and attitudes of merchants, *meshchane*, and councils – their concerns, perceptions, doubts, and reasons for dissatisfaction – changed, owing to the increased demands, and growing centralization, regularization and, to an extent, militarization of the country.

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<sup>8</sup> Munro, *The most intentional city*, pp. 70-71.

Several disputes examined include both cases of casual conflict between individual commoner families, and officers of the army, militia, or rank and file (everyday quarrels, complaints of mistreatment, conflicts during levies), as well as the organized, regular relationships between councils and the military authorities – in particular the regimental office – when a regiment was stationed in the town and villages nearby. In many casual everyday conflicts between the military and the commoners, the positions of merchants and *meshchane* were fairly well protected, and not only by the council: even the military authorities (such as the Commandant of Kronstadt) frequently if not favoured, then at least treated commoners equally to officers and the rank and file. Of course, more secure in these disputes would be merchants or magistrates.

Regarding relationships between councils and regimental offices, various types of dispute, and their resolution, have been examined in Chapter 6. Most of these cases were related to billeting issues, with the main problems being 1) the provision of rooms in private houses for officers and the rank and file; 2) provision of buildings for the regimental estate (private houses or those belonging to the town); 3) construction by the town of buildings for the regiment (barracks, warehouses, stables, workshops, hospital); and 4) and provision of supplies (candles, firewood, paper), usually on a monthly basis.

In most situations examined, negotiation between the councils and regimental offices effectively resolved most disputes and conflicts, with both the councils and military commanders often proving fairly cooperative. It seems that from the early 1800s relationships between commoners and councils, and the regiments billeted in their towns, began to take on a more regular aspect, as the government obliged the regimental office to pay for supplies; indeed, across the board, regularization of relationships between

civilians, local government, and the military increased throughout the years of Alexander I's reign.

As in other European countries at the turn of the century,<sup>9</sup> the problem of demarcation of responsibility between civilians and the military in towns was very acute; the building of barracks and special military infrastructure had already begun, and was not restricted only to larger centres such as St. Petersburg: in the small district capitals of the Northwest such works were also being undertaken already in the 1800s. Negotiation and collaborative effort played an important role here too: for instance, in the absence of additional funding, a solution could be to build military infrastructure jointly, by town and regiment, as cases from Novaia Ladoga show, with councils providing materials and regiments the workforce – with councils later receiving at least partial compensation.

Very often councils would resort to help and mediation from the Civil Governor: the role of the Governor's office was very important in this regard, and it seems that in the absence of an effective crown bureaucracy on the ground, its role only grew in the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The governor received private appeals, the numbers of which grew, and dealt with suggestions and propositions regularly submitted by town councils.

In the first case, it was to the Civil Governor that individuals, from *meshchane* and merchant families, would appeal – he being the senior court of referral, for example, in disputes contesting verdicts of communes regarding nomination for service. In the 1780s-1790s, governors would personally attend to private appeals from the wives and families of men nominated, but it seems that from the 1800s the Governor would more frequently order communes to reconsider their decisions, as practices became more standardized in

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<sup>9</sup> Princi, 'Militarised cities?', pp. 22-26.

the first half of Alexander's reign (as, for example, with the system of communal nomination).

In the second case, Governors would consider pleas, along with suggestions and propositions, from councils. A council might request help to retrieve money from regiments for supplies, or to reimburse them for the construction of military buildings (by asking, for example, for money to be raised from the district). In most cases, the Governor tried to find a solution acceptable to all parties.

At other times, propositions from councils might come before the Governor related to the relationship of commoners with the Chief of Police, or with regiments billeted in the town: more of these, it seems, came to be registered at the Governor's office in the 1810s, and especially the 1820s. It seems that in many towns such suggestions gathered pace after the end of the war period; and they all fit a certain paradigm, with such proposals becoming the norm by the 1820s in the towns of St. Petersburg province – in regard, for example, to alleviating the burden of billeting for commoner families by spreading the duty (of housing the military and raising billeting money) to noble and *raznochinsty* families; or suggesting the reform of local taxation by introducing equal taxation – a land tax – for all residents (cases reported in the 1820s in Novaia Ladoga and Shlisselburg). These requests were sometimes supported by the Governor, despite the obvious opposition of the Chief of Police and nobles of the town.

Based on several cases studied, we can argue that by the 1820s there was a growing self-awareness among provincial urban commoners, leading to increasing requests from families, communes, and councils, for equalization of their rights, and the alleviation of duties. Of course, these requests should not be overestimated, but it seems that commoners and councils had changed a lot by the end of the war period: the level of their

demands and expectations, their self-awareness and self-perception, had grown significantly over the 1790s to 1820s. It is arguable that one of the most important factors behind this – along with more rapid economic development, growing literacy rates, the proliferation of new ideas – was the great contribution that provincial urban commoners had made during the long period of war, with its increased demands and burdensome military duties, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup>– early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup>

One of the indicators of this growing struggle of the urban commoners for equalization of their rights, duties, and positions, can be found in the protest movement in towns, which seems to have manifested itself more at the end of period in question. A case study of two cholera riots in Staraiia Rusa in 1831 has been undertaken here, based on the examination of commoners' testimonies: the riots involved many elite families of the town, council members, and merchants and *meshchane* of the town – with the actions of at least 139 men investigated after the riot. (Although the riot began spontaneously, the commoners later became fairly organized, with the council deeply involved in the riot.) This case-study has demonstrated that there was growing dissatisfaction among commoners with the local authorities, their officers, and the police. Certainly, the riots in Staraiia Rusa, one of the centres of the military colonies, represent a specific case. But the testimonies reveal not only particular conflicts and discontent in this town; they show the broader concerns and ideas circulating among urban commoners at the end of the first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the reasons for their dissatisfaction with local officials, their superiors, the police, and the state, in general.

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<sup>10</sup> Lieven, *Russia and Napoleon*, p. 252.

Given the above, the case could be made that there were certain hopes, or rather expectations, among urban commoners – merchants, *meshchane*, and their magistrates – by the 1820s, that their positions would be improved by the central authorities as a result of great contributions that they had made in the war years of the previous two decades. The circulation of various ‘secret decrees’, allegedly emanating from the Emperor (Alexander I), was recorded by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the 1810-1820s, in various European provinces of Russia, both among urban commoners and peasants. Two *meshchane* from Staraia Rusa were apprehended with such ‘papers’ in 1831, as they travelled across the villages of the military colonies during the riots, reading out these orders to peasants and soldiers allegedly commanding commoners to kill their superiors, in the name of the central authority. A couple of similar cases, involving falsified orders from the authorities for commoners to riot, were reported in villages around Lake Ilmen in 1831, with several more registered in other parts of Russia.

During the cholera pandemic there were more riots among urban commoners, from St. Petersburg to Saratov; of course, most of these were impromptu disturbances largely occasioned by the strict, unpopular anti-cholera measures of authorities. Given this pattern, it can be argued that there was a certain, if not discontent then dissatisfaction among commoners – with the police, the authorities, and more broadly speaking, with the policy of the state – which manifested itself in the 1820s-early 1830s: from the behaviour of commoners on the Senate square during the Decembrist revolt, on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1825, to longer-lasting upheavals against officialdom in Staraia Rusa and across villages of the military colonies around Lake Ilmen in 1831. We can assume that these were initially popular, and mostly poorly organized protests, which indicated dissatisfaction with current duties (billeting, conscription), taxation, or tariffs – which had remained high since the war.

The explanations that individuals and magistrates gave for their actions, in Staraiia Rusa and elsewhere, hint at a growing self-confidence among urban commoners by the 1820s, and rising demands and expectations.

The protests, together with the above-mentioned proposals by councils for levelling up billeting duty or reforming local taxation, can be attributed to the expectations of urban commoners that they were supposed to receive certain remuneration for the years of hostilities, growing military duties, and economic and financial burden which had cost urban communes so much. In many district towns reviewed, communes of merchants contracted considerably, especially in 1812, with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> guilds practically dying out; the elites – which were so important – suffered most; and this ‘stagnation of merchant capitals’ was reported in most provinces of Russia, in the years 1807-1824.<sup>11</sup> It is more difficult to estimate the impact of the war period on *meshchane*, but their losses in men and money were significant; in towns of St. Petersburg province, only about 60 per cent of men conscripted in 1812 to the militia, returned – though there were always men ready to volunteer for the army, and militia service, not only from *meshchane*, but also from merchant families. (The first cases of volunteering have been found for the Russo-Swedish War of 1788-1790; many, of course, volunteered for money or benefits.)

But can we say that urban commoners were rewarded enough for their duties, their service and their losses? For instance, many men who returned from the second militia received state awards – notably the silver medal ‘In Memory of the 1812 War’ (the bronze medal was awarded to merchants who made the biggest donations in 1812), but medals gave few privileges (at least several men who returned were, a couple of years later, sent

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<sup>11</sup> Boiko, ‘Otechestvennaia vojna 1812 goda i tomskoe kupechestvo’, p. 17-18.

back to the army by their communes). A system of state support, pensions, and especially care for invalids – those mutilated during service – was fairly limited even in the 1810s. Still, men whose health suffered during militia service, could ask to be excluded from the commune, on their return home, and upon medical examination be assigned to army invalid squads – a fairly undemanding form of service, which operated as a kind of state pension for retired and mutilated rank and file.

To conclude, we can argue that Catherinian town, in the way it emerged in the last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was a very specific social and political mechanism (but still definitely a sub-type of the European town of the end of the Early Modern era). Despite certain deficiencies, the lack of some functions inherent in towns of Western and Central Europe, the Russian town, a commune of families of merchants and *meshchane*, presided over by the town council, fulfilled its role: and it coped with the very difficult test, the rising duties, demands, and military burdens of the war period at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Many of the problems in towns related to military duties – which manifested themselves during recruit and militia levies, and the billeting process, especially in the 1800s-1810s – were caused more by the global problems in the Russian state system: an obsolete system of recruitment and taxation; lack of public credit; the shortage of crown administrators and educated staff on the ground. Nonetheless, the army received the required number of soldiers, and the treasury considerable amounts of money from the towns, in the form of recruit money or donations during militia levies.

The system of the provincial Russian town in the Northwest, with some reservations and adjustments, worked well during the strain of unseen pressures imposed by army and state demands and duties in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Very often negotiation,

cooperation, and coordinated effort by communes and councils, and the Chief of Police, the Civil Governor, and the officers of regiments helped compensate for the many disadvantages and inherent deficiencies in the system, and enabled urban communes ultimately to fulfil their duties. Although the effect of the 1800s-1810s, on communes and families, on town budgets was very significant, life in the town continued, without terrible problems and conflicts, through the war years and after.

The system, of course, had its drawbacks; it withstood the test of increased duties and demands in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, but there were many problems, which required to be solved by legal adjustment (as in case of nomination): among them were lack of enforcement functions in communes and councils; lengthy disputes and unavoidable appeals; poor financing of urban institutions. Not only further urban reforms, but more global reforms were needed in Russia by the end of the first quarter of the 19th century: to conscription, taxation, trade regulations, financial institutions and credit, education.

The intensified duties, as shown above, led to a certain modernization of social relationships and political culture in *meshchane* communes (e.g., through reforms to nomination); it can also be suggested that the burdens and duties of the war period, which affected a lot of merchant communes and local elites, may have contributed to the dissolution of many old principles and traditions of the mercantile class in Russian provincial centres. Town councils also proved their capabilities, demonstrated efficiency, and often surpassed the legal limits of actions set for them by the reforms of the 1780s. On the ground, life in Russia was always different from the legal theory: in the period under review, urban commoners – the people and their institutions – adapted to changing realities, learned how to fulfil the duties, and withstand the difficulties of the war years –

including mobilizations, increased financial demands, and economic uncertainty – continuing their life, business activities, and social and political development.

The intensified duties and burdens of this period obviously led to the proliferation of new ideas, and stimulated new levels of self-awareness among urban commoners, with requests for the alleviation or equalization of duties, which manifested in radical new suggestions from councils in the 1820s or in occasional disturbances in the provincial towns, as noted at the end of the first third of the century.

It would also be wrong to assert that the government was unaware of the problems in towns relating to military duties, as well as other aspects of local governance; the authorities can be seen to have monitored the situation in the war years, especially the 1800s-1810s, and in the decades that followed. As we have seen, some duties – such as the practice of nomination – were revised significantly. In this regard, we may note that the regularization of many processes and practices in Russia accelerated in the reign of Alexander I, with the increased demands of the state playing a considerable role in this process of legal adjustment.

To sum up, the rising demands and duties, both of the state and the army, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were an important factor in bringing about modernization – a process initiated by the state in response to these growing demands and burdens, and one which was eventually responsible for effecting many changes in the practices and traditions of *merchants*, *meshchane*, and town councils, and more broadly, to social and political life, and the culture of urban commoners in the first third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It seems that the period of increased duties also led to a new level of awareness among commoners, to new demands, such as for equality of rights and alleviation of duties and taxes, new concerns and doubts, and, very probably, to a growing dissatisfaction among

people and magistrates in provincial centres with their superiors, and with the policy of the government.

The government was aware of the problems, and in particular was worried about the depressed state of many Russian provincial centres, including in the Northwest and North, after the end of the war period in the mid-1810s, with a special commission set up to investigate the reasons for the decline in trade and industries in many towns in the 1810s–early 1820s. More projects for urban reform, introducing considerable changes, appeared at the end of the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the first significant attempts undertaken in the 1820s and early 1830s. In particular, E. Kankrin’s reform of 1824 and the subsequent reforms of 1831-1832<sup>12</sup> sought to redefine the merchant estate, and change the principles of trade taxation, which would lead to revision of the legal status of various groups of commoners: occupation was now to be more correlated with legal status. These were the first measures leading to modernization of the Russian town; but of course, more global changes were needed – in regard to the system of urban communes, people’s legal status, the taxation of trade and various occupations – for the system of self-government introduced in the 1780s to be improved. A serious revision of the Catherine town was evidently needed by the 1830s. However, as many researchers have noted, the measures undertaken during Nicholas I reign,<sup>13</sup> in the 1830-1840s, based on lengthy inquiries by several commissions, were limited and palliative. (In the early 1830s rules for migration to towns were simplified; the system of registration to communes was revised, and taxation of trade again reconsidered.<sup>14</sup>) But after the early 1830s, no serious reforms were attempted of the salient matters considered above: the status of urban commoners,

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<sup>12</sup> Ryndziunski, *Gorodskoe graxhdanstvo*, P. 60-76.

<sup>13</sup> Mironov, *Russkii Gorod*, pp. 17-33.

<sup>14</sup> Smith, *For the Common*, pp. 83-86.

taxation in towns, the system of communes and urban self-government. A serious, radical revision of the Russian town, its institutions and organisation, taxation and administration, took place only during the Great Reforms of the 1860s-1870s.

## Appendix

Charges and testimonies of 139 commoners of Staraia Rusa, whose actions in the cholera riots in July 1831 were scrutinized by the Investigation commission (Aug. 1831 – Jan. 1832).

|   | Status                | Name                | Age | Category | Accused:   | Testified:  | Remark   |
|---|-----------------------|---------------------|-----|----------|--|---|--|
| 1 | <i>meshchanin</i> son | Vasil Khlebnikov    | 18  | 2        | Went to the prison house with worker soldiers to free U. Vorob'iev, and while there, exclaimed that 'we would have smashed the prison house if you had not let Vorob'iev go!'  | Went, but on the orders of town headman, merchant Solodovnikov, and did not threaten to smash anything. |  |
|   |                       |                     |     |          | Visited Novgorod together with <i>meshchanin</i> Aleksandr Teslov and brought from there a paper, instigating the riot.  | No.   |  |
|   |                       |                     |     |          | During the riot, in the police house, being drunk, said to NCO Petr Storozhenkov: 'What do you think? You will get the same as Mandzhos has got!'; and being there with another <i>meshchanin</i> , said to that <i>meshchanin</i> 'What are you staring at, seize him!' (Storozhenkov). | No.   |  |
| 2 | <i>meshchanin</i>     | Ivan Iakovlev Lapin | 59  | 4        | Went to the prison house, to collect fetters to chain the officers.  | Went, but on the orders of the town headman, merchant Solodovnikov.                                     | Deprived of his insignia, without being beaten; sent for service in the Finland corps (F. 773. Op. 1. D. L. 82). |
|   |                       |                     |     |          | Was beating bailiff Dirin on the square.   | No.   |  |
|   |                       |                     |     |          | Was running with worker soldiers and shouting on the square 'like a ruffian' ( <i>krichal kak zlodei</i> ).  | Was on the square but was not involved in the riot.   |  |
| 3 | <i>meshchanin</i>     | Ul'ian Vorob'iev    | 24  | 2        | Apprehended by force 2 <sup>nd</sup> lieutenant Ashenbrenner on 10th July and escorted him to the Chief of Police.   | Apprehended him, but on suspicion of poisoning.   |  |

|   |                   |                       |    |   |   |   |                             |
|---|-------------------|-----------------------|----|---|---|---|-----------------------------|
|   |                   |                       |    |   | On the square, when the nobleman Bolotnikov was brought in, and was shouting, 'Here's a Pole, with the poison!' and was driving his phaeton.  | Was riding on the chaise of Bolotnikov's phaeton, but was forced to do so by the military colonists; he didn't drive it, but was only accompanying, showing the road to the town council, and did not shout anything. |                             |
|   |                   |                       |    |   | Scolded Dirin in his face.  | No.   |                             |
|   |                   |                       |    |   | Was in the hospital together with soldiers examining food.  | Was there, but did not examine the food.  |                             |
|   |                   |                       |    |   | Was shouting and running along with the soldiers during the riot.   | Was on the square, but was not involved in the riot.  |                             |
| 4 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Ivan Khokhin          | 42 | 1 | Brought cudgels and sticks to the rioters on the square.  | No.   |                             |
|   |                   |                       |    |   | Was on guard duty, guarding the beaten officers.  | Was on guard, but only assembling commoners on the square on the orders of Solodovnikov, in preparation for the religious service, and allegedly to pacify rioters.   |                             |
|   |                   |                       |    |   | Did not sign the confrontation with merchant Mikhail Bocharov.  |   |                             |
|   |                   |                       |    |   | Gathered commoners on the square to sign the testimony of Dr Bogorodskii.   |   |                             |
| 5 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Iakov Egorov          | 46 | 3 | Was on guard over the beaten officers, tying their hands behind their backs with a rope; was in command when they were fettered; and also when the priest came to attend the last confession of captain Khodot. | Was only on guard.  |                             |
|   |                   |                       |    |   | Escorted the land surveyor Koshubskii to the prison house and placed him in fetters.  | No.   |                             |
|   |                   |                       |    |   | Was conniving with the riotous young man, who was beating major Laradziev.  | No  |                             |
| 6 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Afanasii Krasil'nikov | 50 | 4 | On the 11 <sup>th</sup> July saw the riot, but was not involved, and on the 12th took part in the religious service on the square.  | Yes   |                             |
| 7 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Nikolai Kl'uev        | 23 | 4 | Placed officers in fetters.   | Yes.  | Confessed without evidence. |

|    |                                |                      |    |            |  |  |  |
|----|--------------------------------|----------------------|----|------------|--|--|--|
| 8  | merchant son                   | Petr Vasil'ev Khahin | 30 | 1          | Was at the blacksmith's when one of the officers was placed in fetters.  | Was at the blacksmith's solely to inquire why the people had gathered there. |  |
|    |                                |                      |    |            | During the riot, searched for quartermaster Pol'ianskii at his lodgings, threatening to kill him whenever he caught him.       | No.  |  |
|    |                                |                      |    |            | Signed during the riot.  | Maintained he was forced to.   |  |
|    |                                |                      |    |            | Was seen running with a stake.   | No.  |  |
| 9  | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Nikolai Glushitskii  | 21 | 4          | Placed officers in fetters at the blacksmith's   | Yes.   |  |
| 10 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Nikita Ivanov        | 44 | 4          | Was on guard by the beaten officers.   | Yes.   |  |
| 11 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Petr Gnutikov        | 38 | 3          | Was on guard by the beaten officers, tied them up, placed them in fetters, ordered them to remove crosses.                     | Was only on guard.   |  |
|    |                                |                      |    |            | Escorted the land surveyor Koshubskii to be placed in fetters.   | Was only on guard.   |  |
|    |                                |                      |    |            | On the square, took <i>meshchanin</i> Dmitrii Popov by the hand, forcing him to sign, saying that the commune had ordered it.. | Said that he only told Popov to sign.  |  |
|    |                                |                      |    |            | Knew the riotous young man who assaulted Major Laradziev.  | No.  |  |
| 12 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Ul'ian Kostin        | 52 | 4          | Escorted officers to place them in fetters.  | No, and Khokhin during the confrontation also did not recognise him.         |  |
| 13 | 3 <sup>rd</sup> guild merchant | Efim Luk'ianinov     | 44 | 1          | Visited the archimandrite and was on the square.   | Yes.   |  |
| 14 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Ivan Khud'iakov      | 26 | 4          | Signed.  | Was forced to.   |  |
| 15 | merchant                       | Iakov Bulin          | 42 | not guilty | Saved Sergeev and Mendeleev.   | Yes.   |  |
| 16 | merchant                       | Andrei Grigor'ev     | 38 | 1          | Visited the archimandrite.   | Yes, adding that was on the square but did not do anything criminal.         |  |
| 17 | merchant son                   | Dmitrii Plotnikov    | 27 | 1          | Signed, visited the archimandrite, told him to go to the square with crosses.  | Yes.   | Freed: no evidence (F. 773. Op. 1. D. 8. L. 101) |
|    |                                |                      |    |            | Said to merchant Iakov Bulin who asked him to spare bailiff Dirin: 'What business  | No.  |  |

|    |                   |                           |    |            |   |  |
|----|-------------------|---------------------------|----|------------|---|--|
|    |                   |                           |    |            | is it of yours? ( <i>Kakaiia tebe nadobmost'</i> ) Go away!   |  |
|    |                   |                           |    |            | Was present during the most severe beating of Dirin, but did not do anything to help him.   | No.  |
|    |                   |                           |    |            | Stapled the copies of the officers' testimonies for the worker soldiers.  | Was forced to sign papers in the town council without reading them.                      |
| 18 | merchant son      | Ivan Dedovnikov           | 25 | 1          | Demanded that the archimandrite go to the square to question Dr Bogorodskii, saying that he had been found with poison; and that table, paper, and ink were all now ready on the square.  | Visited the archimandrite, but only invited him to the square for the religious service. |
| 19 | merchant          | Ivan Iakovlev Khud'ia-kov | 42 | 4          | Demanded that the archimandrite go to the square to question Bogorodskii, saying that he was found with poison, and that table, paper, and ink were ready.  | Visited the archimandrite, but did not speak of poison.                                  |
|    |                   |                           |    |            | Assisted in saving Sergreev and Mendeleev.  | Yes.   |
| 20 | merchant          | Iakov Balakhontsev        | 55 | not guilty | Visited the archimandrite, asking what to do to pacify the riot; then was on the square, but did not commit anything criminal.  |  |
|    |                   |                           |    |            | Assisted in saving Dirin and Dr Peshkov.  |  |
| 21 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Aleksandr Teslov          | 31 | 3          | Came to the house of quarter bailiff Zhukov, demanding that his mother-in-law say where Zhukov was; went looking everywhere for him; abused Zhukov on the street and was barely restrained from beating him; during the second visit to the Zhukovs' house, scolded Zhukov's mother-in-law and forced her to drink vodka. | No, says he was drunk and remembers nothing.   |
|    |                   |                           |    |            | Apart from committing the above-mentioned, told Zhukov's mother-in-law Melezovoi and police NCO Kornei Ptitsyn, that together with Vasil Khlebnikov, he had brought the paper from Novgorod that led to the   | No.  |

|    |                   |                        |    |   |   |  |            |
|----|-------------------|------------------------|----|---|---|--|------------|
|    |                   |                        |    |   | riot, beating his chest and saying 'I'm the first instigator!'  |  |            |
|    |                   |                        |    |   | Brought cudgels and sticks to rioters on the square.  | No.  |            |
|    |                   |                        |    |   | Seized police NCO Kornei Ptitsyn by the chest, preparing to beat him and saying, 'you know how the poison was distributed, you all know'; being by the guard box, used foul language against police sentry Kaorvuev, demanding that he say where bailiff Zhukov was to be found.    | No, says he was drunk and he remembers nothing.  |            |
| 22 | merchant son      | Nikolai Latin          | 26 | 1 | Was the first to strike Mandzhos with a cudgel, after which Mandzhos fell down, and soldiers began to beat him and drag him to the square   | Was on the square; did not hit anyone; only saw how officers were being beaten, but did not offer them help.   |            |
|    |                   |                        |    |   | Pointed out the lodgings of the land surveyor Koshubskii to worker soldiers, who, in his presence, apprehended Koshubskii and dragged him to be tortured.   | Yes.   |            |
|    |                   |                        |    |   | Went to bring priest for captain Khodot's confession in the guard house.  | Yes.   | Confessed. |
|    |                   |                        |    |   | Was on the square.  | Yes.   |            |
| 23 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Vasil Khvostov         | 19 | 4 | Incited worker soldiers to kill subaltern Manuilov.   | No, says he was on the square, but was not involved in the riot.   |            |
|    |                   |                        |    |   | Assisted in saving bailiff Dirin and his sister from the rioters.   | Confirmed.   |            |
| 24 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Ivan Maksimov Khvostov | 25 | 4 | Incited worker soldiers to kill subaltern Manuilov.   | No.  |            |
|    |                   |                        |    |   | Assisted in saving bailiff Dirin from the rioters.  | Confirmed.   |            |
| 25 | merchant          | Efim Plotnikov         | 58 | 1 | Grabbed and escorted Dirin's sister to the square, not listening to any of her pleas, gripping her by the kerchief around her neck; and when questioned by <i>meshchanin</i> Vasilii Khvostov, replied: 'It may not matter to you, but in my house, I've already lost one daughter, | Said that he escorted to the square two women dressed in <i>meshchane</i> dresses, as he thought they were poisoning vegetables and other plants on commoners' allotments, and on the square he handed |            |

|    |                       |                             |    |            |  |  |           |
|----|-----------------------|-----------------------------|----|------------|--|--|-----------|
|    |                       |                             |    |            | and the other one is dying!' (from cholera).   | them to merchant son Ivan Potykalov.       |           |
| 26 | <i>meshchanin</i>     | Petr Vasil'ev Shishelov     | 20 | 4          | Was among rioters on the square.   | Yes.                                       |           |
|    |                       |                             |    |            | Was in the hospital along with the soldiers examining food.  | No.  |           |
| 27 | merchant son          | Ivan Potykalov              | -  | not guilty | Was on the square; helped in saving bailiff Dirin and his sister; did not take part in the riot.   |  |           |
| 28 | <i>meshchanin</i>     | Grigorii Liadin             | 39 | 2          | Was the first to catch Dirin, as he sought to escape, which led to Dirin being taken by rioters for torture.   | Yes.                                       | Confessed |
| 29 | merchant              | Ivan Emel'ianov Krasilnikov | 54 | 1          | Signed.  | Was forced to.                             |           |
|    |                       |                             |    |            | Helped to save bailiff Savostianinov with his wife, auditor Anufriev and officer Ovchinnikov from the 4th Carabineer regiment from the rioters.  |  |           |
| 30 | <i>meshchanin</i>     | Alexandr Filipov Dedovnikov | 25 | 4          | Was on the square and abused merchant Krasilnikov for trying to save Dirin.  | Was there, but did not abuse him.          |           |
| 31 | <i>meshchanin son</i> | Nikolai Ivanov Matveev      | 23 | 4          | Was on the square and abused the merchant son Potykalov for trying to save Dirin.  | Was there, but did not scold.              |           |
| 32 | merchant son          | Ivan Glushitskii            | 29 | 1          | During the riot, ran around with a stake impaled with iron, declaring that general Meves, the Chief of Police, the doctor, and bailiff Savostianov had been killed.  | Had a stake in his hand but no iron in it. |           |
| 33 | merchant              | Kiril Glushitskii           | 60 | 1          | Said to Staff Captain Alekhanovich that the land surveyor Koshubskii, who had visited his house, had put poison in his pastry dough, but he and his wife removed the poison, and did not eat the dough; in addition, on 21st July, when checking barrels in his barn | No.  |           |

|    |                   |                                    |    |   |   |  |  |
|----|-------------------|------------------------------------|----|---|---|--|--|
|    |                   |                                    |    |   | where the captain was sleeping, the captain, noticing the fury ( <i>neistovstvo</i> ) on Glushitskii's face, had to seek another shelter from rioters.  |  |  |
| 34 |                   | His wife<br>Nenina<br>Glushitskaia | 59 | 1 | See above.  | No.  |  |
| 35 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Timofei<br>Nikitin<br>Krasil'nikov | 27 | 4 | Was running around with a stake.  | No.  |  |
|    |                   |                                    |    |   | Came to the house of Kiril Glushitskii, and abused the mistress of the house for not saying that captain Alekhanovich was with them, and not exposing him when God commanded that all these men should be beaten without exception. | No.  |  |
| 36 | merchant          | Philip<br>Glushitskii              | 53 | 1 | Was seen with a cudgel outside the house during the riot, but not on the square.  | Confessed, but said that the cudgel was only for self-defence. |  |
| 37 | merchant          | Ivan<br>Novinskii                  | 43 | 1 | Was seen with a cudgel outside the house during the riot, but not on the square.  | Confessed, but said that the cudgel was only for self-defence. |  |
| 38 | merchant<br>son   | Kozma<br>Blodazh-<br>nikov         | 43 | 1 | Was in command during questioning of the officers on the square.  | Was forced by the worker soldiers.                             |  |
|    |                   |                                    |    |   | Sent <i>meshchanin</i> Ivan Lapin from the square to the prison house, to bring fetters.  | No.  |  |
|    |                   |                                    |    |   | Sent <i>meshchanin</i> Khlebnikov to the prison house, to free <i>meshchanin</i> Vorob'iev from arrest.   | No.  |  |
|    |                   |                                    |    |   | Sent <i>meshchanin</i> Ivan Khahin to gather commoners allegedly for the religious service.   | No.  |  |
|    |                   |                                    |    |   | Sent merchant son Ivan Sokolov to find the draftsman Il'ia Zazarov, to collect from him the written confession of major Laradziev, which Sokolov brought and in the office ( <i>Prisutstvennue mesta</i> ) handed to Solodovnikov.  | No.  |  |
|    |                   |                                    |    |   | Was the first man to sign the officers' confessions.  | Yes.   |  |

|    |                   |   |    |   |   |   |  |
|----|-------------------|---|----|---|---|---|--|
|    |                   |   |    |   | Was in possession of two lists, with the names of commoners of the town not present during the first questioning.   | Said he did not know that the lists were to be presented elsewhere; he only had made these lists, of men present during the religious service, for his own use. |  |
| 39 | merchant          | Vasil Savostin                                | 43 | 1 | Was on the square and involved in the riot.   | Was, but did not take part in riot.   |  |
| 40 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Ivan Kemscoi                                  | 37 | 2 | Was on the square and involved in the riot.   | Was on the square, because forced there by soldiers.  |  |
|    |                   |   |    |   | Stapled the copies of the officers' confessions for the workmen soldiers.   | On the advice of council official Dmitrii Plotnikov, he indeed signed papers on the council premises but did not see what they were.                            |  |
|    |                   |   |    |   | Helped to save Zhukov   | Confirmed.  |  |
| 41 | merchant son      | Vasil Sokolov (Secretary of the town council) | 28 | 1 | Demanded that the archimandrite question Dr Bogorodskii, who had allegedly been apprehended with poison; acted disrespectfully when giving the archimandrite papers to read and sign. | Along with other citizens, asked the archimandrite to come to the square, to protect Bogorodskii.   | Sent for service in the Finland corps (F. 773. Op. 1. D. 8. L. 101). |
|    |                   |   |    |   |   | Offered papers just for reading, not for signing.   |  |
|    |                   |   |    |   | Wrote Bogorodskii's confession in his own hand, but intending to clear himself, spoiled it.   | Did not write the confession, but made <i>meshchanskii</i> son Vasikii Bazhenov write it.   |  |
|    |                   |   |    |   | Later forced <i>meshchanin</i> son Vasilii Bazhenov to write Bogorodskii's confession, in face of the rioters, and dictated it to him.  | Doesn't remember.   |  |
|    |                   |   |    |   | When Bogorodskii was beaten and unable to answer, asked him: 'Why do you keep silent?'  | No.   |  |
|    |                   |   |    |   | Advised, then ordered certain citizens to sign the confessions.   | Advised, but did not order.   |  |
|    |                   |   |    |   | Encouraged town head Solodovnikov to place a guard on the beaten officers.  |   |  |
|    |                   |   |    |   | Read out Bogorodskii's confession to the citizens.  |   |  |

|    |  |                         |    |            |   |   |   |
|----|--|-------------------------|----|------------|---|---|---|
|    |  |                         |    |            | During the riot, handed <i>meshchanin</i> Efim Semenov the confession to sign.                          | Only told to sign, did not give.  |   |
|    |  |                         |    |            | In the town council, on the 12th, with worker soldiers, was seen conspiring with those soldiers.        | No.   |   |
| 42 | <i>meshchanin</i> son                  | Vasil Bazhenov          | 16 | 4          | Wrote copies of confessions taken from officers on the order of merchant Sokolov.                       | Yes.  |   |
|    |  |                         |    |            | On the 12 <sup>th</sup> , in the presence of rioters, wrote Bogorodskii's confession.                   | Wrote it, but forced to by Sokolov.   |   |
|    |  |                         |    |            | Helped to save forester of the 12 <sup>th</sup> class Dobrovolskii.                                     |   |   |
| 43 | <i>meshchanin</i>                      | Iakov Sharapov          | 50 | 4          | Was on the square but not involved in the riot  | Did not take part in the riot; was on the square no longer than 5 minutes                                   |   |
| 44 | 2 <sup>nd</sup> guild merchant brother | Grigorii Gol'tiaev      | 35 | 1          | Was seen running along, carrying a cudgel.  | Was on the square, but not carrying a cudgel.   |   |
| 45 | merchant son                           | Ivan Iakovlev Kuznetsov | 24 | 1          | Was on the square with the rioters, with whom he rampaged.  | Was on the square, but did nothing.   | Freed, no evidence (F. 773. Op. 1. D. 8 L. 101) |
| 46 | merchant son                           | Grigorii Lapshin        | 24 | 1          | Was involved in the riot and seen running with a cudgel.  | Denied, though admitting he was on the square and helped save bailiff Denshikov, which Denshikov confirmed. |   |
| 47 | <i>meshchanin</i>                      | Grigorii Efimov         | 49 | not guilty | Was with the town head Severiakov on the square.  | Was, but on seeing the rampage, returned with Severiakov.   |   |
| 48 | 3 <sup>rd</sup> guild merchant         | Ivan Ptitsyn            | 39 | 1          | During the first riot was heard to say all policemen should be hanged.                                  | Denied, though admitting he was on the square and helped save bailiff Denshikov; which Denshikov confirmed. |   |
|    |  |                         |    |            | Shouted excitedly at police NCO Pivelov: 'This first head we will smash, and then we'll hang the rest!' | No.   |   |
|    |  |                         |    |            | During the second riot, helped save council chairman, collegiate advisor Smidt.                         | Confirmed.  |   |
| 49 | <i>meshchanin</i>                      | Timofei Dolotov         | 31 | 4          | Was on the square, but helped save bailiff Denshikov.   | Confirmed.  |   |
|    |  |                         |    |            | Signed.   | Yes.  |   |

|    |                   |   |    |   |   |  |                            |
|----|-------------------|---|----|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| 50 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Aleksei Krasil'nikov                              | 50 | 2 | Attacked Dirin during the riot.   | Was on the square, but did not attack him.   |                            |
| 51 | merchant brother  | Semen Savostin                                    | 35 | 1 | Signed.   | Was forced to.   |                            |
|    |                   |   |    |   | Helped to save Dirin.   | Confirmed.   |                            |
|    |                   |   |    |   | Signed for <i>meshchanin</i> Ivan Stepanov Dem'ianov, at the request of Dem'ianov, because of the illiteracy of the latter.   | Did not sign for Dem'ianov, but if he was asked he doesn't remember.   |                            |
| 52 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Martem'ian Matveev                                | 50 | 4 | Was on the square during the riot.  | No.  |                            |
|    |                   |   |    |   | During the second riot, shouted at the merchant brother Semen Savostin: 'You're all laggards, always hiding behind corners, not wanting to show your face on the square!' | Said that he had said to Savostin: 'You're wrong to hide, you should be the first to confront the worker battalion'; all other accusations denied. |                            |
| 53 | merchant          | Nikolai Savel'ev Popov                            | 43 | 1 | During the riot was on the square and saw the officers being beaten.  | Was there.   |                            |
|    |                   |   |    |   | Signed confessions of officers.   | Doesn't remember, but, according to the check which has been made, he had signed.  |                            |
| 54 | merchant          | Mikhailo Bocharov                                 | 42 | 1 | Was on the square; saw the officers being beaten.   | Yes.   |                            |
|    |                   |   |    |   | Sent <i>meshchanin</i> Ivan Khahin to summon commoners of the town for the religious service.   | Did not confess, Khakin testifying that Bocharov did not command him to summon commoners for the service.  |                            |
| 55 | merchant          | Stepan Sukhanov                                   | 57 | 1 | Signed.   | Yes.   |                            |
| 56 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Timofei Rodionov                                  | 22 | 4 | Commoners reported him as being among the rioters.  | No.  |                            |
|    |                   |   |    |   | On the square, he upbraided the merchant son Alexander Shaposhnikov for standing up for the officers.   | No.  |                            |
| 57 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Vasil Skopin                                      | 40 | 4 | Signed.   | Yes.   |                            |
| 58 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Ivan Andreev (denounced by Petr Ivanov Dem'ianov) | 30 | 4 | Items belonging to officers found in his liquor store.  | Some items considered his own; others may have belonged to three soldiers of the 10th battalion, though they said they knew nothing about them.    |                            |
| 59 | <i>meshchanka</i> | Anna Andreeva                                     | 25 | 1 | Officer's items found in her liquor store.  |  | The wife to be transferred |

|    |                                | (wife of the above)            |    |   |   |  | to the civil court. |
|----|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----|---|---|--|---------------------|
| 60 | merchant                       | Ivan Shelkovnikov              | 42 | 1 | Signed  | Yes  |                     |
| 61 | merchant                       | Nikita Lebedev                 | 56 | 1 | Signed  | Yes  |                     |
| 62 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Aleksei Sumotchikov            | 44 | 4 | Was on the square but committed no offence.                                     | Yes  |                     |
| 63 | merchant son                   | Aleksandr Shaposhnikov         | 35 | 1 | Signed  | Yes  |                     |
| 64 | merchant                       | Anton Plylov                   | 43 | 1 | Signed  | Yes  |                     |
| 65 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Nikolai Nochkovskii            | 39 | 4 | Signed ( <i>meshchanin</i> Iakov Plotnikov signed for him as he was illiterate) | Yes  |                     |
| 66 | 2 <sup>nd</sup> guild merchant | Fedor Katalov                  | 28 | 1 | Signed  | Yes  |                     |
| 67 | merchant                       | Vasil Balokhontsev             | 48 | 1 | Visited the archimandrite asking what to do to save the town.                   | Confirmed and said that he then travelled to Major-General Leont'ev. |                     |
| 68 | merchant                       | Artem Sutetskii                | 45 | 1 | Visited the archimandrite asking what to do to save the town.                   | Confirmed and said that he then travelled to Major-General Leont'ev. |                     |
| 69 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Andrei Grigor'iev Balakhontsev | 43 | 4 | Signed  | Yes  |                     |
| 70 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Evstafii Sobolev               | 49 | 4 | Signed  | Yes  |                     |
| 71 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Dmitrii Mikhailov Popov        | 30 | 4 | Signed  | yes  |                     |
| 72 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Efim Semenov                   | 44 | 4 | Signed  | Yes  |                     |
| 73 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Ivan Cherentsov                | 53 | 4 | Signed  | Yes  |                     |
| 74 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Iakov Plotnikov                | 30 | 4 | Signed  | Yes  |                     |
| 75 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Gerasim Popkov                 | 48 | 4 | Signed  | Yes  |                     |
| 76 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Mikhaila Anikin                | 44 | 4 | Signed  | Yes  |                     |
| 77 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Vladimir Kalashnikov           | 19 | 4 | Signed  | Yes  |                     |
| 78 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Sergei Krasil'nikov            | 41 | 4 | Signed  | Yes  |                     |
| 79 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Vasil Gol'tiaev                | 45 | 4 | Signed  | Yes  |                     |

|    |                   |  |    |   |  |   |   |
|----|-------------------|--|----|---|--|---|---|
| 80 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Ivan Kon'ukhov   | 48 | 4 | Signed   | Yes   |   |
| 81 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Nikifor Gur'ianov Popov                                | 43 | 4 | Signed   | Yes   |   |
| 82 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Ivan Efimov  | 36 | 4 | Signed   | Yes   |   |
| 83 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Ivan Zemskov   | 35 | 4 | Signed   | Yes   |   |
| 84 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Mikhaila Ivanov  | 51 | 4 | Signed   | Yes   |   |
| 85 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Spiridon Bazhenov                                      | 40 | 4 | Signed   | Yes   |   |
| 86 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Ivan Ivanovskii  | 41 | 4 | Signed   | Yes   |   |
| 87 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Ivan Miasnikov   | 62 | 1 |  | Yes   |   |
| 88 | merchant son      | Ivan Sokolov (brother of the secretary of the council) | 23 | 1 | Signed for merchant Aleksei Bykov.   | Yes   | Freed, no evidence (F. 773. Op. 1. D. 8 L. 101) |
|    |                   |  |    |   | During the riot, on the orders of town headman Solodovnikov, searched for draftsman Il'iia Zakharov, who had taken the confession from Major Laradieev; and on finding Zakharov, escorted him to headman Solodovnikov. | Yes   |   |
|    |                   |  |    |   | Copied the confessions of the officers.  | Copied, but under pressure from the rioting soldiers, and on the orders of his brother Vasilii Sokolov, secretary of the council. |   |
| 89 | merchant son      | Fadeii Iakovlev Kuznetsov                              | 28 | 1 | Signed   | Yes   |   |
| 90 | merchant son      | Ivan Iakovlev Kuznetsov                                | 35 | 1 | Signed   | Yes   |   |
| 91 | merchant son      | Andrei Vasil'ev Kharin                                 | 36 | 1 | Signed   | Yes   |   |
| 92 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Ivan Andreev Kuznetsov                                 | 42 | 4 | Signed   | Yes   |   |

|     |                   |   |    |      |   |  |  |
|-----|-------------------|---|----|------|---|--|--|
| 93  | <i>meshchanin</i> | Fedor Polovikhin  | 54 | 4    | Signed (signed for him by <i>meshchanin</i> Ivan Konukhov owing to his illiteracy)  | Yes  |  |
| 94  | <i>meshchanin</i> | Stepan Krasil'nikov                                       | 31 |      | Signed  | Yes  |  |
| 95  | <i>meshchanin</i> | Nikolai Lepshev   | 39 | 4    | Signed  | Yes  |  |
| 96  | <i>meshchanin</i> | Fedor Kolpachkov  | 45 | 4    | Signed  | Yes  |  |
| 97  | <i>meshchanin</i> | Grigorii Kuleshov   | 37 | 4    | Signed  | Yes  |  |
| 98  | <i>meshchanin</i> | Ivan Sineikin   | 50 | 4    | Signed  | Yes  |  |
| 99  | <i>meshchanin</i> | Vasil Nazarov Skokin                                      | 40 | 4    | Signed  | Yes  |  |
| 100 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Egor Maksimov Plotnikov                                   | 64 | 4    | Signed  | Yes  |  |
| 101 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Dmitrii Ivanov Kuznetsov                                  | 45 | 4    | Signed  | Yes  |  |
| 102 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Fedosii Ivanov Kalinin                                    | 29 | 4    | Signed  | Yes  |  |
| 103 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Nikifor Gushitskii  |    | died | Signed  | The town council reported that three men died.   |  |
| 104 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Prokopii Solovukhin                                       | -  | died | Signed  | The town council reported that three men died.   |  |
| 105 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Nazar Sadovnikov  | -  | died | Signed  | The town council reported that three men died.   |  |
| 106 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Ul'ian Iakovlev (non-existent) ( <i>net ego voobshe</i> ) | -  |      | Signed for Skokhin.   | The town council reported that there was no such man.  |  |
| 107 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Petr L'ia din   | 29 | 4    | Skokin signed for him.  | Yes  |  |
| 108 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Petr Korostynskii   | 25 | 4    | Attacked the quarter bailiff Savost'ianov near the sentry box on Krestetskaia street, and shouted, 'Here, lads!', and following his words soldiers ran into the town. | No; supported by <i>meshchanin</i> Susel'nikov and <i>meshchanka</i> Kulikovu and her lodger ( <i>postoialka</i> ), who confirmed that he was not on the square on the 12th. |  |
| 109 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Pavel Molodtsov   | 24 | 3    | Seen brandishing a cudgel.  | No.  |  |
|     |                   |   |    |      | Signed.   | No.  |  |

|     |                   |   |    |   |  |   |  |
|-----|-------------------|---|----|---|--|---|--|
|     |                   |   |    |   | Left the guard house, to bring the priest Aleksandr Nickolskii, to hear captain Khodot's last confession.  | No.   |  |
| 110 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Nazar Skopin                                  | 70 | 4 | Seen brandishing a cudgel.   | No; said that at the beginning of the riot he went out of his house and walked 50 <i>sazhenei</i> only from his door, and was then captured by an unknown soldier and led to bailiff Zhukov. But according to private Andrei Revenko, Skopin had a cudgel when he captured him. |  |
| 111 | merchant son      | Makhailo Shaposhnikov                         | 20 | 1 | Seen running along with a cudgel and calling for a fire ladder to break into the pharmacy.   | Was on the square, and in the police station yard on the orders of Mandzhos, to defend the town against the worker soldiers; only for this purpose was looking for a cudgel but did not find any.   |  |
|     |                   |   |    |   | Was running around the city shouting at officials, and urging rioters to kill all policemen, and saying he wanted to cut off the head of the NCO Sinilnikov  | No.   |  |
|     |                   |   |    |   | Asked the rioting soldiers, where the Chief of the Police was and threatened police private Rebenok with beating.  | No  |  |
|     |                   |   |    |   | Was seen running along with <i>meshchanin</i> Molodsov during the riot, with a stick.  | No  |  |
|     |                   |   |    |   | With <i>meshchanin</i> son Aleksandr Stepanov Dem'anov, was drunk in the fire station yard, calling for the horses to be harnessed, and demanding their ladder in order to break into the pharmacy and arrest the pharmacist, and search for Mandzhos. | No  |  |
| 112 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Osip Sinitsyn (known in the commune as Surin) | 48 | 3 | Signed.  | Yes.  |  |

|     |              |                  |    |   |   |  |  |
|-----|--------------|------------------|----|---|---|--|--|
|     |              |                  |    |   | Attacked Dirin and Bogorodskii with his fists.  | No.  |  |
|     |              |                  |    |   | After the first riot, was on unauthorized absence in St. Petersburg.  | No.  |  |
| 113 | merchant son | Andrei Kuznetsov | 39 | 1 | Was the first to shout to the rioters on the Tikhvin bridge: 'Here, lads, ours are here!'; and then, 'Let's get the Chief of Police!'   | Alleged that, on the Thkhvinskii bridge, he only asked what were the rioters' intentions, and on learning these, slipped away to the state offices building ( <i>prisutstvennye mesta</i> ), where he was later found by soldiers who compelled him to join their search for Mandzhos. |  |
|     |              |                  |    |   | Signed.   | Yes.   |  |
|     |              |                  |    |   | Was replying to archimandrite, when asked what made the rioters gather together; he who was explaining to archimandrite about Vorob'ev. | No.  |  |
|     |              |                  |    |   | Saw Dirin being beaten on the square.   | No.  |  |
| 114 | merchant     | Aleksei Bykov    | 46 | 1 | On the square, during the first riot, received 150 roubles taken from Major Laradziev and gave them to merchant son Sumriakov.          | Said that Kuznetsov did not give him any money, but the worker soldiers, after searching Major Laradziev, found on him 177 roubles 60 kopeks, and gave this money immediately to merchant son Sumriakov.   |  |
|     |              |                  |    |   | Took the money of Major Laradziev and said, 'Your money will not be lost'.  | Did not take any money.  |  |
|     |              |                  |    |   | Was acquainted with the riotous young man who assaulted Major Laradziev.  | No.  |  |
|     |              |                  |    |   | If he did not take it himself, knew who took the ring and other items from Laradziev.   | No.  |  |
| 115 | merchant son | Ivan Sumr'iakov  | 29 | 1 | Questioned Bogorodskii.   | Was only standing near Bogorodskii, and advised him what to answer to the rioters.   |  |
|     |              |                  |    |   | Abused Major Laradziev when he was fettered under guard, that it was unpleasant for him to see how Laradziev took                       | No.  |  |

|     |                            |                         |    |                      |  |   |
|-----|----------------------------|-------------------------|----|----------------------|--|---|
|     |                            |                         |    |                      | sometimes walking along the coast of the river Pererytitsa.  |   |
|     |                            |                         |    |                      | Took 177 roubles belonging to Major Laradziev.   | No.   |
|     |                            |                         |    |                      | Was acquainted with the riotous young man who assaulted Major Laradziev.   | No.   |
|     |                            |                         |    |                      | Signed.  | Yes.  |
| 116 | <i>meshchanin</i>          | Abram Iakhontov         | 33 | 4                    | Assaulted the quarter bailiff Denshikov.   | Was on the square, but did not assault anyone.  |
| 117 | <i>meshchanin</i>          | Matvei Zadnepol'skii    | 30 | 4                    | Saw the <i>meshchanin</i> Iakhintov Avraam assaulting the bailiff Denshikov  | Admitted.   |
| 118 | <i>meshchanin</i>          | Ivan Stepanov Dem'ianov | 39 | 4                    | Charged with harbouring a stolen chest in his house.   | Said the item was brought by his labourer, <i>meshchanin</i> son Nikolai Loginov, from a soldier on the firefighter team.   |
|     |                            |                         |    |                      | Confessed that he had signed.  | Being illiterate, asked his brother Semen Savistianov to sign, which the latter denied: Demianov's signature was indeed not found when checking signatures.   |
| 119 | <i>meshchanin</i> widow    | Ul'iana Demidova        | 34 | Sent to the governor | Accused of shouting: 'Here! the architect's pouring poison on the cabbages!', and sending a boy, her son, to catch the architect Statten; then shouting to the boy to run to the staff of the Kievan regiment and tell the soldiers to go to the architect's lodgings and apprehend him there. | Said that, on 12 <sup>th</sup> July, she saw a young woman, Katerina Dem'ianova, with another one, unknown, pursuing the architect Statten out of her, Demidova's, allotment – for what reason she didn't know; her 14-year old son, also mentioned in the architect's testimonies, confessed to nothing. |
| 120 | <i>meshchanin</i> daughter | Katerina Dem'ianova     | 23 | Sent to the governor | On the 12th pursued architect Statten out of Demidova's allotment.   | Saw a tall hunchbacked man in a frock coat in Demidova's allotment, but did not chase him.  |
| 121 | <i>meshchanin</i> daughter | Ul'iana Churkina        | 21 | Sent to the governor | On the 12th pursued architect Statten out of Demidova's allotment  | Saw a tall hunchbacked man in a frock coat in Demidova's allotment, but did not chase him.  |

|     |                   |                     |    |   |   |   |  |
|-----|-------------------|---------------------|----|---|---|---|--|
| 122 | merchant          | Mikhailo Popov      | 34 | 1 | Apprehended Sergeev and Mendelev in his allotment, reported this to the worker soldiers, and helped as they tied the men up, beat them, and escorted them to the square.  | Confessed that he pointed out Sergeev and Mendelev to the soldiers and helped to take them to the square but did not beat or help tie them up.  |  |
| 123 | merchant          | Kozma Popov         | 42 | 1 | With his brother Mikhailo, saw the rioters bring Sergeev and Mendelev to his garden, and tie their hands with ropes.  | Yes, but was only a witness.  |  |
|     |                   |                     |    |   | Attacked 6th rank official Sergeev and Major Mendelev in his house.   | No.   |  |
| 124 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Petr Nosukhin       | 38 | 4 | Spread it about that quarter bailiff Pakhomov had left for the military districts with poison.  | Doesn't remember.   |  |
| 125 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Boris Ptitsyn       | 59 | 3 | While drunk and in excitable state, declared to quarter bailiff Pakhomov about the Highest Command that he allegedly had to alleviate his fate and to read him Kathisma' ('I have order of the Emperor to alleviate your fate and to read you Kathisma!') | Was drunk.  |  |
| 126 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Semen Baranov       | 25 | 3 | Was involved with the rioters in the riot.  | Was on the square in his shirt, without <i>sibirka</i> , in trousers, with no shoes or hat, and was forced by the rioters to hold the lantern while they searched for Chief of Police Mandzhos. |  |
| 127 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Nikolai Pshennoi    | 48 | 4 | On the 12th was on the square to buy some supplies, saw the body of the dead Mandzos but did nothing and went home.   | He himself testified in this.   |  |
| 128 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Ivan Surin          | 40 | 4 | Skokhin signed for him.   | Yes.  |  |
| 129 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Filip Fedorov Lapin | 54 | 4 | During the riot went from the square to ratman Balokhvantsev demanding he go to the square to question the arrested.  | Said he was on the square and helped in saving Dirin; went to <i>ratman</i> Balakhavantsev, but did not find him at home.   |  |
| 130 | <i>meshchanin</i> | Timofei Zaputriaev  | 48 | 4 | Saw Dirin being beaten but did not help despite Dirin asking for help.  | Was on the square but did not see Dirin being beaten.   |  |
|     |                   |                     |    |   | Helped to place the officers in fetters.  | Confessed without evidence.   |  |

|     |                                |   |    |                       |   |   |  |
|-----|--------------------------------|---|----|-----------------------|---|---|--|
| 131 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Efim Solov'ev   | 25 | 4                     | Saw Dirin being beaten but did not help despite Dirin asking for help.  | Was on the square but did not hear Dirin's pleas and did not see him being beaten.  |  |
| 132 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Iakim Solov'ev  | 25 | not guilty            | Saw a settler ( <i>voennyi poselianin</i> ) take money from the pocket of the murdered Major-General.   |   |  |
| 133 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Vasilii Chetve-rev  | 40 | 4                     | During the second riot, was standing on the stone wall of the military staff building, and, spotting officers, pointed them out to the rioters. | No.   |  |
| 134 | <i>wife of the soldier</i>     | Fedosii Antipova, wife of a private of the worker battalion, Leontii Efimov |    | To the high commander | Looted items found among her belongings.  | Said these are all her own items.   |  |
| 135 | widowed soldier's wife         | Irina Sykavina, soldier's wife, now widow                                   | 49 |                       | Spread absurdities about poisoning.   | Suspected the serf servant ( <i>dvorovoi</i> ) Aleksandr belonging to landlord Rakhmetov; but according to witnesses, he only had salt in his handkerchief. |  |
| 136 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Nikifor Bychatin  | 49 | 4                     | Was at the religious service.   | Yes.  |  |
| 137 | 3 <sup>rd</sup> guild merchant | Iakov Andreev Portknov  | 52 | 1                     | Was at the religious service.   | Yes.  |  |
| 138 | <i>meshchanin</i>              | Nikolai Ivanov Zavarzin   | 45 | 4                     | Was at the religious service.   | Yes.  |  |
| 139 | merhchant                      | Ul'ian Nikolaev Sulevskii   | 40 | 1                     | Was at the religious service.   | Yes.  |  |

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#### Abbreviations

GANO – State Archive of the Novgorod Region

RGIA – Russian State Historical Archive

RGVIA – Russian State Military Historical Archive

PSZ – Full code of Laws of the Russian Empire, The First Edition (Vs. 26-35: St. Petersburg, 1830).

TSGIA SPb – Central State Historical Archive of St. Petersburg

TsGA g. Moskvyy – Central State Archive of the City of Moscow

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D. 18. Empress's decree to Y. A. Bruce, 1788.

D. 37. On merchant brothers Lomakiny, who volunteered, 1789-90.

D. 94. On merchant N. Ovchinnikov's plea to join Kozlovskii regiment, 1790.

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D. 458. On recruit levy in 1795.

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- D. 835. On recruit levy in 1799.
- D. 907. On Militia in Sofia, 1806-07.
- D. 1004. On recruit levy in 1810.
- D. 1038. On recruit levy in 1811.
- D. 1054. On Gatchina recruits, 1812.
- D. 1057. Governor Bakunin on Leontii Belokhvastov, 1812.
- D. 1058. On recruit levy in March 1812.
- D. 1060. On Militia in Tsarskoe Selo, 1812.
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D. 91. On recruit levy in 1809.

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The Investigation Commission in Novgorod and Starai Rusa, 1831-1832.

D. 5403. The reports of the commanders of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> districts of military colonies to the commander of the corps General A. Kh. Eiler about riot in Starai Rusa and in the districts of the corps. The letter of archimandrite of *Spaso-Preobrazhenskii* monastery Serafim explaining that he had been forced to join the trial of the officials.

D. 5572. Explanations given by officers and officials.

D. 5573. Correspondence on the investigation of the events.

D. 5575. The list of commoners of Starai Rusa, with description of their actions in July 1831.

D. 5576. Protocols, testimonies, confrontations of the accused 2<sup>nd</sup> category, 6 persons.

D. 5577. Protocols, testimonies, confrontations of the accused 3<sup>rd</sup> category, 7 persons.

D. 5578. Protocols, testimonies, confrontations of the accused 4<sup>th</sup> category, 40 persons.

D. 5579. Protocols, testimonies, confrontations of those who have been found not involved.

D. 5581. Miscellanea documents of the Investigation Commission.

D. 5583. Reports of the Investigation Commission which had been set in Novgorod.

D. 5585. Protocols of the Investigation Commission in Novgorod, part 1.

D. 5586. Protocols of the Investigation Commission in Novgorod, part 2.

D. 5593. The investigation in Staraia Rusa of the riots in July 1831 (the commission in Staraia Rusa).

D. 5597. The correspondence of the Investigation Commission.

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D. 96. Lists of militiamen from *meshchane* communes of the province, 1812.

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- D. 206. On militia in 1806-1807.
- D. 230. On the recruit levy in 1806.
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- D. 332. In recruit levy in 1808.
- D. 428. On recruit levy in 1810.
- D. 435. On the complaint of the *meshchane* from Krennitsy to free them from billeting, 1818.

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