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Service in the Periphery of the Romanov Empire: Exile or Springboard for Customs Officials of the Administrative Authorities of Czarist Russia in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries?¹

Abstract

Peter I, ruler of Russia, is regarded as the father of the modern administrative apparatus created in order to effectively administer the empire. The then introduced system of personnel selection and promotions became an inherent part of the practice applied during the reign of successive Romanovs until the end of the functioning of absolute rule in Russia. On the basis of preserved source materials of government origin, the fact of the service of customs officials on the borders of the empire was analyzed, as was its influence on appointments to positions within the central administrative authorities that managed the customs revenues of the Romanov Empire in the 19th and early

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20th centuries. For some officials, the necessity of serving on the borders of the empire was only a stage in their civil service career, which ultimately ended in the offices operating in the capital city of St. Petersburg. However, many failed to find employment in the capital, pursuing their careers on the borders of the vast Romanov Empire.

Keywords: periphery, administration, official/officer, customs duty, Russia.

Introduction

In recent decades, studies on Russian administration officials on the frontiers of the Russian Empire in the 19th and early 20th centuries have enjoyed continuing popularity. Several studies devoted to the presence and activity of officials holding executive positions in special administration have been published (Bogdanov, 2014; Górak & Latawiec, 2017; Kula & Massalski, 2017; Latawiec, 2015; Latawiec et al., 2015, 2016, 2018, 2020; Szewczuk, 2020). However, there are no publications offering an analysis of issues connected with the perception of serving in Russia's periphery as a permanent or episodic stage in people's careers as officials. Customs officials were a special group of civil servants in czarist Russia. On account of the specific scope of competence of customs administration bodies, they had to exercise their duties on the far outskirts of the Romanov monarchy. Only a small group of them succeeded in gaining employment at the Ministry of Finance Customs Department (MFCD) based in the capital city of St. Petersburg. This crucial administrative body was at the top of the hierarchy of customs structures operating in Russia between 1865 and 1918. The mode of recruitment of employees to the MFCD had its own rules regulated by legal acts concerning the operation of the civil service. Obtaining a post within it often depended on factors that were seldom connected with professionalism, dedication, conscientiousness and experience.

One very interesting problem connected with the functioning of the MFCD is that of the presence in it of officials who, to a greater or lesser extent, served on the outskirts of the Romanov Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Another interesting circumstance was the transfer to peripheral offices of employees who seemingly had a sufficiently well established position in the MFCD. There was also a group of MFCD officials who deliberately gave up service in St. Petersburg in order to pursue a career on the edges of the vast Romanov Empire. Finally, one should mention the practice of using a temporary position in the MFCD to gain more interesting and financially more attractive posts in the customs administration operating on the outskirts of czarist Russia.

* * *

Work in the customs administration on the periphery of the Romanov Empire was sometimes an opportunity to change one's position in the official hierarchy and, in consequence, to improve one's living conditions through higher remuneration or lower costs of living. This was especially noticeable in the case of MFCD office clerks. Holding this post in the department did not mean the opportunity to have a brilliant career within its internal structure, particularly if one's education gave no grounds to expect a higher position in one of the MFCD divisions or in its head office in future. A way out of this was to seek appointment to a position in customs offices operating on the borders of the Russian Empire.

We will begin the discussion on the attitude of MFCD officials towards the necessity of serving on the periphery of the Romanov Empire by analyzing several cases of people who, when they were about to be assigned to work on the borders of the empire, had held specialist posts in St. Petersburg. It might appear that these people, holding jobs that were important from the standpoint of the interests of the administrative authority, could justifiably expect a future promotion within the department itself. In some cases, however, things were entirely different. The question arises whether assigning an employee to serve on the outskirts of the empire was only a top-down directive of the finance minister or the director of the department, or leaving St. Petersburg occurred as a result of the initiative of the employee in question.

In late November 1868 the MFCD's former special task officer, Nikolai Kaidanov, was appointed officer for combating contraband in the western governorates (*guberniyas*) and in the Kingdom of Poland. He was therefore assigned a very important role: to undertake and coordinate measures aimed at significantly curbing the flow of contraband into Russia across its western land and sea borders. Was this post a form of recognition for Kaidanov? Holding this function required the official constantly to supervise the scale of contraband appearing along different sections of the state frontier, which thus entailed: regular inspections of the operating customs offices; analysis of statistical materials or organizing actions to eliminate the sources of smuggling and the locations where illegal goods were stored. Kaidanov had not expected that from his retreat in the MFCD archive, to which he had been transferred to organize the documentation produced in the Customs Department in the 18th and early 19th centuries, he would be hurled right into the struggle against the omnipresent smuggling in the western part of the Romanov monarchy. Kaidanov's stay in *Zapadnyi*



Kray (Western Territory) and the Kingdom of Poland lasted until the end of April 1873. It ended with his appointment to the post of MFCD archive head, which should be considered a promotion. It should be added that he ran the archive until his death in July 1894. Kaidanov was one of the few MFCD officials who successfully, without any problems, managed to return to the administrative entity from which he had been transferred to the outskirts of the empire (LVVA, fonds 545, apraksts 2, lieta 29, fol. 10; RGIA, fond 21, opis 11, delo 318, fol. 408v; "UPRMF", 1866, No. 4, p. 60; 1867, No. 43, p. 773; 1869, No. 7, p. 98; 1870, No. 1, p. 3; 1872, No. 39, p. 765; 1873, No. 42, p. 850; 1894, No. 32, p. 406).

A small group of just under forty MFCD specialist officials was sent to the peripheries of the empire in the years 1865–1914 to take up different positions in local structures of the customs administration. It needs emphasizing that an analysis of the course of their civil service careers shows that these people were later offered no opportunity to work in the MFCD in St. Petersburg. Considering the positions they held, it is difficult to argue that their official assignment to the outskirts of the empire was tantamount to banishment, especially since, due to their conscientious and dedicated work, they were promoted through successive ranks as officials. It is therefore worth examining selected cases from this group.

The highest promotion was given to Nikolai Baklanovsky, an MFCD special task officer. After almost fifteen years of work in St. Petersburg, on January 12, 1887 he was appointed to the post of director of the Radziwiłłów Customs House (CH). How well he fulfilled his duties at one of the significant customs offices of the Romanov monarchy is evidenced by the fact that he held this job until his death on March 22, 1908 (EAA, 644.1.1700, fol. 42v; LVVA, fonds 545, apraksts 2, lieta 38, fol. 9v; RGIA, fond 21, opis 2, delo 2027, fol. 12v; "UPRMF", 1872, No. 21, pp. 372–373; No. 51–52, p. 1021; 1884, No. 18, p. 905; 1885, No. 12, pp. 771–772; 1887, No. 4, p. 230). However, it should be stressed that Baklanovsky had already held a comparatively important and high place in the hierarchy of positions in the MFCD's structure.

Obviously, seeing huge competition for promotion among their fellow employees in the MFCD structures, MFCD personnel who held lower specialist positions (mainly assistant clerks, less often the clerks themselves) tried to improve their situation by applying for appointment to diverse positions functioning on the periphery of the empire. What successes were achieved by former MFCD officials can be seen by analyzing the information in the table below.

Table: Appointments of selected MFCD officials to local structures of the customs administration in the Russian Empire in the period 1866–1913.

Surname and first name of the official	Last post held in the MFCD before transfer to the outskirts of the empire	Post granted in the periphery of the empire and the date of appointment	Post held at the moment of leaving service, death or in 1914
Avenarius von Aleksander	Senior assistant clerk	Member of Aleksandrów CH (1866)	Director of Aleksandrów CH (1867)
Bakalagin Mikhail	Senior assistant to the section head	Special task officer with the chief of the Zawichost Customs Division (1871)	Assistant treasurer of Moscow CH (1886)
Baranov Nikolai	Senior assistant clerk	Member of Sosnowiec CH (1895)	Departmental controller in Odessa CH (1914)
Bergiel Stanisław	Senior assistant clerk	Member of Orenburg CH (1867)	Dismissed from the post because of the office's closedown (1869)
Bezrukov Pyotr	General registrar	Member of Sevastopol CH (1883)	Director of Aleksandrów CH (1909)
Bolsunov Maxim	Senior assistant clerk	Member of Izmail CH (1892)	Director of Yalta CH (1902)
Buschmann (Buszman) Marian	Junior clerk	Member of Riga CH (1899)	Member of Riga CH (1912)
Buzhbetsky Mikhail	Senior clerk	Member of Odessa CH (1895)	Member of St. Petersburg Port CH (1909)
Cherniavsky Vasily	Junior section head	Member of Aleksandrów CH (1899)	Director of Szczypiorno CH (1914)

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Davydov Nikolai	Senior assistant clerk	Administrator of Zaisan Customs Division (1895)	Secretary at Tiflis (now Tbilisi) CH (1902)
Dorofeyev Pavel	Junior clerk	Member of Odessa CH (1895)	Director of Warsaw CH (1914)
Heydatel Henryk	Translator	Member of Grajewo CH (1884)	Member of Astrakhan CH (1896)
Gorlov Vladimir	Section head	Member of Riga CH (1875)	Senior member of CH Revel (now Tallinn) (1885)
Grigoriev Nikolai	Senior assistant clerk	Assistant superintendent of the customs warehouse of Nikolayevsk CH (1879)	Assistant superintendent of the customs warehouse of CH Nikolayevsk (1880)
Gutman Robert	Bookkeeper	Controller, Riga CH (1913)	Controller, Riga CH (1914)
Yelchaninov Ivan	Translator	Member of Nikolayevsk CH (1875)	Member of Kharkov CH (1878)
Shchegolev Dmitry	Junior clerk	Member of Baltiski CH (1881)	Director of St. Petersburg Land CH (1908)
Trotsky Georgiy	Junior assistant clerk	Special task officer with the chief of Warsaw Customs Division (1899)	Director of Kiev CH (1914)

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Surname and first name of the official	Last post held in the MFCD before transfer to the outskirts of the empire	Post granted in the periphery of the empire and the date of appointment	Post held at the moment of leaving service, death or in 1914
Tyszko Lubomir	Junior assistant clerk	Secretary of the Office of the Chief of Vilnius Customs Division (1901)	Assistant inspector of South-Western Customs Division (1914)
Zagert Aleksander	Junior assistant clerk	Junior assistant superintendent of the customs warehouse of Wierzbołów CH (1869)	Junior assistant of the superintendent of ships of St. Petersburg Port CH (1884)
Zelenin Nikolai	Assistant lab technician-specialist	Technician-specialist of Batumi Customs Division (1907)	Controller of Warsaw CH (1914)

Sources: DAKO, fond 292, opys 1, sprava 7; EAA, 644.1.1578, 644.1.1612, 644.1.1740; LVVA, fonds 545, apraksts 2, lieta: 27a, 33–37, 41; RGIA, fond 21, opis 2, delo: 2025–2027; fond 139, opis 1, delo 885; fond 143, opis 2, delo: 17, 18; TLA, 1411.2.62, 1411.2.63; “UPRMF”, 1865–1898; Latawiec et al. 2023a, pp. 130–131, 143–144, 173–174, 186–187, 212–213.

There were probably also cases of disappointment with a transfer from the MFCD to faraway provinces, which required more commitment from an employee to improve his situation. For example, since October 1873 Piotr Januszkowski had been moving up the career ladder in the MFCD from the lowest specialist position: that of junior assistant clerk. After thirteen years of employment, he obtained the job of senior clerk. However, several years later, unexpectedly to his co-employees, he was appointed to the position of member in the Nieszawa CH. It is not clear whether this was a promotion or exile, because not even three months had passed when Januszkowski took over a similar job at the Granica (now Maczki) CH and occupied the post until his death in 1898 (RGIA, fond 143, opis 2, delo

18, fol. 12; “UPRMF”, 1873, No. 25, p. 491; 1874, No. 19, pp. 442–443; 1877, No. 12–13, pp. 271–272; 1878, No. 15–16, p. 386; 1880, No. 14, p. 353; 1883, No. 37, p. 1068; 1884, No. 24, p. 1333; 1886, No. 25, pp. 705–706; 1888, No. 33, pp. 422–423; 1890, No. 41, p. 402; 1891, No. 1, pp. 5–6). Given the prestige of the latter office of customs administration, his presence in Nieszawa must have been a misunderstanding and, in view of the procedure for examining applications submitted by officials, this quick change of appointment could have been effected by the interested person himself.

Sometimes MFCD employees were appointed unexpectedly to a position in the customs administration operating on the borders of czarist Russia, which will be evidenced by the cases presented below. At times, according to the opinion of the MFCD director, an appointment to a serious position on the periphery of the empire would be the crowning achievement of a many-years-long career as an official. These were presumably the motives for entrusting, as of May 8, 1869, the position of member in the Sosnowiec CH to the head of one of the MFCD sections, Vladimir Bogdanovich. He was, however, not very enthusiastic about this dubious, he believed, distinction. Ultimately, he never arrived in Sosnowiec, since he resigned from further work in the civil service on July 13, 1869 because of the intransigent MFCD chief who was deaf to his pleas for a change of appointment (LVVA, fonds 545, apraksts 2, lieta 29, fol. 79v–80; lieta 31, fol. 5v; RGIA, fond 21, opis 11, delo 318, fol. 388v, 496; “UPRMF”, 1865, No. 14, p. 196; 1869, No. 29, p. 418; No. 48, p. 675).

An interesting case was that of Matvey Nerussky. An assistant bookkeeper in the MFCD, working in St. Petersburg for a quarter of a century, in early June 1869 he was appointed to the post of superintendent of the customs warehouse at the Michałowice CH. This was a dubious promotion to Nerussky, however, so he immediately started to apply for the possibility of avoiding this transfer to a customs office operating at the then border between Russia and the Habsburg monarchy. He sought the cancellation of his appointment or a change of his assignment. Apparently the MFCD director was unyielding in his decision. Finally, after consistently refusing to assume his appointed post in the Michałowice CH, and not wishing to be dismissed on disciplinary grounds for insubordination, Nerussky submitted an application for resignation from the civil service. This took place on July 17, 1869. That was the price Nerussky paid for his reluctance to carry out service duties on the frontiers of the empire (“UPRMF”, 1869, No. 36, p. 508; No. 37, p. 524; 1870, No. 13, pp. 187–188).

The fate of Ilya Andreyev, a senior clerk in the MFCD, was a similar case. On June 22, 1876 this employee was appointed to the post of member and treasurer in the Taurogi (now Taurage) CH. Andreyev probably did not even think of going to the Russian-Prussian border to assume this post. He decided to give up working in the civil service once and for all, resigning from his newly appointed position. He stated that the reason for his resignation was his poor health caused by illnesses (“UPRMF”, 1871, No. 52, p. 875; 1874, No. 3, p. 58; 1876, No. 37, p. 839; No. 43, p. 986). To fill the vacancy in the Taurogi CH left by Andreyev, the department’s authorities decided to appoint another MFCD clerk. This time Theodor Hilscher was chosen, who also did not intend to go to the Kovno (now Kaunas) Governorate in order to assume his new post. Hilscher preferred to submit a resignation application because of illness rather than find himself, at the age of 62, in the distant periphery of the empire, especially as he had spent most of his career at the offices in St. Petersburg (“UPRMF”, 1866, No. 47, p. 908; 1867, No. 2, p. 18; No. 11, p. 180; 1876, No. 40, p. 915; No. 46, p. 1050).

The fate of Andreyev and Hilscher was also shared by Aleksandr Bashilov. He had held the position of senior clerk in the MFCD since 1871. There was nothing to suggest that something might disturb his peaceful and stable life in St. Petersburg. However, the MFCD chief, after having consulted the finance minister, decided to appoint Hilscher, as of April 20, 1883, member of the Wierzbołów CH operating on the Russian-Prussian border in the Suwałki Governorate. Bashilov could not accept the fact that after several decades of work in the MFCD he would have to take a position on the periphery of the empire. That is why, several days after receiving his appointment, he submitted his resignation from the civil service for health reasons, which was accepted by his superior, and on April 25, 1883 he retired (“UPRMF”, 1866, No. 47, p. 908; 1868, No. 28, p. 530; 1870, No. 39, p. 572; 1871, No. 52, p. 875; 1874, No. 44, p. 1001; 1883, No. 37, p. 1068).

There was an unusual ending to Józef Dymśa’s work as a senior assistant clerk in the MFCD. In late January 1890 he was unexpectedly appointed to the post of translator in the Odessa CH. The necessity to change his place of employment and go to the Black Sea coast must have disappointed the barely forty-year-old Dymśa. He decided to take a risky step. He refused to accept the new position by submitting an application to be temporarily assigned to MFCD personnel without being appointed to a specific position, and his request was granted on March 11, 1890. He did not want to leave the customs administration structures because this would entail seeking a new place of employment, which would cancel his previous



position in the customs revenue apparatus. Staying in the MFCD, deprived of funds from remuneration, he counted on ultimately being reappointed to a full-time job at the department's headquarters in St. Petersburg. Time passed inexorably while the vision of obtaining a new job in the MFCD became increasingly distant. Finally, after a year or so without a position, on April 24, 1891 he assumed the job of assistant superintendent of ships in the Riga CH ("UPRMF", 1882, No. 12–13, p. 307; No. 38, p. 1019; 1884, No. 29, p. 172; 1885, No. 46, p. 517; 1886, No. 27, p. 14; No. 46, p. 454; 1890, No. 7, p. 70; No. 11, p. 101; 1891, No. 24, p. 254). The question is whether taking this post was a random thing. Convinced that his endeavors to regain a job in the MFCD were futile, Dymcza decided to assume a position in an office situated not very far from his family estate in the Telšiai (then Telszew) district, Kovno (now Kaunas) Governorate, where his father still lived. Everything suggests that in view of the impossibility of returning to St. Petersburg, it was family and property issues, alongside working in the civil service, that were a priority in his personal life. It should be added that Dymcza worked in the Riga CH for more than two decades, e.g. being promoted to the position of CH member on February 25, 1895. He left the service several months before the outbreak of the First World War (TGIASP, fond 1822, opis 4, delo 223, fol. 483v; LVVA, fonds 545, apraksts 2, lieta 33, fol. 4v, 9, 47; Studnicki, 1948, pp. 63–64).

A change of one's environment through leaving the capital for a town situated in the border zone could also result in obtaining successive posts with specialist competences and in entirely abandoning purely clerical work, which meant the possibility of moving up the ladder in the hierarchy of customs offices. This was already noticeable before 1865, when the customs structures were administered by the Ministry of Finance Department of External Trade. For example, Pavel Alenev decided to leave St. Petersburg in December 1863 as he was appointed to the post of superintendent of the customs warehouse in the Palanga CH operating on the Baltic Sea in the Courland Governorate (LVVA, fonds 545, apraksts 2, lieta 30, fol. 36v; lieta 31, fol. 72–72v; RGIA, fond 21, opis 11, delo 318, fol. 395v). It should be added that Alenev's appointment coincided with the start of the de-Polonization policy in the administrative structures operating in Zapadny Kray (Western Territory) and in the Kingdom of Poland. As an official coming from the center of the empire, he would also have had opportunities to gain additional rights and privileges (mainly financial) on account of representing the Russian factor in an area with a distinctly dominant non-Russian population.

The wish to break free from “the St. Petersburg trap” and focus on carving a civil service career on the outskirts of the empire presumably motivated Konstantin Christin. In February 1875 he assumed the post of office clerk in the MFCD. After six years of service, seeing no prospects for promotion in the central authority of the customs administration structure, he became interested in the potential opportunity to move away from St. Petersburg. On May 13, 1881 he was appointed bookkeeper and customs estimator in the Słupca CH operating in the Kalisz Governorate. Regrettably, Christin’s civil service career on the periphery of the empire was terminated by his death in November 1882 (APPOK, Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Prawosławnej Słupca, sygn. 27, fol. 37v; “UPRMF”, 1875, No. 31, p. 735; 1876, No. 15, pp. 319–320; 1879, No. 17, pp. 425–426; 1881, No. 48, p. 1419).

Likewise, Józef Drozdowski, who obtained a job as an office clerk in the MFCD in April 1882, quickly came to the conclusion that the promotion prospects for a Roman Catholic clerk of Polish descent having a rather poor education, i.e. at the district school level, were significantly limited in the department’s office. Hence, it should come as no surprise that he decided to apply for a position on the periphery of the empire, especially when there were no additional restrictions in force regarding persons of Polish descent. In December 1883 he obtained the post of assistant superintendent of ships in the Sevastopol CH (“UPRMF”, 1882, No. 50, p. 1394; 1883, No. 52, p. 1587). The decision to resign from work in the MFCD evidently influenced his further career in different customs offices operating on the Baltic Sea or in the Kingdom of Poland (EAA, 644.1.1612, fol. 4v; 644.1.1700, fol. 8; LVVA, fonds 545, apraksts 2, lieta 33, fol. 15v, 38v; lieta 35, fol. 4v; lieta 36, fol. 7; lieta 38, fol. 23; lieta 41, fol. 11v; RGIA, fond 21, opis 2, delo 2025, fol. 38v; delo 2027, fol. 29; fond 139, opis 1, delo 885, fol. 3–3v; fond 143, opis 2, delo 18, fol. 1v, 47, 55–55v).

The lack of career development prospects in the MFCD in St. Petersburg also affected Fyodor Fyodorovich’s decision to seek work outside St. Petersburg. After four years of being employed as an office clerk in the MFCD, he filed an application for appointment to any higher position in the customs administration on the periphery of the empire. In late 1897 he obtained the post of deputy director of the Poświęcie Crossing in the Kaunas (then Kovno) Governorate. This was the beginning of his civil service career on the western border of the Russian state (EAA, 644.1.1578, fol. 8v; 644.1.1700, fol. 51–52; LVVA, fonds 545, apraksts 2, lieta 34, fol. 29–30; lieta 36, fol. 48–49; lieta 38, fol. 5v–6; RGIA, fond 21, opis 2, delo 2027,

fol. 8v–9; delo 2028, fol. 28v; fond 128, opis 1, delo 25, fol. 7–8; “UPRMF”, 1893, No. 11, p. 134; 1897, No. 31, pp. 453–455; No. 34, p. 495).

While the abovementioned MFCD office clerks applied for any position in the local customs administration, there is no need to thoroughly analyze the motives that drove Ippolit Andreyev, Mikhail Arkadyev, Mikhail Barsukov, and Vasily Grishchuk. All four of them were offered an opportunity to abandon service in St. Petersburg to assume executive functions in the lowest category of customs offices, the so-called toll gates. For all of them, this opened up prospects for a successful career on the periphery of the empire. They assumed the posts of superintendents of the toll gates in Skulsk (Andreyev), Gola (Arkadyev), Czeladź (Barsukov), and Niesułowice (Grishchuk) (LVVA, fonds 545, apraksts 2, lieta 31, fol. 66v; APWOM, Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Prawosławnej w Mławie, sygn. 31, p. 22; sygn. 34, pp. 100–101; “UPRMF”, 1866, No. 43, p. 813; 1867, No. 11, p. 180; No. 39, p. 704; 1868, No. 15, p. 290; No. 16, p. 305; No. 45, p. 842; 1869, No. 48, p. 675; 1873, No. 10, p. 194; 1874, No. 27, pp. 642–643; 1875, No. 31, pp. 735–736; 1883, No. 43, p. 1266; 1884, No. 30, p. 254; Latawiec et al. 2023b, pp. 98, 108, 123–124, 253).

Working in the MFCD headquarters in St. Petersburg was the dream of many officials drifting around the outskirts of the empire. One effect of the personnel policy followed in the local structures of customs administration was instability in respect of the place of employment. Officials could not be sure of being employed in the same place for several or more years. It was not unusual for employees to be transferred from one workplace to another, even several thousand kilometers away.² Taking up a position in the MFCD made it possible to enhance one’s prestige. Entering the central structures brought hopes of obtaining another, higher and better-paid post after several years. An additional factor motivating people to seek a job in the MFCD headquarters was the prospect for a stable life in the capital, St. Petersburg, although the living costs were much higher than

² Generally, officials were relocated within one customs division. It was not uncommon, however, to transfer customs house personnel from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, or from the Kingdom of Poland to the border with China or to the Pacific coast; e.g. in August 1899 Platon Stankevich from the Sosnowiec CH in the Piotrków Governorate was transferred to Krasnoyarsk; in July 1901 Nikolai Menzikhovskiy from the Dąbrowa crossing in the Łomża Governorate was assigned to a post in the Vladivostok CH; in February 1911 Vladimir Kravchenko was relocated from the Aleksandrów CH in the Warsaw Governorate to the Manchuria CH operating at the Manchuria station of the East-Chinese Railway (EAA, 644.1.1578, fol. 22v; 644.1.1893, fol. 5v; RGIA, fond 21, opis 2, delo 2025, fol. 30; fond 143, opis 2, delo 18, fol. 74).

in the provinces. The question then arises whether it was possible to promote a customs official from structures operating on the periphery of the empire to the MFCD in St. Petersburg. An analysis of the careers of several thousand customs officials employed in the customs administration of the Russian Empire in the years 1865–1914 produces a series of surprising conclusions.³ First of all, employees in customs offices operating in the distant periphery of the then Romanov monarchy did not have great chances of obtaining a job in the MFCD headquarters (not counting those who had the status of so-called officers included in MFCD personnel, which will be discussed below). However, it needs emphasizing that some of them succeeded in being transferred from the empire's distant edges to the central department; their case will be presented in the discussion below.

One of the most spectacular civil service careers, closely connected with serving in the customs administration structures, was achieved by Klemens Hejmowski. He started working in the customs administration in 1840, after leaving the post of secretary to the Russian commissioner for border affairs with the Kingdom of Prussia. His first position was that of translator in the Jurburg (now Jurbarkas) CH. For the next eighteen years he held different full-time customs jobs in the Kaunas Governorate. In early September 1858 he took up the position of senior member in the Warsaw CH. After about four years, in May 1862, at his own request he landed the post of Moscow CH member. It is from here that, on October 21, 1865, he was transferred to the position of chief of one of the MFCD⁴ divisions. It is not known what decided about Hejmowski's promotion. This appointment had so far been unprecedented in the department's short history (LVVA, fonds 545, apraksts 2, lieta 30, fol. 63v; lieta 31, fol. 32–32v; lieta 72, fol. 22–22v; lieta 73, fol. 7; lieta 74, fol. 14v–15; lieta 75, fol. 13–14; lieta 76, fol. 47; lieta 78, fol. 38–39; lieta 82, fol. 8v; lieta 87, fol. 29v, 40; RGIA, fond 19, opis 4, delo 48, fol. 13v–14, 33; delo 55, fol. 13–14; delo 58, fol. 100–101, 238–238v; “UPRMF”, 1865, No. 48, p. 819; No. 50, p. 865; 1866, No. 36, p. 687; 1867, No. 30, p. 552).

³ The analysis covered all appointments of employees to existing positions in the customs administration structures of the Russian Empire from the establishment of the MFCD in late 1864 to the outbreak of the First World War. For this purpose, personnel-related orders were used, issued by the finance minister and the MFCD director, published in *UPRMF* in the years 1865–1915 as well as those stored with personal files at archives in Estonia, Latvia, Russia, and Ukraine.

⁴ Hejmowski held the post of MFCD Accounts Division chief until his death on May 18, 1867 (TGIASP, fond 1822, opis 3, delo 81, fol. 31v).

In the next decades, other officials from peripheral customs administration structures came to the MFCD in a similar manner as Hejmowski, although, it should be stressed, this was not a mass trend. First, in late April 1882, the position of chief in one of the MFCD divisions was obtained by Vladimir Rogal-Kachura. He assumed this post after twelve years of serving as a member and treasurer in the Rataje CH, a special task officer with the chief of the Kalisz Customs Division, and a member in the Granica CH. Having come to the MFCD in 1882, he worked in its structures until his retirement in late November 1905 (RGIA, fond 21, opis 2, delo 2026, fol. 22v, 44, 45v; "UPRMF", 1870, No. 16, p. 219; 1871, No. 48, p. 795; 1882, No. 17, p. 427; No. 38, p. 1019; 1883, No. 37, p. 1068; 1905, No. 16, p. 214).

More than a quarter of a century later, Hejmowski's achievement was repeated by Vladimir Puzino. In 1872 this graduate of the Law Faculty of the Imperial University of St. Petersburg initially planned his future in the judicial structures in the Volhynia Governorate. However, for unexplained reasons, in June 1881 he obtained the post of special task officer with the chief of the Odessa Customs Division. Thus began a new chapter in Puzino's civil service career. He worked in this post and then in a similar one in the Kalisz Customs Division for almost a decade, to obtain the position of chief of an MFCD division⁵ on January 16, 1891. Three factors certainly helped him in his comparatively quick promotion from the peripheries to the Customs Department headquarters: 1) an excellent legal education; 2) conscientious performance of official duties and carrying out of orders, which was the specificity of the job of special task officers with a customs division chief, 3) the connections of his father Orest Puzino, who was a vice-admiral of the Russian Navy (TGIASP, fond 19, opis 128, delo 71, fol. 248; delo 383, fol. 265v; EAA, 644.1.1700, fol. 38; LVVA, fonds 545, apraksts 2, lieta 36, fol. 37; RGIA, fond 21, opis 11, delo 214, fol. 27–32; "UPRMF", 1881, No. 18, p. 507; No. 48, p. 1421; 1883, No. 7, pp. 186–187; No. 34, p. 971; No. 41, p. 1186; 1891, No. 5, p. 66; No. 42, p. 470).

Another excellent example of a customs official succeeding in being appointed to the MFCD headquarters is that of Karol Dornstein. This son of a water police inspector in Warsaw began his career in the customs service from the position of a writing clerk at the Kalisz Customs Division Chief's

⁵ On March 16, 1895 Puzino assumed the function of an MFCD customs departmental controller, which he held until early August 1906, and then retired ("UPRMF", 1895, No. 14, pp. 229, 232; 1906, No. 33, p. 619).

Office in 1856. For the next 25 years he held different jobs in the customs administration in the territory of the Kingdom of Poland (including in Słupca, Nieszawa, Aleksandrów Przygraniczny, and in Sosnowiec). Ultimately, in late April 1881 he obtained the position of senior member of the Revel (Tallinn) CH. This appointment was not without significance in his career. The Revel CH operated within the St. Petersburg Customs Division. The very fact of obtaining a post in structures whose decision-making center was in St. Petersburg provided a chance for promotion to a customs job in the MFCD. In July 1882 Dornstein assumed the post of senior member of the St. Petersburg Land CH. He already held the rank of state counselor, which only increased his chances of subsequent promotions. Actually, Dornstein did not have to wait long to take up another post, which, most importantly to him, did not involve changing his place of residence. Namely, on April 13, 1883 he was appointed one of the MFCD departmental controllers. It is possible that his Lutheran denomination helped him to obtain this job. There were no restrictions on appointments to high-ranking positions for Lutheran officials (LVVA, fonds 545, apraksts 2, lieta 28, fol. 2v; RGIA, fond 139, opis 1, delo 486; APK, Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Rzymskokatolickiej w Godziszach, sygn. 103, pp. 85–86; APTOW, Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Rzymskokatolickiej Służewo, sygn. 45, p. 47; sygn. 46, p. 75; Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Rzymskokatolickiej Nieszawa, sygn. 33, fol. 28v–29v; “UPRMF”, 1881, No. 48, p. 1418; 1882, No. 26, p. 699; 1883, No. 20, pp. 528–529; No. 32, pp. 913–914; No. 37, p. 1068; 1890, No. 39, p. 394; “GRKP”, 1859, No. 39, p. 245). The post of a departmental controller was very important because of its associated controlling and supervising competences over local structures of the Russian Empire’s customs administration. People holding this office were highly trusted because their task was, first of all, to inspect and control the activities of all the customs offices subordinated to the MFCD. They were often sent to places where irregularities or even offences were suspected. Dornstein’s promotion was his spectacular success, although it took very long, more than a quarter of a century, but it became proof of the possibility for officials from peripheral customs structures to obtain one of the very important positions in the MFCD.

Holding significant positions in the customs administration on the borders of the Russian Empire contributed to Vladimir Nikonov’s promotion to the MFCD. In the 1870s he successively worked in the following posts: member in the Wierzbołów CH in the Suwałki Governorate, director of the Nowosielice CH in the Bessarabia Governorate, and director



of the Baltiski CH in the Estland (Estonian) Governorate. In late March 1881 he was entrusted with the administration of the St. Petersburg Land CH. His more than 11 years in this post influenced the decision to entrust such an experienced official with the function of an MFCD departmental controller in late August 1892 (EAA, 644.1.1612, fol. 27; 1901.1.166, fol. 1v; “UPRMF”, 1872, No. 31, p. 604; No. 51–52, p. 1021; 1877, No. 30, p. 768; No. 47, p. 1220; 1881, No. 1, pp. 1, 3; No. 31, p. 931; 1892, No. 36, p. 412).

A job in the MFCD similar to Dornstein’s and Nikonov’s was also obtained by Bronisław Wilczyński. However, for him the position of departmental controller was the crowning achievement of more than 42 years of service on the edges of the Romanov Empire. Wilczyński was a graduate of the Higher Real School in Kalisz. Right after graduating in 1854, at the age of 18, having a secondary education, he obtained the post of writing clerk in the Szczypiorno CH. He thus began his service from the lowest full-time position in the customs administration structures in the Kingdom of Poland. He was connected with his first place of employment for two decades, achieving the post of secretary in January 1867. For the next three decades, owing to his eagerness, dedication, impeccable service and acquired experience, he obtained successive key positions in several of the most important customs offices in the western part of Russia, which ranked among the leading administrative bodies that cleared the largest amount of goods in terms of their value and bulk. He held such posts as member of the Volochysk CH and Revel CH, deputy director of the Odessa CH, and director of the Libava (now Liepāja) CH. He spent over a decade in this last job. Wilczyński consequently belonged to the most experienced customs officials in Russia in the late 1890s. That is why his appointment to one of the posts of departmental controller in the MFCD headquarters was a well thought-out decision of the finance minister and the director of this department. Wilczyński himself held the position of departmental controller over the next decade, from February 1897 to October 1907 (EAA, 644.1.1578, fol. 19v; LVVA, fonds 232, apraksts 2, lieta 292, fol. 13; fonds 545, apraksts 2, lieta 35, fol. 12; fonds 7085, apraksts 3, lieta 521, fol. 60v; RGIA, fond 21, opis 11, delo 237, fol. 487–498; APTOW, Akta Stanu Cywilnego Parafii Rzymskokatolickiej Służewo, sygn. 59, p. 59; sygn. 61, p. 22; “UPRMF”, 1865, No. 42, p. 697; 1868, No. 7, pp. 127–128; 1869, No. 37, pp. 523–524).

The analysis of a few cases of promotion from local structures to the MFCD in St. Petersburg may indicate the occurrence of external factors that, it needs emphasizing, were not always legal or acceptable to an ordinary

citizen from a moral point of view, but ultimately resulted in someone being given a post in the Customs Department. At this point, it might be in order to examine the circumstances that contributed to the fact that only very few people nevertheless succeeded in being transferred to the capital's MFCD headquarters from the distant outskirts. After receiving the title of engineer-technologist from the Technological Institute of St. Petersburg, Pyotr Khvostov decided to follow in his father's footsteps as a customs official. In late September 1891 he obtained the status of a clerk included in MFCD personnel. Several weeks later he was appointed to one of the lower posts in the Mława CH. That is how his work in the customs administration structures began, although with his education, Khvostov's aspirations must have been greater. However, he had to swallow this bitter pill and reconcile himself to serving in the peripheries, although his subsequent positions in the largest customs offices (Granica [now Maczki] CH and Warsaw CH) in the Kingdom of Poland could inspire his optimism. Indeed, from the position of senior assistant superintendent of the customs warehouse in the Warsaw CH, in November 1897 he was unexpectedly assigned to the post of junior head of section in the MFCD. What happened that such a spectacular promotion took place? Our attention should be drawn to the father of the above-mentioned Pyotr Khvostov – Aleksandr. In 1897 this official had held one of the higher posts in Russia's largest customs office, the St. Petersburg Port CH, for over seven years. He had close contacts with influential officials in the MFCD and already had 35 years of seniority in government service (including a quarter of a century in local MFCD structures). All these factors may have directly influenced the fact of his son Pyotr's promotion from the peripheral structures of the customs administration to St. Petersburg (EAA, 644.1.1578, fol. 22v; 644.1.1700, fol. 38; 644.1.1740, fol. 24; "UPRMF", 1872, No. 51–52, p. 1022; 1875, No. 15–16, p. 343; No. 47, p. 1104; 1883, No. 37, p. 1066; No. 39, p. 1130; 1887, No. 18, p. 285; 1889, No. 42, pp. 425–426; 1891, No. 42, pp. 470–471; No. 48, p. 510; 1894, No. 3, p. 38; 1896, No. 24, p. 524; 1897, No. 22, p. 290; No. 34, p. 494; 1898, No. 1, p. 12).

Khvostov's example was not exceptional. Another career worth examining is Waclaw Dzierzowski's. This son of a former teacher of Polish from the Secondary School for Boys in Płock graduated in 1890 from the Technological Institute of St. Petersburg with the title of technologist. Several months later he obtained the status of an officer included in MFCD personnel, which was not equivalent to obtaining a full-time post in the headquarters in St. Petersburg, but it was a probation period



and a time of waiting for assignment to a post, usually in a customs office operating on the empire's periphery. Finally, after ten months, in late 1891 he was given the full-time position of expert-mechanic in the Aleksandrów CH in the Warsaw Governorate. Although that customs office was among the larger ones operating on the outskirts of the Romanov monarchy, Dzierzowski did not really intend to spend the best years of his life somewhere that did not even have the status of a town. In August 1892 he succeeded in obtaining the job of customs controller of goods produced in Moscow that were intended for export. It should be emphasized that the Moscow CH, in addition to the Kharkov CH and the Warsaw CH, belonged to a small group of so-called storage customs offices directly subordinated to the MFCD director. The very fact of obtaining a post in the Moscow CH, an administrative body enjoying some prestige and additionally operating in one of the capital centers, was Dzierzowski's unquestionable achievement. The more so that after seven years, in November 1899, he obtained the full-time post of member in this customs house. Almost six years later, on May 11, 1905, he was appointed to a similar position in the Warsaw CH. The factor that undoubtedly helped him to obtain those posts so quickly was that he had a higher technical education. After seven years, on August 8, 1912 he was promoted to deputy director of the Warsaw CH. However, he did not hold this position too long, because from mid-January 1913 the Ministry of Finance intended to introduce a reform of the local customs administration structures. Dzierzowski was one of the beneficiaries of these changes, as he assumed the function of an MFCD departmental controller. This appointment might seem to be a natural consequence of the in-service promotion of customs officials operating on the periphery of the Romanov Empire, although surprising in view of his less than 23 years in employment, if it were not for one fact. On November 3, 1903 Dzierzowski became the son-in-law of the Bronisław Wilczyński mentioned earlier: the man who worked at the MFCD headquarters in the years 1897–1907 and, presumably, living in Warsaw after his retirement, retained most of his contacts with people responsible for the selection of personnel in the Customs Department in St. Petersburg. After all, with his many years of service in the Customs Department, Wilczyński was held in very high esteem in the St. Petersburg circle of officials connected with the Finance Ministry. It should also be added that Dzierzowski held the position of customs departmental controller in the MFCD until its abolition on August 1, 1918 (TGIASP, fond 1822, opis 4, delo 52, fol. 186; DAKO, fond 292, opys 1, sprava 7, fol. 43,

50, 52v; EAA, 644.1.1578, fol. 12v, 18–18v; 644.1.1740, fol. 40–40v; LVVA, fonds 545, apraksts 2, lieta 33, fol. 21; RGIA, fond 21, opis 2, delo 2026, fol. 20v, 22; fond 139, opis 1, delo 885, fol. 14v, 18–18v; fond 143, opis 2, delo 18, fol. 85, 89; APTOW, Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Rzymskokatolickiej Lipno, sygn. 65, p. 123; sygn. 66, p. 23; sygn. 68, p. 6; “UPRMF”, 1891, No. 3, p. 30; No. 46, p. 498; 1892, No. 36, p. 412; 1903, No. 14, pp. 185, 191–194; “TV”, 1918, No. 18–19, p. 159).

The appointment of Silvin Golkovsky to the full-time position of junior clerk in the MFCD on September 23, 1886 was somewhat suspicious. This employee had worked barely a few years in the customs structures in the Caucasus, holding one of the lower full-time posts – junior assistant warehouse superintendent in the Batumi CH. Unprecedentedly, compared to the previous practice of appointments to positions in the MFCD, this minor clerk soon assumed one of the specialist posts. Credit for such a spectacular promotion presumably goes to a difficult-to-identify influential dignitary operating within the circle of officials in St. Petersburg, who influenced Golkovsky’s appointment to his post. For Golkovsky himself, it was the start of his career in the department. In 1895 he was appointed chief of one of the divisions of the MFCD (LVVA, fonds 545, apraksts 2, lieta 33, fol. 10, 18; “UPRMF”, 1886, No. 39, p. 838; 1889, No. 10, p. 95; No. 15, pp. 145–149; No. 16, p. 162; 1893, No. 27, p. 346).

Resigning from one’s post to obtain the status of an employee included in MFCD personnel provided an opportunity for quicker in-service promotion. In this case, the point was not to obtain a position in the MFCD in St. Petersburg itself, but in the customs structures operating on the periphery of the empire. This was noticeable, for example, in the case of Stepan Kharlampovich. Right after leaving university, this graduate of the Physical-Mathematical Faculty of the Imperial University of Warsaw was employed as an office clerk by a decision of the Warsaw CH director. The procedure under which Kharlampovich was appointed to his position provided no prospects for quick promotion even with his university education. This clerk wanted to obtain a much higher post appropriate for his education and the lack of longer experience in the customs administration. In order to carry out his plan, he took a rather risky step. He applied for relief from his position and for inclusion in MFCD personnel. This request was granted by the MFCD director on February 10, 1905. Without a service assignment, Kharlampovich risked having no guarantee of obtaining a full-time job in the Kingdom of Poland. In fact, the existing situation could force him to accept a post in St. Petersburg, or Vladivostok, or Samarkand.

However, after 10 days he was assigned to work in the customs office which he had quit at his own request. Training lasting over 11 months ended with his being appointed assistant warehouse superintendent in the Sosnowiec CH on January 30, 1906. It should be added that until the outbreak of the First World War, Kharlampovich did not leave the peripheries of the empire, working in locations such as the Herby CH (EAA, 644.1.1700, fol. 4; 644.1.1740, fol. 15v, 21–21v, 40–41; RGIA, fond 21, opis 2, delo 2026, fol. 4–4v; APW, Cesarski Uniwersytet Warszawski, sygn. 583, fol. 26; sygn. 586, fol. 26v; “TV”, 1918, No. 22–23, p. 208; “UPRMF”, 1915, No. 12, pp. 190, 199). It is also worth noting that another graduate of the Imperial University of Warsaw, Ivan Khomatsky, found himself in a similar situation. He also quit his job in the Warsaw CH in order to obtain the status of being included in MFCD personnel. He was assigned to work in the Szczypiorno CH (Kalisz Governorate), and from there, after just five months, he landed the position of secretary in the Słupca CH (RGIA, fond 21, opis 2, delo 2026, fol. 7, 8, 33, 37v; APW, Cesarski Uniwersytet Warszawski, sygn. 586, fol. 51v).

Conclusions

The analysis of several thousand appointments of people employed in the customs administration structures of the Russian Empire between 1865 and 1914 makes it possible to determine the scale of the transfer of officials between the central authority, i.e. the MFCD in St. Petersburg, and customs offices operating on the outskirts of the Romanov monarchy. It turns out that only few of them could, owing to their conscientiousness, impeccability and acquired experience, be promoted from peripheral offices to the MFCD in St. Petersburg. Usually, almost every promotion was due to non-service factors (social, family, etc.). The practice followed in this matter clearly shows that there was a certain reluctance to employ in St. Petersburg those who had pursued their careers on the edges of the empire from the start of their employment in the customs administration. This attitude of the MFCD authorities and the finance minister likely stemmed from certain tendencies already developed in the first half of the 19th century, when it was very difficult for provincial officials to penetrate into the circle of the employees of central authorities.

A far greater group of people, but, it should be stressed, not a breathtaking number, who held lower posts in the MFCD and had several- or over ten-year seniority in this institution, were assigned to full-time jobs in customs

administration units operating on the periphery of the Romanov Empire. For some of them, especially those of advanced age and approaching retirement, this effectively meant termination after many years of civil service. Assignments to work on the state frontier were presumably treated by those interested as an unacceptable form of coercion in no way connected with any career promotion. However, this group also included young and middle-aged employees, for whom leaving the MFCD as the place of employment and going to peripheral customs offices was a way of continuing their careers as civil servants. When they took on the challenge of working on the outskirts of the empire, they were presumably motivated by the idea of a speedy return to the capital – St. Petersburg – to assume a position in the Customs Department. However, this often never happened. In such cases, the peripheries of the vast state of the Romanovs became the place of many careers of officials affiliated with the MFCD in St. Petersburg in the past.

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- APK = Archiwum Państwowe w Kaliszu
Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Rzymskokatolickiej w Godzieszach, sygn. 103.
- APPOK = Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu Oddział w Koninie
Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Prawosławnej Słupca, sygn. 27.
- APTOW = Archiwum Państwowe w Toruniu Oddział we Włocławku
Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Rzymskokatolickiej Lipno, sygn. 65, 66, 68.
Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Rzymskokatolickiej Nieszawa, sygn. 33.
Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Rzymskokatolickiej Służewo, sygn. 45, 46, 59, 61.
- APW = Archiwum Państwowe w Warszawie
Cesarski Uniwersytet Warszawski, sygn. 583, 586.
- APWOM = Archiwum Państwowe w Warszawie Oddział w Mławie
Akta stanu cywilnego Parafii Prawosławnej w Mławie, sygn. 31, 34.
- DAKO = Derzhavnyi arkhiv Kyyivs'koyi oblasti
Fond 292, opys 1, sprava 7.
- EAA = Eesti Ajalooarhiiv Tartu
644.1.1578, 644.1.1612, 644.1.1700, 644.1.1740, 644.1.1893, 1901.1.166.
- LVVA = Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs
Fonds 232, apraksts 2, lieta 292.
Fonds 545, apraksts 2, lieta: 27a, 29–31, 33–36, 38, 41, 73–76, 78, 82, 87.
Fonds 7085, apraksts 3, lieta 521.
- RGIA = Rossiyskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv
Fond 19, opys 4, delo: 48, 55, 58.
Fond 21, opys 2, delo: 2025–2028; opys 11, delo: 214, 237, 318.



Fond 128, opis 1, delo 25.

Fond 139, opis 1, delo: 486, 885.

Fond 143, opis 2, delo: 17, 18.

TGIASP = T'Sentral'nyĭ Gosudarstvennyĭ Istoricheskii Arkhiv goroda Sankt Peterburga

Fond 19, opis 128, delo: 71, 383.

Fond 1822, opis 3, delo 81; opis 4, delo: 52, 223.

TLA = Tallinna Linnaarhiiv

1411.2.62, 1411.2.63.

Printed sources

“GZKP” = “Gazeta Rządowa Królestwa Polskiego” 1859.

“TV” = “Tamozhennyĭ vestnik” 1918.

“UPRMF” = “Ukazatel' pravitel'stvennykh rasporiazheniĭ po Ministerstvu Finansov” 1865–1898, 1903, 1905, 1906, 1915.

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Służba na peryferiach imperium Romanowów. Zesłanie czy trampolina dla urzędników celnych organów administracyjnych carskiej Rosji w XIX i na początku XX w.

Władca Rosji Piotr I uważany jest za ojca nowożytnego aparatu administracyjnego stworzonego w celu sprawnego zarządzania imperium. Skonstruowany wtedy system doboru kadr i awansów służbowych na trwałe wpisał się do praktyki stosowanej za panowania kolejnych Romanowów, aż do kresu funkcjonowania władzy absolutnej w Rosji. Na podstawie zachowanych materiałów źródłowych proveniencji urzędowej poddano analizie fakt służby urzędników celnych na granicach imperium i jego wpływ na otrzymanie stanowisk w centralnych organach administracyjnych zarządzających dochodami celnymi imperium Romanowów w XIX i na początku XX w. Dla urzędników konieczność służby na peryferiach imperium była jedynie etapem w karierze urzędniczej, którą ostatecznie kończyli w murach urzędów działających w stołecznym Petersburgu. Jednak wielu z nich nie znalazło już swojego miejsca zatrudnienia nad Nową, realizując kariery na granicach rozległego imperium Romanowów.

Słowa kluczowe: peryferia, administracja, urzędnik, cła, Rosja.

Note

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