

WALTER M. PINTNER

## The Social Characteristics of the Early Nineteenth-Century Russian Bureaucracy

Serious scholarly study of the imperial Russian civil service is almost entirely the product of the past decade, and although several important works have appeared, virtually no quantitative material on the social characteristics of the bureaucracy is available.<sup>1</sup> The imperial government did not publish and probably did not compile statistics on such matters as the social origin, wealth, religion, or education of its civil employees, but the raw data for a partial compilation are available in personnel records (*formuliarnie spiski*) of individual officials, which are preserved in the Central State Historical Archive in Leningrad.<sup>2</sup>

1. Recent contributions to the study of the imperial civil service before the great reforms include Erik Amburger, *Geschichte der Behördenorganisation Russlands von Peter dem Grossen bis 1917* (Leiden, 1966); N. F. Demidova, "Biurokratizatsiia gosudarstvennogo apparata absoliutizma v XVII-XVIII vv.," in *Absolutizm v Rossii (XVII-XVIII vv.)* [a Festschrift for B. B. Kafengauz] (Moscow, 1964), pp. 206-42; James E. Hassell, "The Vicissitudes of Russian Administrative Reform: 1762-1801" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1967); Robert E. Jones, "The Russian Gentry and the Provincial Reform of 1775" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1968); Marc Raeff, *Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia: The Eighteenth-Century Nobility* (New York, 1966), and his earlier articles cited therein; M. M. Shtrange, *Demokraticeskaja intelligentsiia Rossii v XVIII veke* (Moscow, 1965); Hans-Joachim Torke, "Das russische Beamtenum in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, vol. 13 (Berlin, 1967); and S. M. Troitsky, "Materialy perepisi chinovnikov v 1754-1756 gg. kak istochnik po sotsial'no-politicheskoi i kul'turnoi istorii Rossii XVIII v.," *Arkheograficheskiĭ eshegodnik za 1967 god* (Moscow, 1969), pp. 132-48. The institutional framework of imperial personnel records is described in Z. I. Malkova and M. A. Pliukhina, "Dokumenty vyshikh i tsentral'nykh uchrezhdenii XIX-nachala XX v. kak istochnik biograficheskikh svedenii," *Nekotorye voprosy izucheniia istoricheskikh dokumentov XIX-nachala XX v.: Sbornik statei* (Leningrad, 1967). For other countries the literature, both quantitative and nonquantitative, is extensive.

2. With the exception of a few files in fond 1,374, *General-prokuror senata*, all of the records used are in fond 1,349 of TsGIA, which contains some twenty-two thousand items apparently put together in the late nineteenth century. Only a small portion of the individual *dela* are complete volumes for a single agency and therefore useful for this study. The author is deeply grateful to the staff of the TsGIA for its help in locating the material needed, a difficult task in the absence of a detailed inventory. The volumes of service records were originally produced in response to legislation requiring each government agency to provide the Heraldry Office with lists of its employees. Starting in 1788 the lists were supposed to include all officials in the Table of Ranks and were to be

The discussion that follows is based on the records of 2,952 officials serving in the years 1846 to 1855, and of 1,923 men serving between 1798 and 1824, a total of 4,875 in all. Only files that provided data on all the employees of a given agency (fourteenth rank and above) were used, so there is no internal "sampling problem." We know exactly how many nobles are reported as working in, say, the General Chancellery of the Ministry of Finance in 1846. The extent to which the agencies for which complete files are available are representative of the civil service as a whole cannot be established by statistical techniques. The agencies used were concerned with domestic civil administration and were not substantially involved in military, technical, or foreign affairs. The provincial agencies studied were in Great Russia rather than minority or frontier areas.<sup>3</sup> For central agencies, particularly in the mid-nineteenth-century period, I believe that the agencies used are likely to be generally representative of unspecialized civil departments. Variation from province to province even within Great Russia is a substantial, but there are, nevertheless, features characteristic of all provincial agencies studied. (A full list of agencies used is found in the appendix.)

The simplest yet also the most important information in the personnel files is that which shows what the usual pattern of an official career actually was. Civil employment could be a lifetime career or simply a part of a more varied life including military service, agricultural pursuits, or possibly other non-governmental work. In the data used it is strikingly clear, and noteworthy, that 80 to 90 percent of all the officials, representing all ranks, had spent their entire working life in the civil service. This pattern is evident both in the 1850s and at the beginning of the nineteenth century (table 1). The sole exception is in the province of Kursk in 1802, the only province for which this information is available in the early nineteenth century. There, of 494 civil officials, 33 percent started their careers in military service. The two provinces available for the 1850s (Voronezh and Vladimir) do not show this exceptional pattern. If we can assume that the pattern shown in Kursk in 1802 was typical of the provinces at the start of the century, and that Voronezh and Vladimir were representative of provinces at mid-century, the drastic

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filed annually. The amount of information required on each person was periodically increased over the years. By the mid-nineteenth century the record of a senior official could easily fill a thirty-page booklet. Legislation on this subject is summarized in the *Svod zakonov* (1842), vol. 3, bk. 1, sec. 6, chap. 4, statutes 1408–17, pp. 254–55. The major laws are as follows: *Polnoe sobranie zakonov*, I, 1764, no. 12,030; 1771, no. 13,690; 1788, no. 16,641; 1794, no. 17,216; 1798, no. 18,440; 1813, no. 25,381; 1817, no. 27,116; II, 1834, no. 7,595.

3. I used most of the complete files that were located for me in TsGIA, with the exception of some specialized technical agencies. No files from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Army, or Navy were located. Because of the inadequate inventory it is impossible to be sure what remains in the *fond* unexamined. A few of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century files in the Senate are not complete departments but lists of men who had served a specified number of years and were therefore eligible for promotion.

Table 1. *Nature of First Employment of Officials* (in percentage)

Agency	Number of Officials <sup>a</sup>	Central Civil Service <sup>b</sup>	Provincial Civil Service	Military	Teaching or Medicine
<i>Early Nineteenth-Century Officials</i>					
Central (1798–1806) (St. Petersburg)	283	82.0	9.2	6.4	0.7
Central (1812–1824) (St. Petersburg)	726	73.0	15.7	8.4	2.2
Kursk (1802)	494	5.3	60.7	33.4	0.6
<i>Mid-Nineteenth-Century Officials</i>					
Central (St. Petersburg)	796	66.5	16.3	12.2	5.0
Voronezh	830	3.3	80.7	11.1	5.0
Vladimir	381	4.5	86.6	7.6	1.3
Moscow	318	86.5	5.0	8.5	0.0

<sup>a</sup> Of the total number of early nineteenth-century officials, nine men started in jobs not classifiable under these headings.

<sup>b</sup> Includes both St. Petersburg and Moscow.

reduction in the percentage of men of military background suggests that former officers who entered civil provincial service in substantial numbers during the reign of Catherine II had retired by the 1850s and were replaced by “career men.”<sup>4</sup> The central agencies at the beginning of the century, however, show the same lifetime career pattern that holds at mid-century. Either the retired officers had never been numerically predominant in the central agencies or they had faded from the scene by about 1800.

Former army officers were more frequently found at the top (ranks one to five) and upper middle (ranks six to eight) levels, where they comprised about 25 percent of the total staff; but with the exception of Kursk in 1802, the proportion did not reach 30 percent in any agency, even at the top level.<sup>5</sup> If the central agency officials are grouped according to the year in which they entered service, it appears that the pattern of predominantly civil careers was established by the 1780s and 1790s (table 2). Thus, with the probable exception of the provinces in the late eighteenth century, it can be said that Russian civil administration was in the hands of men who had spent their working lives in that occupation.

The data do not permit an estimate of how many men served briefly and then retired to their estates or, in a few cases, entered nongovernmental work, but it is clear that a long civil career, usually in St. Petersburg from the start,

4. Jones, “Russian Gentry,” pp. 44–47.

5. Throughout this discussion the fourteen levels in the Table of Ranks will be grouped as follows: “top” one to five, “upper middle” six to eight, “lower middle” nine to eleven, “bottom” twelve to fourteen. Rank one was held only by the minister of foreign affairs and rank two by a small number of the most senior statesmen. The “top” category is thus actually ranks three to five (privy councilor, actual state councilor, and state councilor). Rank eleven was never used in this period and rank thirteen only rarely. The usual promotion pattern was fourteen, twelve, ten, and thence up by single steps.

Table 2. *Nature of First Employment of Central Agency Officials According to Year of Entry into Civil Service (in percentage)*

Year of Entry	Number of Officials	Central Civil Agencies	Provincial Civil Agencies	Military
<i>Early Nineteenth-Century Officials</i>				
To 1769	23	78.2	0.0	17.4
1770 to 1779	64	62.5	9.4	23.4
1780 to 1789	158	68.4	16.5	13.3
1790 to 1799	256	71.9	15.2	10.5
1800 to 1809	263	76.0	19.8	1.9
1810 to 1819	208	86.1	9.3	1.4
After 1819	11	100.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Mid-Nineteenth-Century Officials</i>				
To 1809	28	64.3	14.3	21.4
1810 to 1819	51	39.2	11.8	35.3
1820 to 1829	116	53.5	20.7	17.2
1830 to 1839	129	55.8	18.6	14.7
After 1839	203	81.3	11.8	3.9

*Note:* Those few who are unaccounted for started their careers in teaching or medicine.

was typical of at least two-thirds of the upper-level bureaucrats in central agencies. Men who started work in the provinces rarely moved to central agencies. In the provinces at mid-century, only at the highest levels do we find any significant group that had started work in the center (table 3).

One important change in the pattern of advancement between early and mid-nineteenth-century is that in the early 1800s most high-ranking bureaucrats had started work in a central civil agency, but below the lowest rank in the Table of Ranks.<sup>6</sup> By the 1850s nearly 30 percent had started work somewhere in the Table.<sup>7</sup> The new pattern was certainly the result of the expansion of the service-oriented state educational system, which gave the successful student the right to enter service at a specified rank.<sup>8</sup>

Taken solely in terms of the normal career pattern, the Russian civil service of the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century appears to be remarkably homogeneous. Almost everybody had considerable common experience, faced common problems, and had a common source of reward, both in material terms and in prestige. Of course, this does not mean that there could not be distinct groups within the bureaucracy despite the overall common framework of experience. The data in the personnel files permit a discussion

6. Below the lowest (fourteenth) rank there were at least four commonly used titles (in ascending order): *pistsar*, *kopeeist*, *podkantsliarist*, and *kantsliarist*. Many men held all of these before reaching the first rung of the Table of Ranks, and ended their careers at a very low level.

7. Of this group 34 percent started at ranks fourteen, thirteen, or twelve, 42 percent at rank ten, and 24 percent at rank nine.

8. The early stages of this process are discussed by James T. Flynn, "The Universities, the Gentry, and the Russian Imperial Services, 1815-1825," *Canadian Slavic Studies*, 2, no. 4 (Winter 1968): 486-503.

Table 3. *Nature of First Employment of Mid-Nineteenth-Century Top and Upper Middle Level Officials (in percentage)*

Agency	Number of Officials	Central Civil Service	Provincial Civil Service	Military	Teaching or Medicine
<i>Top Level Officials<sup>a</sup></i>					
Central <sup>b</sup>	148	54.0	12.8	21.6	11.5
Voronezh	5	0.0	60.0	0.0	40.0
Vladimir	7	28.6	14.3	42.6	14.3
Moscow <sup>b</sup>	3	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Upper Middle Level Officials</i>					
Central <sup>b</sup>	209	61.3	15.3	15.8	7.7
Voronezh	65	21.5	55.4	9.2	13.8
Vladimir	34	11.8	79.4	2.9	5.9
Moscow <sup>b</sup>	63	77.8	7.9	14.3	0.0

<sup>a</sup> Note that the number of top-ranking jobs in the three provinces is negligible, and therefore the percentage distribution cannot be considered significant.

<sup>b</sup> Central means St. Petersburg. Both St. Petersburg and Moscow are considered "Central" for location of first job.

of several important factors that served to differentiate individuals and groups within the civil service, in addition to the contrast already made between the purely civil career and the combined military-civil pattern. Distinctions of varying degrees of importance can be based on: (1) location of employment (central or provincial), (2) social origin, (3) formal education, (4) national origin, and (5) religion.

The contrast between the staffs of the provincial and central agencies is marked, so marked that it is frequently misleading not to keep the two categories separate when discussing other variables. There were, first of all, few high-level jobs in the provinces examined (the "top" category in ranks hardly existed). In the mid-nineteenth century, although serf ownership by nobles, and house ownership in general, was somewhat more widespread in the provinces than in the center, there were fewer officials of noble origin in provincial agencies than in central agencies, and there were many fewer really wealthy men in the provinces (table 4). The general level of education achieved by provincial bureaucrats was not nearly as high as that of central agency officials (table 5). Opportunities for advancement must have been poorer in the provinces, because there were fewer young men at middle and upper ranks and more older men at low rank levels than there were in the center (table 6). The mid-nineteenth-century provincial civil service was staffed with career men rather than the retired officers that were probably typical of the late eighteenth century, but the quantitative data supports the impression of backwardness and ignorance that is gained from literature and contemporary memoirs.<sup>9</sup>

9. As in Gogol's *Dead Souls* and Alexander Herzen's account of his residence in Viatka, *Byloe i dumy*, pt. 2, chaps. 25 and 26.

Table 4. *Family Serfholdings of Mid-Nineteenth-Century Officials in Central and Provincial Agencies* (percentage of officials with given holdings)

Agency	Number of Officials	Number of Male Serfs Owned				
		None	1-19	20-99	100-499	500 or more
Central	821	69.3	4.8	6.6	10.5	8.9
Voronezh	831	70.9	15.9	9.2	3.0	1.1
Vladimir	381	82.4	3.4	5.5	7.1	1.6
Penza	280	72.5	13.9	6.4	4.3	2.9
Moscow	321	84.4	4.7	8.4	2.2	0.3

Table 5. *Highest Level of Education of Mid-Nineteenth-Century Officials* (in percentage)

Agency <sup>a</sup>	Number of Officials	Home	Elementary	Seminary	Secondary	Higher	Elite
Central	510	4.9	13.9	3.9	17.2	49.2	10.8
Voronezh	613	22.0	39.5	10.8	14.9	12.2	0.7
Vladimir	377	6.9	22.2	40.3	22.6	6.6	2.4

<sup>a</sup> Data are not available for the Penza and Moscow agencies.

Table 6. *Age and Rank Level of Mid-Nineteenth-Century Officials*

Rank Level	Number of Officials	Percentage in Each Age Group						
		24 or younger	25-29	30-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	Over 64
<i>Central Agencies (St. Petersburg only)</i>								
Top	105	0.0	1.0	4.8	30.5	38.1	21.0	4.8
Upper middle	204	2.5	13.2	19.1	37.3	20.1	6.9	1.0
Lower middle	350	13.1	34.0	27.4	18.9	5.4	0.9	0.3
Bottom	210	24.8	56.7	10.5	5.2	2.9	0.0	0.0
<i>Provincial Agencies (Voronezh, Vladimir, and Penza)</i>								
Top	12	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.3	58.3	33.3	0.0
Upper middle	98	0.0	2.0	6.1	22.5	51.0	17.4	1.0
Lower middle	381	1.1	7.4	23.9	39.6	22.6	5.3	0.3
Bottom	636	17.6	38.5	20.8	17.1	4.7	1.1	0.2

The overall relationship between the civil service and the legally recognized social categories of Russian society is clear, and remarkably stable over a roughly seventy-five year period. Of the mid-nineteenth-century group, 40 percent were sons of nobles, 30 percent were sons of junior military officers or civil servants, 20 percent were sons of churchmen (more in the provinces, fewer in the center), 5 percent were from all taxed classes, urban and rural, and 2 percent each were sons of merchants or foreigners. At the beginning of the century there were fewer nobles in central service (35 percent) and more nobles in the provinces; the central agencies had more men from

Table 7. *Social Origin of Officials According to Father's Social Status (in percentage)*

Agency and Period	Number of Officials	Nobles	Churchmen	Service Men	Merchant or Professional	Lower Class	Foreign
All early nineteenth-century agencies (1798-1824)	1,874	40.0	17.5	21.0	5.1	11.5	3.9
Central agencies (1798-1800)	297	24.2	14.1	36.0	4.4	16.5	3.7
Central agencies (1812-1824)	724	40.9	5.9	26.9	6.6	14.6	4.8
Kursk (1802)	492	52.0	22.8	10.0	2.4	6.5	3.1
Penza (1802)	312	36.2	40.7	7.4	4.5	7.4	3.2
All mid-nineteenth-century agencies	2,941	40.4	20.1	30.4	2.2	5.3	1.5
Central agencies (mid-century)	1,131	52.4	8.2	27.3	3.5	6.5	2.0
Voronezh (1849)	831	38.6	15.9	37.9	1.8	4.1	1.4
Vladimir (1850)	380	23.4	51.6	21.3	0.5	2.9	0.3
Penza (1849)	280	31.8	31.8	30.4	1.1	3.6	1.4
Moscow (1848-51)	319	29.8	25.7	32.9	1.3	8.8	1.6

Table 8. *Social Origin of Officials According to Year of Entry into Service (in percentage)*

Year of Entry	Number of Officials	Nobles	Churchmen	Service Men	Merchant or Professional	Lower Class	Foreign
<i>Early Nineteenth-Century Central Agency Officials</i>							
To 1769	18	22.2	5.6	44.4	0.0	22.2	5.6
1770-1789	216	33.3	14.4	22.2	5.6	17.6	4.6
1790-1809	523	35.2	6.5	34.6	6.3	13.4	4.0
1810-1824	218	38.1	6.4	27.5	8.3	15.6	4.1
<i>Officials in Kursk Province (1802)</i>							
To 1769	56	75.0	0.0	3.6	3.6	10.7	7.1
1770-1789	348	49.4	23.9	10.2	2.6	6.3	2.6
1790-1809	60	53.3	33.3	10.0	0.0	0.0	3.3

the taxed classes (15 percent) (table 7). Year of entry groupings, which push the estimates back into the eighteenth century, show no substantial change in the percentage of nobles' sons in central service and only modest changes in the other categories (table 8). The basic pattern remains the same, and the changes may well reflect the peculiarities of the agencies involved. What we find is a career service composed of about half nobles and half nonnobles from which the vast mass of the population—the peasantry and the urban lower classes—was almost entirely excluded.

Of the three main groups—nobles, churchmen, and what will be called



“service men”—the last group is the least familiar.<sup>10</sup> For the most part it consisted of the sons of junior military officers (ranks fourteen through nine in the Table of Ranks, confusingly called *oberofitseriy* in Russian), with a small percentage made up of sons of junior civil servants (rank nine and down, including those below the Table of Ranks entirely). Although these service men, in contrast to the ecclesiastical group, have hardly been mentioned in historical literature, their presence should not surprise us. The army was the largest “modern” group in Russian society and the son of an officer who could not or did not wish to follow his father’s calling had few other careers open to him beyond the civil service.<sup>11</sup> This group of “service men” was consistently the second largest group in the central agencies, even among men entering service in the 1770s and 1780s. In the provinces it was exceeded by the ecclesiastical group until mid-century. Possibly it was through this group, rather than the retired officers, that “military influence” entered the Russian civil service, at least at the lower and middle levels.

The churchmen are certainly no surprise. Priests’ sons have been cited by historians as the main source of literate manpower for almost every period of Russian history. In the years under study here, however, they seem to be a largely provincial phenomenon, hardly exceeding 10 percent in any central agency.<sup>12</sup> In the provinces the variation is great, ranging from 16 percent in Voronezh to 52 percent in Vladimir, a center of church activity and education.

Early nineteenth-century material for central agencies (not provincial) and also for officials who entered service in the 1700s and 1780s shows substantial lower-class representation—about 17 percent. Almost all of these men were sons of *meshchane*, members of the urban lower class, not of peasants or soldiers. By the middle of the nineteenth century men of lower-class or merchant background were a negligible proportion of the total staff of the agencies studied, both central and provincial.

Men of foreign birth or origin were conspicuous in Russian official life almost from the beginning of the Muscovite state and particularly during and after the reign of Peter I; however, among the group at hand they are few in

10. The service records indicate the social status or occupation of the official’s father. For convenience, “noble,” “churchman,” or “service man” shall be used to mean “noble’s son,” “son of a priest or other church worker,” and “son of a junior military officer or civil servant.”

11. Until the 1830s achievement of even the fourteenth rank in military service entitled a man to hereditary noble status (the eighth rank was required in civil service). However, only children born after the achievement of the required rank were ennobled. The large group of bureaucrats who were *iz oberofitserikh detei* suggests that there was a substantial group of noncommissioned officers who reached the lowest commissioned rank so late in life that most or all of their children had already been born and therefore did not benefit from their father’s eventual ennoblement.

12. They reach a maximum of 14 percent in the files for various Senate departments for 1798–1806. By chance, these files include that most famous of all priest’s sons, Michael Speransky. See TsGIA, fond 1,374, opis’ 2, delo 1,397, list 798.



Table 9. *Social Origin and Rank Achieved* (in percentage)

Rank Level	Number of Officials	Nobles	Churchmen	Service Men	Merchant or Professional	Lower Class	Foreign
<i>Early Nineteenth-Century Central Agency Officials<sup>a</sup></i>							
Top	32	46.9	15.6	12.5	3.1	6.3	12.5
Upper middle	147	61.9	4.1	15.0	3.4	8.2	7.5
Lower middle	375	34.9	7.7	32.5	8.0	12.8	3.5
Bottom	336	31.3	10.1	32.1	6.0	16.7	3.3
Office workers below fourteenth rank	125	12.8	6.4	44.8	8.0	26.4	1.6
TOTAL <sup>b</sup>	1,070	35.5	8.2	30.0	6.6	14.9	4.5
<i>Early Nineteenth-Century Provincial Agency Officials (Penza and Kursk)<sup>c</sup></i>							
Top	8	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Upper middle	84	79.8	2.4	3.6	2.4	6.0	4.8
Lower middle	108	53.7	21.3	3.7	0.0	12.0	6.5
Bottom	463	24.4	45.8	12.7	5.0	6.5	2.4
TOTAL <sup>d</sup>	804	45.9	29.7	9.0	3.2	6.7	3.1
<i>Mid-Nineteenth-Century Central Agency Officials</i>							
Top	159	76.7	8.2	6.3	2.5	2.5	3.8
Upper middle	272	65.1	9.6	12.1	4.8	5.8	2.6
Lower middle	438	49.1	7.3	31.1	3.4	7.1	1.8
Bottom	252	29.0	8.3	50.4	3.2	8.7	0.4
TOTAL <sup>e</sup>	1,131	52.4	8.2	27.3	3.5	6.5	2.0
<i>Mid-Nineteenth-Century Provincial Agency Officials (Voronezh, Vladimir, and Penza)</i>							
Top	18	77.8	16.7	5.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Upper middle	134	44.8	18.7	26.1	0.8	6.7	2.2
Lower middle	457	28.7	27.4	36.5	2.0	4.4	0.9
Bottom	787	28.0	33.2	34.4	1.1	2.7	0.6
TOTAL <sup>f</sup>	1,491	33.5	28.0	32.3	1.3	3.7	1.1

<sup>a</sup> The social categories do not include five men identified as Ukrainian.

<sup>b</sup> Includes fifty-five men of various special categories, mainly military.

<sup>c</sup> The social categories do not include nineteen men identified as Ukrainian.

<sup>d</sup> Includes 141 men who were mostly military officers with civil jobs, predominantly of noble origin.

<sup>e</sup> Includes ten men in special categories.

<sup>f</sup> Includes ninety-five military officers with civil jobs, predominantly of noble origin.

Table 10. *Rank and Family Serfholdings of All Mid-Nineteenth-Century Officials* (percentage of officials with given holdings)

Rank Level	Number of Officials	Number of Male Serfs Owned				
		None	1-19	20-99	100-499	500 or more
Top	174	42.5	8.1	13.8	17.2	18.4
Upper middle	415	57.8	14.9	13.0	9.4	4.8
Lower middle	872	79.1	7.7	5.2	5.6	2.4
Bottom	1,069	84.6	7.2	5.0	1.9	1.4
TOTAL <sup>a</sup>	2,568	73.9	9.0	7.4	6.0	3.7

<sup>a</sup> Includes thirty-eight men with military rank in civil jobs.

number, even at the highest rank levels (table 9).<sup>13</sup> More common, and probably more significant for the character of the civil service, were the Germans of Russian citizenship.<sup>14</sup> Of the total mid-nineteenth-century group, 93 percent were Orthodox, 4 percent Lutheran, and 3 percent Roman Catholic. In the central agencies Lutherans filled 15 percent of the top-level posts. Lutherans were generally somewhat better educated and more frequently had started their careers in the military than had the Orthodox. In a few small central agencies at the top level they amounted to as much as 40 percent of the total staff.<sup>15</sup> The Lutherans clearly did better in rank level achieved and education than the Orthodox did, but if they “set the tone” for the Russian civil service it was through means other than numerical preponderance.

Far more important than any of the groups thus far considered were the nobles, amounting to nearly half of the total and filling 70 to 80 percent of the posts at the top of the civil service (table 9). These are men who are identified in the service records as sons of nobles. How their fathers became nobles, by inheritance or through service, cannot be determined. However, it is possible to discuss the relationship of family wealth (in terms of serfs owned), formal education, and legal membership in the nobility to success in the civil service as measured by rank.

It is hardly surprising that really substantial wealth (family holdings of five hundred serfs or more) was apparently helpful in reaching the top levels of the bureaucracy. In the mid-nineteenth century 22 percent of such officials or their family had that many serfs.<sup>16</sup> Much more striking is the evidence that lack of serfs was not a barrier to bureaucratic success in the mid-nineteenth century. Of the total noble group nearly 50 percent had no serfs at all in their family. Most of these men could certainly be called “hereditary career bureaucrats,” inasmuch as neither they nor their parents nor their wives had a single serf. The tie to the land of these officials, if it ever existed, must have

13. Despite the extensive detail in the service records, place of birth is not one of the items recorded. Individuals are classified as foreign if they or their fathers are so listed under the social origin category. There is probably some undercounting, but not enough to make a substantial difference.

14. They can be readily identified, because religion (Orthodox, Lutheran, and Catholic) was consistently reported (in the mid-nineteenth century). Individuals with German (or Polish) names but Orthodox religion are not included with the Lutheran and Catholic groups on the assumption that conversion implied a substantial degree of cultural Russianization. Only two other religions were reported, the Armenian church (three individuals) and the Presbyterian, represented by one man of “Persian noble birth.” Non-Christians were excluded from state service.

15. For example, of ten top-level officials in the Ministry of Interior, Economic Department, four were Lutherans, the highest proportion in any agency. The Roman Catholic—presumably largely Polish—group was not strikingly different from the Orthodox in any major respect.

16. The figures on serf ownership include male peasants owned by the official, his parents, and his wife. Uninhabited land and urban houses were also reported on the records but they add little to the picture presented by serf ownership. House ownership

Table 11. Rank and Highest Level of Education of Mid-Nineteenth-Century Officials (in percentage)

Rank	Number of Officials	Home	Elementary	Seminary	Secondary <sup>a</sup>	Higher	Elite
<i>Central Agencies</i>							
Top	106	3.8	0.0	0.9	12.3	65.1	17.9
Upper middle	137	2.9	8.0	4.4	19.0	54.0	11.7
Lower middle	183	7.1	12.0	4.4	15.9	51.4	9.3
Bottom	82	4.9	46.3	6.1	23.2	15.9	3.7
TOTAL <sup>b</sup>	510	4.9	13.9	3.9	17.3	49.2	10.8
<i>Provincial Agencies</i>							
Top	11	0.0	9.1	0.0	36.4	45.5	9.1
Upper middle	69	17.4	7.3	18.8	18.8	37.7	0.0
Lower middle	304	15.5	32.9	22.7	16.8	11.2	1.0
Bottom	535	15.3	38.5	24.9	15.7	4.5	1.1
TOTAL <sup>c</sup>	990	16.3	32.5	22.0	17.8	10.1	1.3

<sup>a</sup> *Central agency officials*: Consists of about equal numbers of gymnasium and cadet corps graduates plus a few from private boarding schools (proportions at each such level are about the same). *Provincial agency officials*: Consists mostly of gymnasium graduates with a small number of cadet corps and private boarding school graduates.

<sup>b</sup> Includes two military officers with civil jobs.

<sup>c</sup> Includes seventy-one military officers with civil jobs.

been remote in most instances.<sup>17</sup> It is particularly important that the serfless nobles were by no means confined to the lower ranks. Even at the top over 40 percent of the nobles serving had no serfs at all in their family (table 10).

Data on serfholding for the period around 1800 does not permit thorough comparison with the mid-nineteenth century. Only personal serfholdings were recorded then, so the young man from a wealthy landed family who had yet to inherit his father's estate was recorded as having no serfs. The percentage of serfless nobles thus appears to be much higher (as high as 80 or 90 percent in the central agencies). If only the older men are considered (most of whom would have already inherited the family property) the percentage drops to a level roughly consistent with the pattern found in the mid-nineteenth century. There is nothing in the available data to suggest a major increase or decrease in the number of serfless men in the central civil service between 1800 and 1850. The evidence on this point, however, is not fully satisfactory.<sup>18</sup>

was fairly common in the provinces (about one-third of the officials had houses) but much less common in St. Petersburg, where only 15 percent owned houses. The serf-owning noble was the least likely of all groups to own an urban house.

17. Of course, some of these men could have come from families who had recently liquidated their serfholdings, but it seems unlikely that the bulk of such a large group would fall in that category.

18. There is some indication that within the noble group in provincial civil service, between the beginning and the middle of the nineteenth century, there was an increase in the proportion of men without serfs. During this same period the percentage of nobles in provincial service markedly declined. At both the beginning and the middle of the century there was a larger proportion of small serfholders (one to one hundred serfs)

Table 12. *Year of Entry into Civil Service and Highest Level of Education of Mid-Nineteenth-Century Officials* (in percentage)

Year of Entry <sup>a</sup>	Number of Officials	Home	Elementary	Seminary	Secondary	Higher <sup>b</sup>	Elite
Before 1810	45	31.1	22.2	15.6	17.8	13.3	0.0
1810-1819	135	21.5	22.2	11.1	30.4	11.1	3.7
1820-1829	276	23.2	30.4	12.7	15.2	16.3	2.2
1830-1839	432	11.6	36.3	17.8	18.3	13.4	2.6
After 1839	486	5.1	19.4	20.0	14.8	34.8	6.2
TOTAL	1,374	13.3	27.2	16.8	17.6	21.3	3.8

<sup>a</sup> The breakdown by year of entry for central and provincial agencies reflects only the difference shown in table 11 and no important changes over time.

<sup>b</sup> The large rise in this category after 1839 is not significant, because university graduates entered at or above the fourteenth rank and those with less education usually served in jobs below that level for several years. Since only men with fourteenth rank or higher are included in the data, those who entered civil service below the fourteenth rank in the years just prior to the compilation of the files are excluded, and the proportion with "higher" education is exaggerated.

Landed wealth, the main source of income for literate Russians besides state service, was by no means a prerequisite for a highly successful career in the civil service. Education was much more closely related to career success than wealth. In the mid-nineteenth century men with some kind of higher or "elite" education, regardless of their social origin, the number of serfs they owned, or the nature of their first job, almost without exception were in the upper ranks of the civil service if they had reached an appropriate age.<sup>19</sup> Conversely, those without some higher education were rarely found in the top or even the upper middle ranks. Those with only a home, elementary, or seminary education were rarely anywhere but at the bottom level (table 11).

The service records for the early years of the century did not include data on education, but if the mid-century officials are grouped according to the year in which they entered service, the educational pattern as far back as 1800 to 1815 is strikingly constant; the only marked change of time is a decline in the

in the provinces than in the central agencies. What probably happened was that the retired military officers with large estates who were active in provincial service at the beginning of the century were no longer involved by the 1850s, and the nobility was more and more attracted to service in central agencies.

19. "Higher education" is defined as at least one year's study at a university or equivalent institution such as the Institute of Transport Engineers. Virtually all higher education was obtained in Russian institutions; only two individuals studied abroad. "Elite education" includes the Corps of Pages school, the Tsarskoe Selo Lycée, and one or two provincial schools designated as "lycées." Of the total of seventy men with "elite" education, twenty-four attended the provincial lycées. A graduate of one of these elite institutions, particularly the two in St. Petersburg, had status and advantage that exceeded that of a university graduate, even though these schools were formally secondary schools, not institutions of higher learning. Data on education in the mid-nineteenth century is less complete than other important attributes. Information is available on 1,525 officials. By agency it is reasonably complete for the Ministry of the Interior (Department of General Affairs), the Ministry of Justice, the various Senate departments, the Chancellery of the

proportion of home education and a rise in elementary school training (table 12).<sup>20</sup>

From the standpoint of the state the relationship between education and rank in the civil service suggests that those with more education were found to be, or at least presumed to be, more capable and useful than those with less. From the standpoint of the citizen it was access to education that largely determined the rank achieved in the course of a civil service career. The priest's son or the junior officer's son who got some university training was virtually assured a successful career.

If education was the chief determinant of rank in the mid-nineteenth-century civil service, and landed wealth by no means essential for success, does it follow that legal membership in the nobility had lost its substantive meaning and that the officials of serfless-noble and nonnoble background were merging into a relatively homogeneous bureaucratic group? If any such tendency did exist, it was not strong enough to be discernible from the data at hand. Nobles with absolutely no serfs in their families—the “hereditary bureaucrats”—were far more likely to be found at the higher rank levels and to have higher or secondary education than either the churchmen or service men. As a group the serfless nobles are only slightly less well placed and slightly less well educated than the nobles with twenty or more serfs (tables 13 and 14). Membership in the nobility was important in respect to the civil service not because it conferred the right to own serfs but because nobles were more likely to be educated. State service and education, often at state expense, was a tradition established from the time of Peter I. Schools had been one of the most prominent demands of the provincial nobility in the petitions sent to the Legislative Commission of Catherine II, and they were requested specifically to enable the young noble to succeed in service.<sup>21</sup> Despite the often reported indifference and hostility of many nobles to education, it seems clear that even though most educational institutions were open to all free citizens, it was the nobles who were most able and inclined to benefit from them.<sup>22</sup>

The overall picture of the imperial civil service in the mid-nineteenth century that emerges from the foregoing analysis of the service records is of a

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Ministry of State Domains, all of the Vladimir agencies, and interior and justice offices in Voronezh. Other agencies are represented either partially or not at all. It is reasonable to assume that those who did not list their education were less well educated in most cases than those who did. Thus the percentage with “home” or “elementary” as the highest level reached would rise if full data were available.

20. All data on education refers to the most advanced level reached. Thus home education is clearly an inferior form of training in most cases. The majority of the wealthy who had tutors at home presumably attended some outside institutions at a later stage of their education.

21. Jones, “Russian Gentry,” pp. 66–69.

22. Flynn, “The Universities, the Gentry, and Russian Imperial Service,” pp. 492–96; Torke, “Das russische Beamtentum,” pp. 168–69.

Table 13. *Family Serfholdings, Social Origin, and Rank of Mid-Nineteenth-Century Officials (in percentage)*

Social Group	Number of Officials <sup>a</sup>	Rank Level			
		Top	Upper middle	Lower middle	Bottom
Nobles with twenty or more serfs	404	19.3	23.3	25.5	21.3
Serfless nobles	496	8.3	18.2	35.5	34.1
Churchmen	592	2.7	10.3	30.7	55.7
Service men	892	1.2	10.7	37.7	49.3

<sup>a</sup> Totals include a small number of men with military rank in civil jobs.

Table 14. *Family Serfholdings, Social Origin, and Highest Level of Education of Mid-Nineteenth-Century Officials (in percentage)*

Social Group	Number of Officials	Level of Education					
		Home	Elementary	Seminary	Secondary	Higher	Elite
Nobles with twenty or more serfs	282	11.7	8.9	0.7	24.1	42.9	11.7
Serfless nobles	272	10.7	18.8	3.7	26.9	30.9	9.2
Churchmen	352	2.0	20.5	60.8	3.1	13.1	0.6
Service men	378	20.9	46.6	2.9	18.3	9.8	1.6

professional organization, in the sense that it was staffed mainly by men who entered at or near the bottom, spent their lives in service, and looked to it for both status and economic support. The most important social category in the service were those men legally defined as nobles, though many were totally divorced from the land, probably for more than one generation.<sup>23</sup> All of this was generally true at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the central agencies studied.

By the end of the eighteenth century the civil bureaucracy in the central agencies, and by the 1850s in the provinces also, was an essentially self-perpetuating group. Recruits came from a nobility that was in large measure divorced from the land, and from among the sons of nonnoble government workers (military, civil, and ecclesiastical).<sup>24</sup> Within this virtually closed system there was some, but far from massive, movement from the lower levels

23. Even among the most elite group of nobles that can be identified, those who had attended the Tsarskoe Selo Lycée or the school of the Imperial Corps of Pages, 48 percent had no serfs at all in their families.

24. The clergy and other employees of the Orthodox Church were, of course, not strictly government workers, but in view of the close ties between state and church it seems reasonable to regard them as a specialized branch of state service. Whether or not this view is accepted, the system was a closed one that included the churchmen as a component.

(service men, churchmen, and uneducated nobles) to the upper level, composed of educated men of all classes.

That the civil service was a way in which the nonnobles could rise socially and even become nobles is true, but not very important, because so few men actually did rise that way, either from the lower classes of society or from the lower levels of state service. Education had become the route to a successful career, and it was the nobles, landed and nonlanded, who were most able and most inclined to take advantage of the facilities provided by the state to train the men it needed. What is important is that the state's civil administration, even at the upper levels, was staffed with men who were committed to that career and no other and who seldom had any other significant source of income. The competence, efficiency, and honesty of the civil service were undoubtedly very low, and therefore its ability to accomplish things was strictly limited. In light of its social composition, however, it should have been a politically loyal instrument, and indeed it proved to be when the tsar determined to emancipate the serfs and assign to them land that was legally the property of the nobility.

#### APPENDIX: *List of Agency Personnel Records Used*

- I. Early Nineteenth-Century Central Agencies
  - Ministry of Finance, 1817
  - Ministry of Finance (State Treasury), 1824
  - Ministry of the Interior (various departments), 1810, 1818, 1819
  - Office of State Control, 1812, 1814
  - Senate (various departments), 1798, 1800, 1802, 1806, 1815, 1822
  - State Agency (*Ekspeditsiia*) for the Inspection of Accounts, 1815
- II. Early Nineteenth-Century Provincial Agencies
  - Kursk (various departments), 1802
  - Penza (various departments), 1802
- III. Mid-Nineteenth-Century Central Agencies
  - Committee of Ministers (Chancellery), 1851
  - Ministry of Finance (General Chancellery), 1846
  - Ministry of Finance (Special Chancellery for the Credit Section), 1846
  - Ministry of the Interior (Economic Department), 1852
  - Ministry of the Interior (Department of General Affairs), 1852
  - Ministry of Justice, 1851
  - Ministry of State Domains (Chancellery), 1850
  - Office of State Control, 1847
  - Senate (various departments), 1851, 1855
  - State Chancellery, 1851
- IV. Mid-Nineteenth-Century Provincial Agencies
  - Moscow (Ministry of State Domains), 1848
  - Moscow (Treasury Board), 1851
  - Penza (major civil agencies), 1849
  - Vladimir (major civil agencies), 1850
  - Voronezh (major civil agencies), 1847, 1849