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KREMLİN ON FIRE: 18TH CENTURY RUSSIA THROUGH THE TONGUES OF FLAME

Mikail PUŞKIN¹

Abstract

Current research is an exploratory study investigating actions, socio-historical context and characters of bureaucrats in an emergency situation of Trinity Fire in Moscow of 1737. Microhistory approach is applied to analysis of primary sources: the interrogation reports produced by investigators over three years period following the disaster. These dry formal documents act as windows into lives, beliefs and lies of the bureaucrats and by proxy muscovite society of the times of Anna Ivanovna as a whole. The resulting analysis then not only investigates formal procedures and duties related to firefighting and civil service of the time, but provides commentary on how civil servants of various social standing positioned themselves with regards to religion, state and personal moral responsibility.

Keywords: 18th century Russia, disaster investigation, Russian bureaucracy, Russian society and culture, civil and moral duty

KREMLİN YANIYOR: ALEVLERİN DİLİNDEN 18. YÜZYIL RUSYA'SI

Öz

Bu araştırma, 1737 Moskova'sında gerçekleşen Trinity Yangını acil durumu esnasındaki eylemleri, sosyo-tarihsel bağlamı ve bürokratların karakterlerini inceleyen bir keşif çalışmasıdır. Faciayı takiben üç yıl boyunca müfettişler tarafından oluşturulan sorgu kayıtları bu çalışmanın birincil kaynaklarını oluşturmaktadır ve bu kaynakların analizinde mikro tarihçi yaklaşım uygulanmıştır. Bu resmi evraklar hayatlara, karakterlere, inançlara, bürokratların yalanlarına ve bu sayede de bir bütün olarak Anna İvanovna zamanlarının Moskova toplumuna açılan birer pencere teşkil etmektedir. Sonuçta ortaya çıkan analiz, yalnızca zamanın yangınla mücadele ve kamu hizmeti ile ilgili resmi prosedürlerini ve görevleri incelemekle kalmayarak, çeşitli sosyal duruşlara sahip memurların kendilerini din, devlet ve kişisel ahlaki sorumluluk hususlarına göre nasıl konumlandıkları konusunu da yorumlamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: 18. yüzyıl Rusya'sı, facia soruşturması, Rus bürokrasisi, Rus toplumu ve kültürü, medeni ve ahlaki görev

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Introduction

While the rule of Peter the Great and Catherine the Great have arguably left the strongest influence on the history of the Russian Empire and its neighbors on the grand scale, the life of more common people, living in the time space between these giants of history, however, is mostly known to the Western reader through literary fiction. Inspired by *The Cheese and the Worms* by Ginzburg, Tedeschi and Tedeschi (1980), current research implements microhistory approach to glimpse into the lives of the state bureaucrats living under the reign of Anna Ivanovna, illuminated through the flames of Trinity fire of the 29th of May, 1737.

A brief introduction into how and why this research came to be is necessary at this point. Although relative ease of information access has brought about ever-growing volumes of academic writing, it is regrettably common that the research into the past is not based on primary or at times even secondary sources Robinson (1904), which is why the opportunity to gain access to authentic historical documents, whilst having further benefit of native knowledge of the language, was not to be overlooked. A request for original documents with Saint Petersburg connections has brought me to Historical selection of the 18th century business documents from Moscow, Сумкина (1981). However, the documents came with no additional analytical material necessitating reliance on supplementary literature on the period in general as well as the dictionary definitions of some (more antiquated) terms. The purpose of the documents' assembly was rather to illustrate various linguistic aspects of the Russian language in Moscow of that time, not their social narrative content. Non-native sources were not covering this specific case either, instead predominantly focusing on the higher strata of society, Sinel (1976) or on the question of composition of the Table of Ranks² itself, Le Donne (1993), Pintner (1970), but not on the daily life experience of such officials.

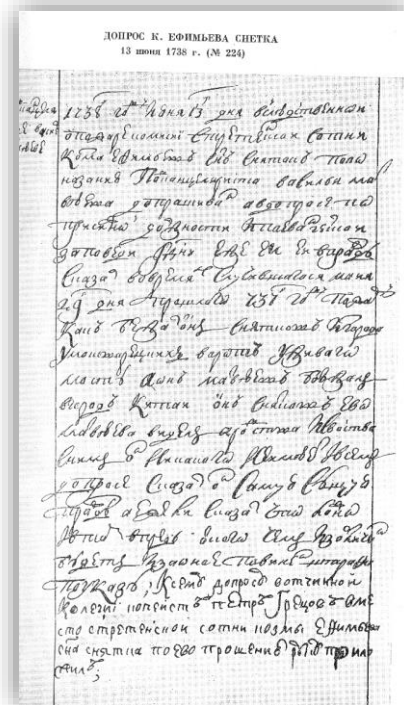
The native knowledge of Russian did not permit for immediate transparent understanding of the documents either, as the language itself has since gone through several stages of evolution. Some bureaucratic positions do not exist anymore either or have no analogues in the English language.

Even the situation in which the documents were produced is only described briefly in the introduction. Out of the groups of documents this research is focused on the subject dealing with interrogations, protocols and registers of the civil servants of Moscow

² Official social servant ranking system introduced by Peter the Great, Segrillo (2016).

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institutions (specifically located in the Kremlin) in regards to the Trinity fire. Such choice was determined by a relatively large scope of documents (50 in total) and vivid descriptive elements within them, allowing for a broader picture of the event.



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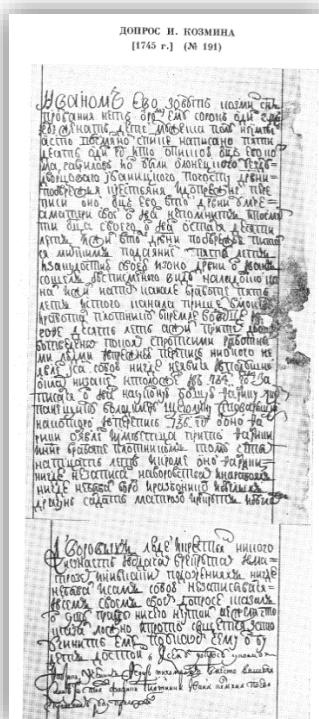


Figure 1. Interrogation reports samples, Сумкина (1981).

As a separate notice, all translations are done manually, keeping the structure as close to the original as possible to give it a more authentic feel. It is furthermore noteworthy, that the whole paragraphs or even protocols run without a single full stop or a comma in their original form (mocking the very daring attempts of surrealists at the stream of consciousness writing), therefore, punctuation is added in translation only, when the structure of the original otherwise becomes nearly incomprehensible. Additional complications follow from the condition of the documents themselves, as well as varying handwriting quality as evident from Figure 1.

The Research Questions

Similarly to Carlo Ginsburg, the article endeavors to perform a microhistory study of this very specific case attempting to explain more general concepts and paradigms by which the society lived at that time in that place. While not striving for his level of in-depth analysis, attempt is made to uncover what might be hiding behind some of the seemingly straightforward lines in the interrogation protocols. Are some of the reasons just a common system of excuses? What might these protocols tell us about the society of that time and possibly its values, priorities, morals and social classes? What was the role of the state, religion and even current and earlier emperors in the hearts and minds of the people?

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It is a common case that the official documents, even if recorded in a formal setting and for a specific purpose contain more information than just “dry facts”. For these documents, this surly is the case. The interrogations and protocols furthermore provide hints towards what the investigators were expecting to hear, what the interrogated ones were expected to say and which excuses they would use as valid. It is also peculiar, that the investigation lasted for at least three years after the actual fire, since we can find interrogation protocols dated as late as January 1740.

The Setting

“All these facts are reliable, witnessed by science, and if we recall that from a penny candle Moscow lit up that many very small people are the creators of truly great dirty tricks, then the meaning of what happened [...] will become quite clear.” (Салтыков-Щедрин, 1863, p. 115)

Indeed, the case of the Troitskiy pojar of 1737 or Trinity fire, as it was nicknamed, due to happening on the same day as the religious holiday of Trinity, is rather particular in that it managed to spread through the Kremlin itself, consuming numerous tax books, let alone permanently damaging unique monumental pieces of architecture such as the Tsar-Bell, for example, and the relics.

Naturally there were supposed to be people on duty on that day too: despite the religious holiday, it was still a working shift for some of the civil servants. Most common ones that were supposed to be there are chamberlains (kameriri) and Secretaries (copyists, kanceljarists): it most likely was their duty to be there and to assist in securing the documents, which clearly did not take place.

Chamberlains (kamerirs) performed a function similar to that of a treasurer – they were in charge of keeping the account of the state's income through various taxation forms, watching the state's expenditure and attempting to save the state's money in general through optimization of financial mechanisms. Secretaries (copyists, kanceljarists) were similar to the secretary position nowadays yet with a broader area of responsibilities.

Whether the duty to retrieve the logbooks in case of emergency was a documented or a moral one, however, is not clear. Locating any specific documents of that time regarding the regulations in case of such fires proved to be impossible, despite the fact that Moscow was burning quite often, since it was built in large part out of wood. Notwithstanding the decree of the 9th of August 1700 by Peter the Great forbidding building houses out of wood in the capital, Фальковский (1950). Furthermore, professional firefighting force has only been established in Moscow in 1804 by the decree of Alexander I, Шмидт (1997), with no professionally-trained unit designated for the task prior. Instead, soldiers with disabilities preventing them from military service were assigned to this duty. This alone makes for a curious research question, which is addressed in this paper.

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It is also clear that such fire could have been to someone's advantage and it were the chamberlains and copyists, who were capable of using the situation to their benefit. Thus, in order to investigate the case, - a special commission was formed, which then interrogated those in position and involved in the case of the fire.

If there was a person, who purposefully set the city on fire, we will never know (though a number of versions do exist Беседина (2009)), therefore, most likely, the investigators were trying to identify the treasurers and secretaries, who were not performing their duties on that day, failing to secure the documents, rather than locating someone guilty of setting the fire.

Naturally, of the many people who were not at their desks when the fire took place, many claim to have been at various churches or sick or somehow incapable of securing the documents. Whether they lied about their authentic locations from the moment when the Tsar

Kolokol (Tsar-Bell) sounded, announcing the disaster, we will not be able to tell for sure, but we can look at the “excuses” they referred to and see, where those go wrong and furthermore find references in the other documents, when people were interrogated to verify the original interrogation protocols.

As a matter of fact, a lot of documents were destroyed and the state could not do anything about it, but the event was major, losses great: “12000 courtyards, 2500 houses, over 500 shops, 70 churches and cathedrals, 40 administrative units” (Беседина, 2009, p. 213)), thus – investigation. In this section of paper, a most common straightforward kind of interrogation protocol will be outlined so that the other cases, which deviate from it in some significant way can then be discussed, thus revealing new perspectives and describing peculiarities of situation.

Before And Instead Of The Fire

Default case.

During the interrogation most people claimed to have been at the religious sermon or a mass when the fire took place. Then they have heard the bell, rushed over to the treasury, could not get to it because of the fire and heat. On the way and/or at the church they were seen by the people, whom they name as references to authenticity of their stories. Despite the diversity of such cases, they do not deviate from this scenario in any significant detail. Interrogation of A. Antonov may serve as one such exemplary case.

“Interrogation of A. Antonov

Clerk Alexey Antonov. On the day of May 29, year 1737 on the day of the Pentecost in the Kamer Collegiate he, Antonov, was not present, since before that fire (he) was at the mass at the parish of his church across the Moscow-river by Ekaterina, the sufferer in Christ, which is near the Serpukhov’s gates. And at that time was seen in that church by the priest Ivan Ivanov Luki Zabolovozkogo, Warden Ivan Leontief. And when that fire has begun and when (he) heard that it happened near Kremlin, (he) says, he rushed straight on towards the Kremlin and on the way was seen by the clerk of Antonov’s county’s Collegiate’ Mikhail Chegodarev and arrived to the great Stone bridge to the All holy gates but due to the great flame could not reach Kremlin, and as he was standing on the Stone bridge among other people he saw Chamberlain Vasili I and this whole protocol is truthful and if he lied and will be discovered and for that found guilty, will be punished according to law.

This interrogation protocol is acknowledged by the clerk Alexey Antonov and that it was written in truth and in that time, I am not arguing”. (Сумкина, 1981, p. 134)

In a subsequent interrogation protocol Vasili I recalled seeing him too.

The “default” case follows through the following steps: been at church, been seen there, went to Kremlin, been seen along the way and saw someone too, failed to reach Kremlin, is then acknowledged by someone, whom he saw in later protocols. Following are the deviant cases with analysis and various hypotheses on the nature of their deviations.

Case 1.

Interrogation of Petr Narmatskiy

“In the course of investigation of the fire the clerk Petr Narmatskiy said that he was not present at the Collegiate for the rescuing of the treasury and the documents on the 29th of May and was not executing his duty for that day and was at the liturgy at the Simov’s monastery, and as he heard about the fire, then he, Narmatskiy, rushed from that monastery to the Collegiate without waiting for the end of the sermon, and when he was at the monastery, there wasn’t anyone familiar, who had seen him...” (Сумкина, 1981, p. 139)

At a later point not far from Kremlin he meets someone from his department, with whom there is no interrogation record. This version of protocol is also not unusual. What is different here from the default scenario?

Firstly, Clerk Narmatskiy is stressing that he “was not available for the rescuing of the treasury”, “was not executing his duty”, which by itself is a strange way to put it. On the one hand, we do not know whether he was supposed to be in service during the religious holiday, or whether it was his duty to be present on that day at all. On the other, though, why is it that he is stressing this aspect so much? Is it him, who was formulating the phrases this way or was it the investigator, pushing him into a certain way of emphasizing the failed duty element? A possible interpretation is that he might be stressed, since he is not telling the truth. What reinforces this hypothesis is that he has not been seen by anyone who could have identified him in the church that he is mentioning and later on he mentions someone from his department as an eye witness, whom we do not come across in the other interrogation records.

Case 2.

This one can be called humorous, though it most likely was not such for copyist Ivan Popov. He starts by saying that he was at the sermon until the evening, and then went to one of the priests as a guest with his friend and co-worker. This is when he heard the bell alarming about the fire and rushed firstly towards his own house, which was nearby to find it in flames

(it was an entirely different fire on the same day). All his belongings burnt there and he spent the day troubling over it and didn't even know there was another major fire at the Kremlin.

“And as soon as I heard the alarm bell, (I) rushed towards the flat of mine, which I had by the Court commission by the guard Andrei Mikhailov at the church parish of Ioan precursor at the same place where the fire started and that was this fire of the aforementioned guard Mikhailov, the house was burnt and all the belongings of Popov were burnt there as well and he was not at the Collegiate on that day and whether there was a fire in the city at that time he did not know apart from the fire which had started by his own flat” (Сумкина, 1981, p. 140).

The story is most likely realistic, since it is easily verifiable. Interesting element here is the striking illustration of just how often and usual the fires were in Moscow with the whole houses and streets burning down in an instant in various places of the city, it appears that it was permanently burning in various parts.

Case 3.

In the interrogation of clerk Danilo Stukolov, we encounter a phrase “by the end of the liturgy he heard (about) the fire, that Kremlin is burning and, *according to his position* ran off to Kremlin” (Сумкина, 1981, p. 140). This particular phrase is quite interesting in the context of the attitude towards duties: apparently, duty was something of social status or position or rank – even outside of the “working time” one remained the servant of the state on duty. This is very likely to be a consequence of the introduction of the Table of Ranks by Peter the Great, allowing people to progress in their social rank and statues simultaneously through the service to the state. This way a human would feel like he is always on duty, by being of a certain rank.

Case 4.

This case is particular in very many ways and tells us a lot of outside of the case information. Clerk Ivan Trofimov produced a very lengthy interrogation protocol (three times the size of a usual one). A more general relationship is clearly illustrated here: the less proof and evidence of his actions does the interrogated have – the smaller his protocol is. In the common scenario case – the length on average is a bit over half a page. However, when the interrogated actually achieved something for the state, - the protocol stretches enormously.

The reason is that he actually managed to save a lot of documents and money from the burning Collegiate buildings. Most likely, he volunteered to be interrogated and perceived it as an opportunity to describe his great feat, make requests for those, who assisted him and

complain about those, who did not. The length and a certain eloquence of his protocol suggests that he probably planned it beforehand, even in the ending phrase he is more pompous than any other interrogated one of his rank: “and if found guilty will be punished by the order of her imperial highness” (Сумкина, 1981, pp. 140-142). This closing phrase is more significant than just of the eloquence. It shows the extent to which the state’s officials related their own success to the service to the Empress herself, as if levitated to a higher plane, where they could mention her. This is perhaps a direct consequence of the mindset, created by Peter the Great’s growth of status through achievement model.

In his protocol we see him firstly referring to undersecretary Andrei Koltashev who forgot his key from the official documents shelf and was sent home to fetch them, but, as it seems, didn’t return to help, which looks like a complaint.

“And from the assigned on that day on duty during the fire was not present undersecretary Andrei Koltashev, who on that date in the morning before dinner in that Collegiate was present and declared about himself that he has forgotten in his house the key from the locker with documents and that in that locker he had the white paper for distribution to the collegiate assessors, for which he, Koltashev also had the documented requests also in that locker for this key he, Koltashev was allowed to depart” (Сумкина, 1981, pp. 140-142).

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He continues with descriptions of his bravery in saving the documents from fire, suffering from the heat and smoke and then even temporary damaging his sight (possibly a bit exaggerated, but we do not know that for sure).

“Under the assault by that strong flame through the open windows from which a lot of smoke and multitude of sparks were coming, for that sake he, Trofimov, having joined with the aforementioned soldiers entered the archives chambers for the best securing from the fire...”
“inside of this chamber it was all filled with smoke and heat so much that Trofimov and the soldiers had only a very thin possibility to breathe, however were dragging what they brought from the upper chambers away from the flame and for further safety from fire to the best of their efforts [...] and did not let anything be damaged but from that heat and smoke damaged their eyes and for several days could only see little and he, Trofimov, due to the need is writing through the glasses...” (Сумкина, 1981, pp. 140-142)

He also comments on how helpful a number of people (from his co-workers to common soldiers) were. And remarks that they (the soldiers) deserve financial reward: “and if the Kamer Collegiate would permit itself to not reward them, then he, Trofimov, will pay

from his own estate as much as he can to reward them” (Сумкина, 1981, pp. 140-142). The whole protocol reads very much like an action scene in an adventure story.

Case 5.

A letter from a noble, the baron councilor Isai Shafirov. This case is also particular in many ways, starting from the fact that it is not an interrogation protocol, but an actual letter. It is most likely due to the high social status and rank that he was not obliged to go through the interrogation procedure, like the minor colleagues. He is also constantly referring to the “commission of empress”, the “and if I be found guilty may the wrath of her highness empress be unleashed upon me” (Сумкина, 1981, pp. 144-145). Evidently, even mentioning the empress was a status signaling in itself, strengthening the self-perception as well as producing a certain impression on those, who would be reading the letter. We can also see that the final sentence “if I be found guilty may the wrath...” is almost theatrically dramatic. Secondly, the length of this letter is about the same one as that of Case 4, reinforcing the link between achievement, status, mentioning of the empress and the length of the protocol.

Regarding the content of protocol, the most useful information is, perhaps, the mentioning of the goal of the investigation commission:

“According to the documents sent by the department of the ruling Senate it is demanded by the cabinet of her imperial highness for everyone with their own hands to provide for the judgment (information) about the fire that happened on the 29th of May 1737, who was where, and for what reason was not executing his duties in securing the treasury and documents...” (Сумкина, 1981, pp. 144-145)

This passage outlines the questions that the investigators were interested in, when interrogating the lesser officials, thus we have a clearer picture of the situation now.

Another important aspect of the letter is the way it is written: baron Shafirov is combining the relaxed manner of narration with as many reasons as possible for not having done anything. For example, he starts by telling us, that his health has been poor all the year (the sickness excuse in general will be looked at later on), in addition he visited a number of liturgies, had to take his wife home and before that – to the liturgy.

“And so I sent my horses to my wife to the house I own across Nikitinskije Gates to the Voznesenskaja street to the church of Annunciation of God, but at that time my wife passed by not far from that house of mine towards the church of Feodor Studit and my people with my horses came by and took my wife to the aforementioned church and on finishing that liturgy

and vesper my wife returned...”, “that in the current 1737 year for most part of it I was in the poor health, to be specific with my heart problems, throat problem and often generals were visiting me with throat infections so it is hardly that I escaped pneumonia, and also I have fistula and chechuinaja sickness, so this kept me at home most of the time” (Сумкина, 1981, pp. 144-145).

It is further curious to note how he integrates the importance of his position with mentioning the generals visiting him. At the same time, he was constantly contacting various people, who all seem to have been giving him directions and information about the fire and he was rushing through various locations, which ended on the 30th of May, when there were no signs of fire anymore. It is not clear, what was his duty in such cases but it appears that he was supposed to monitor information, rather than do the rescuing of the documents or organizing something. On a number of occasions, he mentions that he went to one or another site to “according to my position, see the condition of Kamer Collegiate”. It is also clear that what was required of him in his letter is to demonstrate that he put much effort into overcoming a whole range of difficulties in order to attempt to do his duty.

Something particular that caught my attention here was also the mentioning of firefighting equipment: “that bridge was all occupied by those carrying firefighting equipment”. This suggests that there was indeed no firefighting brigade at that time, however, some equipment was present. In combination with mentioning of the soldiers working on saving the archives in Case 4, the notion that there has been no official kind of force or procedure for this kind of occasion is verified.

Case 6.

This is an interrogation protocol of copyist Egor Jukov. The whole report is actually a verification of the authenticity of an earlier interrogation protocol of copyist Mikhail Grigoriev (which is not amongst the available documents). Situation is simple: Mikhail Grigoriev claimed to have been seen by Egor Jukov at the Dorgomilov bridge. Jukov then says that he has not been there at the specified time and could not and did not see Grigoriev. “Behind the Arbat gates that are close to Dorgomilov bridge he, Jukov on that day was not present and did not see the aforementioned copyist Mikhail Grigoriev and it was not possible to see him by that liturgy” (Сумкина, 1981, p. 147) This case is useful to illustrate, that the commission was doing its job properly, really looking into the case. Unfortunately, though, the information regarding further actions on that case is not available.

Case 7.

Another success story, however, by two low ranking guards – they are just telling the regular routine story and then how the fire started and they went to assist in securing the documents. This one is similar to Case 4 in terms of achievement; however, the tone of the document is indifferent and they are neither suggesting that they should be rewarded, nor are they describing the situation as an exploit of a kind. This shows discrepancy in the ranks as well as, possibly in their lack of ability to express themselves soundly: since the interrogation is written from the words of two people and is in a very unemotional tone. The document is furthermore signed by the third person – the scribe, with their agreement, which suggests that lower ranks were probably put off by official procedures.

It is also peculiar that lower-ranking interrogated public is using a religious oath: “by the oath of the position and the evangelic god’s commandment” (Сумкина, 1981, p. 148). Something, which does not appear in the documents of higher ranks. It is possible to use this as an example of the split between the church and the state, clearly carried out by Peter the Great. Evidently, the common folk was still very much religious and possibly the higher ranks too (they were mostly at the liturgies, as they claim), however, the state’s politics encouraged shift towards the servitude to the state and the emperor, therefore, higher ranks are not very liberal with religious expressions while even higher ranks would instead allude to the Empress herself.

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Case 8.

Interrogation of copyist Vasili Nagorny. This interrogation record adds significant clarity in terms of the situation with the fire regulations. Starting with a common phrase that he failed in assisting in the rescuing of treasury, he goes on to the story, which suggests that he did not really fail, but instead followed a regulation. After the liturgy, Vasili Nagorny rushed home to get some buckets and his friend Gavril Larionov. He mentions that he had to attend the fire according to the police books records where all the civil servants who do not have their own male servants are supposed to run towards the place of fire and assist there.

“And when the evening liturgy ended, he rushed home, where he took some buckets and (fetched) his friend [...] Gavril Larionov, since he and Nagorny according to the police books are signed in for funning to the fire by an edict, as with all the civil servants who do not own people of male gender and he, Nagorny, did not own anyone of male gender and as soon as they arrived with his designated friend and the bucket to the Borovitskij bridge and their sixth brigade was sent to the police and then from police to the Cannon yard and he was at this fire

for three days in various places with this same brigade and in verification of that he is relying on the aforementioned friend Gavril Larionov..." (Сумкина, 1981, pp. 154-155)

Now we basically have it: the regular routine for how the copyists should have been acting in case of the fire. However, there is a discrepancy here: he starts by saying that he failed in helping to secure the treasury (which implies that it was his duty to do so). Does it mean that there were several conflicting regulations regarding the same matter? Although taking into consideration the Russian mentality, it is possible, one should rather address the situation from perspective of priorities: actual job position in the department versus a general duty to protocol for firefighting, due to the concept of constant servitude by social/professional rank. Even though his duty according to his rank was to follow protocol and aid the police to fight fires around the city, he was also under the duty assigned through his position at the workplace: two coexisting, but conflicting in this case systems of obligations.

Case 9.

The last case considered for research specifically: the sickness excuse. Among interrogation report two kinds prevail. The first kind provides a kind of proof: the official was attended by a doctor, looked sick to others, been sick for a while. The second kind provides no verifiable evidence: stayed at home, been sick. We have already come across this in Case 5, though there it was debatable, whether his remarks were of some significance or just an attempt to illustrate how devotedly he performed his duties despite all the troubles and health condition.

Here follows the protocol of doctor Fedor Karpov testifying the authenticity of sickness of the public prosecutor Kaminin:

"Last year 1737, may 29th, about three weeks before the fire, he, Kaminin, was sick with constipation of his bottom, from which he had a pain in the left side of his stomach, heat in the head, melancholy, the disease called hypochondria and during that very time of the fire he was also sick with this disease until June thirteen and from this difficult disease was treated in his own home by Karpov and he, Karpov, has no personal connection with..." (Сумкина, 1981, p. 150)

Following is an example of the case without a proof from chamberlain Gregory Alsufiev:

"During the event of May 29 at the day of the fire, he, Alsufiev was not (present), but was sick with apoplexy and other diseases like fever and tremor and he, Alsufiev, has fallen ill since

march and got liberated from the sickness after the fire in June 8th of the current year 1737, about which there is a journal note in the printing department and he was not inspected by the doctor and does not have a clear evidence...” (Сумкина, 1981, p. 134)

This one is clearly doubtful – he only has a note stating his absence from job, has not been inspected by the doctor, nobody can witness that he even looked sick. One is left to wonder why chamberlain Alsufiev has not provided a more reliable excuse when compared to public prosecutor Kaminin. Both are about equally high in the Table of Ranks.

Analysis

The State And Church Through The Prism Of Social Standing

What can one observe with regards to the church and the state relationship through these interrogation protocols? Clearly a dichotomy in significance is present within the society and is visible when related to the social standing and rank of the interrogated ones. The higher the standing – the less it is likely that the person would apply religious terminology in his interrogation protocol or letter, but instead he would prefer to fill the protocol with various mentioning of secular political and military powers: generals, soldiers, the Empress. It is clear, however, that church was very important for all the people in general and for the common folk in particular. Whenever someone of a lower standing would be interrogated, - he would be made to swear that he is telling the truth using religious oath. And it is unlikely that he would even attempt to mention authorities and administrative superiors, pointing to strict hierarchical mindset.

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This situation is a consequence of the formation of a strong civil and military service structure and taking of a great deal of power, money, land and importance from the church by Peter the Great. The people, whose interrogation reports are being studied, are the ones, who went through his iron fist reformation and were now in the period of comparative recession with Anna Ivanovna rule. Commonly, like in any other time and place, the reforms trickle down the social structure slowly, so it is possible to conclude that those at the bottom of the hierarchy have not yet internalized the shift from the religious to the more secular state monarchy.

At the same time the higher-ranking officials, the ones who were closer to the head of the state were already “up to date”, in the modern way of putting it, and have furthermore started to internalize the superficial nature of Anna Ivanovna’s regency with her tendency towards the balls and eloquence, Lipski (1959). This superficial flamboyance is contrasted by

the large scope and thoroughness of the investigation itself signifying the other side of the coin of Anna Ivanovna's rule: heavy reliance on the Secret office of investigation with over 20 000 prosecuted on record, Baynes (1878), Lipski (1956).

Focusing on the role of the church, - one can see that it is still very much internalized within the language itself in the typical scenario case cited in this paper, the author is naming the day as "the day of Pentecost", which is a religious calendar name. The main excuse for failure to perform one's duties for people of all ranks is that they were at the liturgy at the church. However, this is where the ambiguity becomes most striking, and we can see that they are expected to perform their duty despite the religious holiday, but at the same time they seem to be comfortable using the visit to the liturgy as a valid reason or excuse for not being at the Collegiate.

In some cases it is questionable whether responses of the kind like "did not perform my duty of assisting in rescuing the treasury" originated from the subjects or the interrogators, since the former are more likely to have phrased it as "hurried on to the site of fire after the liturgy", and did when possible. For higher ranks participation in the event is linked with personal willingness and ability in the service of the state, while for the lower ones it is voiced more as an exhausting fulfillment of duty. The two cases, where the wording is elaborate: the cases 4 (successful saving) and 5 (letter from a noble) clearly illustrate the situation, particularly when contrasted with the case 7 (successful rescuing but by lower ranks). The case 4 person is very elaborate, very expressive, heroic, the case 5 person is also very expressive, very elaborate, while case 7 people are most likely guided by the interrogators all the way through and the record is an interpretation of what they are actually saying. Even the signature under the interrogation protocol is placed by a third person with their agreement.

The Truth And The Lies

It is fascinating that we actually have case 6, showing us that not all the reports were really truthful and opening an option of being doubtful about each of them. Since most of the people claimed to have been at the church but about half claim that they were not seen by anyone they know there – we can safely assume that there is a high probability of them simply skipping their jobs using religious ceremony as a good excuse. It is often the case that they are seen close to Kremlin, but too late to get to it and perform their duty of securing the papers.

Their excuses range from sickness real and forged, to lying about being seen by others to possibly asking their friends to witness seeing them (something that we cannot verify definitely).

One question that is left open here simply because the fire accident only lasted one day (although cleaning up took 3 days according to one of the records) – we cannot be sure if skipping the job was a regular massive thing people did all the time or if this day was really very special due to religious holiday.

The Fire Procedures And Duties

This one is most likely something that people would expect to be the key research point of the paper, although it is rather a more dry and technical question that could have been better addressed otherwise. Were there really any rules and regulations for the cases of great fires like this one? The answer is bot yes and no. The common folk and the lower ranks, let alone the soldiers, were obliged to report to the police and then be appointed to specific sites to combat fire and help in other ways. We should keep in mind that the social hierarchy of that time was such that there were very few free people in our contemporary democratic understanding of this word (most often tradesmen), instead there were either serfs, low ranks or people of high enough status to enjoy freedom through the said status. Therefore, people themselves were all “volunteers-firefighters” akin to mandatory conscription for men in many a country of today. In this sense there were firefighters and there were mandatory rules for people to follow. The clash comes when the ranks enter the stage: most workers of the Kremlin’s treasury have a permanent kind of duty resulting from their social rank as much as their professional occupation. In other words, one gets a job and with it gets a rank in the social hierarchy, so the job is in a sense a rank itself, which is not limited to working hours. One could perhaps parallel this to contemporary academic system where one’s degree and academic job title at the university are linked though not synonymous. To make is sound a bit less confusing, one should look at Peter’s Table of Ranks. However, the duties towards the state of someone of a certain rank and of a certain job are not the same – from here the confusion. Case 8 provides the best illustration to the point. Apparently, the duty of a person of a certain job was a rather vague idea of sorting out any troubles at the place of employment, while the duties of the ranks were documented. Which is why the impression of present and absent regulations regarding this case.

Conclusion

While the scope of the research does not permit for making generalizing statements about the whole society of the 18th century in the Russian Empire, it nevertheless shows a glimpse of the country's national character in part valid to this day. There is reverence for God, stoicism and self-sacrifice in the face of enormous disaster. There is little description of the fire itself, instead the reports speak of people: some concerned for their own burning home, others – securing the state property as their duty dictates. The richer and higher-ranking officials risking little are borderline boastful of their efforts, properties and connections, while lowest ranks, bearing the main brunt of fighting the fire, are dry, unemotional and brief. Although the role of religion in Russian people's lives has since significantly declined (a process observed even in this brief research), it is clearly still the same folk centuries later, that will persevere through any disaster in stoic, fatalistic fashion despite the lack of action from pompous officials.

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