POWER IN THE PROVINCES: THE EVOLUTION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT PRACTICES IN IMPERIAL RUSSIA, 1825-1917

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a study of the political of local self-government in Imperial Russia over the course of the period 1825-1917. In particular, I concentrate on the zemstvos, elected bodies established in 1864 at the provincial and district levels to oversee a wide range of public works and social services. The zemstvo reform and other legislation on local self-government established general areas of operation, but left substantial leeway for the individual organizations to set policy priorities.

I designed my project as a case study of two provinces: Moscow was urban and relatively wealthy, whereas Penza was poorer and more agrarian. My research focused on three particular areas: the role of leadership, taxation and spending priorities, and the negotiation of jurisdictional prerogatives between different institutions.

I make several arguments about the evolution of local government practices and ideals in these particular provinces. First, the structure of elections and the general traditions of deference meant that leaders in the zemstvo and other local organizations could work with relatively limited oversight on the part of voters, assembly delegates, or provincial governors. As a result, leaders were able to rapidly expand their operations into particular areas of their choosing, resulting in significant variations between regions in the evolution of financial priorities.
However, this independence also meant that leaders’ priorities generally did not remain in place after their departure from office. We see little in the way of institutionalization or rationalization of particular local norms, and these organizations could vary widely in their policy priorities from one year to the next.

Also, this particular arrangement of politics and policy encouraged the development of an idealized conception of local self-government. Leaders were insulated from many of the ordinary pressures of day-to-day politics, and conducted their activities in the belief that all were working towards a single goal—the “local mission.” This left them particularly unsuited to resolve the conflicts that inevitably arose when their policies pitted the financial interests of one region against those of another.
I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who helped make this dissertation possible. You are too many to count, but please know you have my thanks.

One person, however, deserves special mention. My wife, Hadley, has been this project’s biggest supporter from the very start to the long-anticipated finished. From the first, it was inconceivable that it would be dedicated to anyone but her.
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Introduction

Aside from the end of serfdom itself, perhaps no program from among Alexander’s Great Reforms aroused as much discussion and debate as did the reforms of local self-government. The zemstvo legislation of 1864 and the municipal reform of 1870 raised important questions about the Russian state’s responsibility for its subjects, the relationship between central and local authority, and the utility of popular participation in self-government and self-administration.

These issues, of course, did not solely arise with the consideration of the proposals themselves, nor were they settled by their passage into law. This discussion continued throughout the zemstvo era, as commentators and practitioners contested the practical relevance and symbolic significance of the new organizations. In fact, the various pieces of authorizing legislation related to local issues established a general framework for action (setting election procedures, lines of authority, areas of oversight, and tax prerogatives), but left many of the particular questions to be resolved by the new bodies themselves. The eventual outcomes were largely dependent on the political culture that developed in each locality—in other words, the implicit assumptions and norms held by the voters, delegates, and administrators of the various organizations. To understand how the zemstvos worked on the ground level, an understanding of this political culture is vital.

In my analysis of political culture, I use the definition elucidated by Sidney Verba in his conclusion to Political Culture and Political Development. He defines political culture as “the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values which defines the situation in which political action takes place.”¹ Studies of political culture have examined the intersection

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¹ Sidney Verba, “Conclusion: Comparative Political Culture” in Verba and Pye (eds.), Political Culture and Political Development (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 513. The articles in this volume demonstrate a teleological mindset about political culture, closely tied up with the idea of “political development” of various polities. In his introduction to the volume, Lucian Pye outlines six different modes of analysis of political
between political institutions and implicit values and norms within the political community, and have argued that political outcomes can only be explained through an understanding of both these factors. They attempt to assess values and beliefs related to such topics as deference, public trust, and optimism, and then explain how these values have evolved in a tandem negotiation with the existing political structures.

Because the formal legislative authority was so vague, the informal norms thus took on paramount importance. Thus, political culture seems to be an ideal mode of analysis for this period in Russian history. Given the particularities of local self-government, I have chosen to focus on three particular areas of investigation for political culture. First, I consider the implicit assumptions surrounding the selection and exercise of leadership, considering questions of deference to authority, levels of trust in leadership, and the desire for comity in political negotiations. Second, I examine the financial records of the various institutions. Because the guidelines for taxation and spending were quite loose, spending levels were largely determined by the implicit assumptions about the appropriate level of governmental activism in social life. Third, I view the debates related to the competing claims of district, provincial, and municipal organs. These claims rested on implicit assumptions about the appropriate size and delimitation of the political community, and with that the appropriate sphere for social care and economic redistribution.

This approach will add to our understanding of late Imperial Russia in several ways that add to the existing historiography. First, it will allow us to assess the degree to which we may speak of a national political culture related to local self-government. Many studies of local self-development, identifying the key common elements as “a change from widespread subject status to an increasing number of contributing citizens, with an accompanying spread of mass participation, a greater sensitivity to the principles of equality, and a wider acceptance of universalistic laws.” (Ibid, 12-13). I am skeptical of an overly teleological approach to our study of local self-government in Russia; that notwithstanding, however, one does not need to adhere to this assumption in order to make use of their methodological approach.
government issues have spoken about the zemstvo movement as a unified whole, while 
underestimating the amount of variation from one region to the next. More recently, scholars in 
several countries have begun to re-consider the role of regional particularity in the larger course 
of Russian history. This emphasis has extended to numerous areas of inquiry, as scholars have 
considered the distinctive norms and practices of specific local organizations, institutions, and 
social classes.² Most notably, Catherine Evtuhov has made the case more broadly, using a case 
study of Nizhnyi Novgorod to argue for “an approach and methodology that would permit the 
deconstruction of nineteenth-century Russia into smaller provincial units, and a subsequent 
reconstruction that will provide us with a revised vision of the country as a whole.”³ It is my 
hope that this work will make a contribution to this evolving line of thought. To that end, I have 
designed this as comparative case study of two ostensibly dissimilar provinces: Moscow and 
Penza. A closer examination of these specific areas allows for a more clear elucidation of those 
areas where distinctive local political cultures proved particularly significant.

Next, it will allow us to examine the relationship between these local political cultures 
and the national developments occurring during the same period. Much of the existing 
scholarship on the zemstvos and city dumas has considered them in terms of their eventual 
contribution to politics at a national level—to view the zemstvos and city dumas as crucibles of 
reform, creating the cadres of (largely liberal) figures who would oppose the tsarist regime in 
1905. Historians have assumed that questions of local governance followed the same general 
contours and ideological divisions as did debates over larger political questions in the Russian 
Empire. For instance, writing in the conclusion to The Zemstvo in Russia, Terrence Emmons 
draws on Roberta Manning’s work on the zemstvos’ national political aspirations in order to

² For a more extensive discussion of this literature, see below, p. 12.
³ Catherine Evtuhov, Portrait of a Russian Province: Economy, Society, and Civilization in Nineteenth-Century 
associate the “zemstvo idea” with a “liberal activist minority.” But, as we will see, the “zemstvo idea” was not nearly so narrow, and association with that idea did not imply an endorsement of change at the national level. Likewise, historians have assumed that the increased restrictions on local government organs marked a crackdown on all types of zemstvo and duma activity. In fact, this is not the case; the organs continued to expand their operations at a remarkable rate over nearly the entire period under study.

Lastly, this assessment allows for a comparative consideration of democratic practices, the state of civil society, and the evolution of the state as a provider of social services. This is a particularly salient issue in relation to the zemstvo, because many of the zemstvo delegates made explicit reference to foreign practices in arguing for a particular course of action. Drawing largely on secondary literature, I conclude by relating Russia to its foreign counterparts in Western Europe and elsewhere. Given the region-specific nature of this study, and the breadth of possible comparisons, the conclusions in this regard will necessarily be more tentative than in other areas. Nevertheless, the picture developed here does allow for insightful comparison, and raises key questions for further research.

Based on the assembled evidence, I make several arguments about the political culture of local self-government in this period. In both provinces, we see the development of a particular model of leadership that depended on high levels of deference and trust. Despite the supposed outpouring of public enthusiasm for the zemstvo, candidates for office were sometimes difficult to come by, and even the prestigious posts were not particularly popular for would-be officeholders. As a consequence, dedicated aspirants (of varying social backgrounds) generally

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did not face substantial opposition in pursuing positions in the zemstvo. We also see the
continuation of patterns of relative deference to leaders, such that they did face particularly
stringent scrutiny when campaigning for re-election. A similar dynamic played out within the
zemstvos themselves; ostensibly “self-selecting” individuals could attain leadership posts on the
board or one of the more influential committees.

This model is in and of itself not unusual—it has a number of precedents in pre-Reform
organs—but its effects were significant. A comparison of district zemstvos within particular
provinces reveals remarkable dissimilarity from one to the next. Certainly, the districts were not
monochromatic in their local needs, but the magnitude of the difference makes it likely that the
leadership model outlined above was a significant contributor to this phenomenon. Policies
came about not necessarily because of the aggregate preferences of voters and delegates, but
because of particular interest or initiative on the part of an active minority.

Though we see more consistency from one region to the next in later years, the larger
narrative is still one of remarkable variety from one location to the next. Perhaps more
surprising is the remarkable degree of change that we see within particular institutions.
Although individual district zemstvos showed substantial variation in their taxation and spending
priorities, these patterns did not hold up over the long term. There is minimal correlation
between district zemstvos’ general and program-specific levels of spending in a particular year
and those same levels a short time later. Again, the anomalous leadership model would seem to
be a significant contributor to these outcomes. The rapid level of turnover in the leadership
ranks meant that particular priorities would usually not have long-term champions. In short
order a revamped assembly or board would press for a change of direction in various areas, and
meet little opposition in doing so.
This method of operation did not render the zemstvos dysfunctional (indeed, few can doubt their programmatic achievements), but it did have an impact on the way that they conducted their affairs. Though the delegates and leaders developed a Weberian rationalization of their everyday procedures, their conception of those procedures remained largely idealistic and charismatic. We see little in the way of efforts to develop stable models for future action. This conclusion becomes particularly stark when we consider the evolution of the relationship among the organs of local self-government. Both the duma-zemstvo relationship and the district-province relationship within the zemstvo were marked by suggestions of fraternal collaboration between different bodies, followed by surprising conflict when this ideal could not match the realities of limited resources and regional parochialism. The delegates seemed ill-equipped to conceive of these problems in a constructive way, despite the fact that they were the inevitable consequence of the Russian (or indeed, any) system of local self-government. In sum, zemstvo and duma activists saw the “local task” as both a pragmatic and an ideological mission, and failed to see the inherent conflict between these two ideas.

Ultimately, these conclusions might expand our understanding of certain larger questions in late Imperial history. The first question that this addresses is the debate over the nature of Russia’s civil society in the late Imperial Era. Beginning with Leopold Haimson’s landmark 1964 essay, a number of scholars have attempted to discern whether Russian society in the immediate pre-WWI period was essentially fragmented beyond repair. In contrast to Haimson’s pessimistic interpretation, we see more positive approach from, among others, Joseph Bradley and Wayne Dowler, who emphasize the many positive developments in the last decades of the Romanov dynasty.6 This dissertation provides partial support for both sides in the debate. The

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zemstvos and city dumas were certainly active agents during the Reform Era, and managed to continue their operations on local issues relatively free of interference from the center. On the other hand, this independence from the government did not signify an increasing engagement with “society” as a whole. Despite their continually increasing levels of activity over the course of the half-century of their existence, the zemstvos did not seem to open up to broader participation on the part of their constituents. To the last, they remained an institution comprised primary of self-selected elites. The assumptions regarding political participation and voter engagement remained largely as they had in the first days of zemstvo activity.7

This latter conclusion sheds light on a related topic of note—the eventual failure of the liberal movement in the immediate pre-Revolutionary Era. Though I do not wish to claim perfect equivalence between the practices of local politics and those at the national level, there does seem to be a potential continuity in certain areas. Most significantly, the oligarchic and deferential nature of local leadership might help to explain the mindset of the liberals in their approach to the newly-instituted State Duma after 1905. Many of the Kadet and Octobrist candidates came from a zemstvo background, and as such would likely have absorbed the norms associated with zemstvo political culture. Most tellingly, the local norms mentioned above seemed to minimize oversight and accountability on the part of the leadership. Board members and delegates were insulated from their constituents by a multi-tiered election system, but also

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7 This argument has an interesting relationship to another supposed weakness in Russia’s democratic development—the stunted growth of middle-class professional movements. See Harley Balzer (ed.), Russia’s Missing Middle Class: The Professions in Russian History (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1996). In his introduction, Balzer highlights the particular “messianism” of many of the Russian intelligentsia, but ultimately lays more of the blame for the failure of middle-class development at the feet of the autocracy: “…the failure of democracy in Russia resulted from a complex interaction involving divisions within the nascent middle class and resistance of the Russian government to collective action by its subjects…Russia’s rulers never committed themselves to legal limitations on their power.” (Ibid., 24).
by the patterns of deference that were apparently quite common in local affairs. During their tutelage at the arts of democratic engagement, they apparently did not have to develop the skills to respond to the demands of their constituents. Indeed, the same might be said of those constituents as well. It is telling that the major shifts in the composition of the Duma came about not because of groundswells in voter sentiment, but because of the decisions of political elites. The leftist revolutionary parties chose to boycott the first duma and run in the second, whereas the third and fourth dumas were formed more by the Stolypin “coup” of June 1907 than by the wishes of the Russian citizenry. Given the voters’ prior history with democracy at the local level, such experiences doubtlessly would have felt familiar.

Outline

The dissertation is divided into three parts, conforming to the three major questions of political culture raised above. The first part (Chapters 1, 2, and 3) will examine the political culture related to the leadership positions within the respective organs. Even under identical legal frameworks, an organization in which the political culture is characterized by ideals of leadership continuity, deference to authority, and high levels of executive power will function much differently than one in which rapid turnover, significant oversight, and deconcentration of power are the more accepted norms of operation.

Chapter 1 makes use of election records and assembly rosters to understand the process by which leaders were chosen and retained. It examines in detail the first round of zemstvo elections in Moscow province, and attempts to discern some sense of the preferences of the voting delegates. The electoral data for other regions, offices, and time periods is more sporadic, but it is sufficient to offer some observations about the degree to which the precedent established
in Moscow was duplicated in other times and other provinces. We will also examine the more extensive data available from zemstvo rosters to develop a sense of the patterns of tenure within the zemstvo leadership. These records generally do not indicate how the officials in question came to leave their posts (whether through electoral defeat or simple resignation), but they do allow us to document the overall rate of turnover within the boards and assemblies.

Chapter 2 draws on meeting minutes and memoirs to consider the exercise of leadership within the organs themselves. Nearly every organ of local self-government was based on the same administrative structure—a parliamentary assembly that exercised oversight over an executive board. Most of them, however, also made use of temporary or permanent committees to handle special projects. By examining these bodies in detail, we can discern the basic patterns of decision making within the zemstvo and the city duma, among other bodies. Do we see extensive parliamentary oversight, or did would-be activists have a free hand in crafting policy?

Chapter 3 examines another potential influence on the course of local government activity—the central government in the person of the provincial governors and their supervisory organs. The 1870 city reform established a representative committee in each province with specific responsibilities for city oversight. Although the zemstvo was initially under direct gubernatorial oversight, it too was added to the committee’s portfolio after the revised zemstvo legislation of 1890. Despite the significant authority invested in the office of the governor, one very well might imagine a political culture that emphasized caution and deference to local prerogatives in lieu of a heavy hand in asserting the authority of the central government. The records of these bodies allow us to consider the degree to which the various governors tested the limits of their authority. Did they exert a significant amount of influence over local activities?
To what end? Do we see consistent patterns, whether of respectful independence, fruitful collaboration, or antagonistic meddling?

The second part (Chapters 4 and 5) focuses on the specific financial priorities of the local government organs. Chapter 4 considers taxation and other forms of revenue collection, whereas chapter 5 examines the expenditure side. Here, the treatment is largely statistical, drawn from the wealth of financial reports prepared by the local organizations and the statistical bureaus of the central government. These statistics are perhaps the best way to gain a broad-spectrum understanding of the zemstvo and city duma programs as a whole. This is particularly relevant to the study of political culture in the Russian case, because the authorizing legislation did not provide precise instructions about the total sums or relative distributions of local revenues and expenditures. The political culture of the locality, then, would contribute to the conception of the “proper” amount to be collected and spent in particular areas. These chapters consider the levels of taxation in spending in particular areas, the consistency in these rates between individual areas, and their evolution over time. Concluding, they examine the impact of various demographic and historical factors to determine which have the greatest impact on spending trends.

Part 3 will examine the relationships among the various organs within the local government apparatus. This is an interesting and perhaps understudied question in the realm of political culture—the conceptualization of the size of the polity itself, and the nature of the obligations owed to other members within it. In most instances, a governmental system involves a series of concentric circles, ranging from the strictly local to the territorial and eventually to the national or even international level. Unless the specific rights and obligations vis-à-vis each level are explicitly stated (and in Russia, they certainly were not), it is political culture that will
shape and contest those conceptions in the minds of voters and their representatives. This is particularly relevant in the case of the Russian system of local self-government, in which overlapping jurisdictions and responsibilities led to an explicit discussion of the boundaries of obligation. In so doing, the participants in the discussion were essentially discussing the limits of the political community itself.

Chapter six considers the intellectual and practical links between the zemstvo and the city duma, beginning with the very first meetings after the establishment of the zemstvo assemblies. Over the course of the ensuing decades, various issues arose that called into question the exact nature of the relationship between the duma and the zemstvo (and, by extension, between the city and the countryside), and on each occasion the dispute was resolved without a clarification of the larger issues involved. In Moscow, this problematic arrangement came to a head in the early 1890s, when the provincial zemstvo board proposed the taxation of real estate within the city of Moscow. The ensuing discussion and debate was quite heated, and crystallized the gulf in understanding that separated the representatives of the two bodies.

Chapter seven looks at the relationships between the bodies within the zemstvo itself. Specifically, it focuses on a commission established by the Moscow provincial zemstvo in 1899 to clarify the relationship between the provincial and district zemstvos. It is remarkable that such a commission was raised only after thirty years of collaboration had passed; even more remarkable is the breadth of the reaction to the commission’s report and its conclusions. Review by the district boards and assemblies was followed by a protracted debate in the provincial assembly. Both before and after the final resolution, debate raged in popular periodicals about the significance of this question for the local self-government movement and the successful realization of the “zemstvo task.” As in the debate over city taxation, the evolution of this
question revealed the conceptual gaps that existed among the interested parties, and the difficulty of establishing a sense of a common mission.

By examining these topics in detail in two separate provinces, one may come to an understanding of the mechanisms by which the zemstvos and city dumas contested and implemented their particular objectives. These areas of focus are important precisely because they have not received significant attention in the scholarly literature. We have a number of treatments that examine zemstvo outcomes, both on the local and the national level, but none that explain in depth the processes and assumptions that produced these outcomes. That, I believe, is the major contribution of this dissertation. Through a study of the political culture of individual regions and organizations, it allows for an on-the-ground understanding of the intersection of personality, law, and political culture that produced the diverse outcomes of the local self-government project.

**Methodology and Historiography**

This study incorporates the analytical tools of political culture with the particular history of the zemstvo in Russia; as such, a discussion of the major lines of thought on each topic seems appropriate. Political culture as a mode of analysis has a long history in social sciences, but the term came into wider use in the 1950s and 1960s. As one of its earliest proponents later expressed it, the study of political culture grew out of “the failure of enlightenment and liberal expectations as they related to political development…,” in particular the collapse of democracy in Germany and Italy in the interwar period. Scholars sought to elucidate the factors that

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8 For a discussion of the various trends that gave rise to the popularity of political culture methodology, see Lucian W. Pye, “Political Culture Revisited,” *Political Psychology* vol. 12, no. 3 (Sep., 1991), 487-508.
contributed to deviation from the supposedly normal path of national development. In turning to political culture as a mode of explanation, they sought to combine the institutional focus of political scientists with the insights gleaned from behavioral psychology. Theorists of political culture postulated that such social phenomena as trust, deference, and a sense of the possibility of progress can impact the ways in which populations respond to existing structures, thus altering their future political development.

One of the earliest major works in this field was Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba’s *The Civic Culture*, in which they compared democratic developments in five countries. Ultimately, they argue that the traditional “rationality-activist” model of citizen behavior is only one part of a broader “civic culture” (requiring simultaneous “participant,” “parochial,” and “subject” modes) that a democracy needs to survive and thrive. Their analysis made use of opinion surveys to gauge the levels of these qualities in the countries under study.\(^{10}\) Shortly thereafter, a group of scholars, Verba included, collaborated on *Political Culture and Political Development*, which extended this mode of analysis to a number of different countries. This work was devoted to Almond and followed closely his mode of analysis.\(^{11}\)

Given that the original assumption of this method was teleological in nature, it is hardly surprising that the scholarly works on the subject followed similar normative approaches. Indeed, many of them are explicit on that score, attempting to isolate those variables that would lead to a supposed “positive” outcome for democratic practice. Such an approach may be too reductionist for a study of a political subculture, but nevertheless it seems that one might utilize the principle insights of this scholarly approach without embracing its normative aspects.


\(^{11}\) Pye’s introduction to the volume explicitly praises Almond’s model. See Verba and Pye (eds.), *Political Culture and Political Development*, 7. It is the conclusion to this volume that gives us Verba’s now-near-standard definition of political culture, cited above (see p. 1).
Namely, political outcomes are dependent not only on the formal institutional frameworks, but also on the cultural predispositions of those participating in them.

The use of political culture as a method of analysis fell out of favor for some time, before undergoing a revival in the 1980s. In this latter period, however, the approaches have broadened, incorporating history, sociology, and political science. At the same time, this expansion has rendered the topic both more applicable and less internally coherent. Indeed, a number of review articles on the subject have cautioned against linguistic carelessness in the use of the term. Broadly speaking, these studies have been less explicitly statistical than the survey-driven studies of Almond et. al. In history, this revived interest in political culture has concentrated on public displays and celebrations as expressions of political attitudes. The most pathbreaking studies in this regard considered the particular public culture of the French Revolution, but we have also seen attempts to use similar modes of analysis for the Russian Revolution. Though these works are quite compelling, the source base they require is quite different from that available to study the zemstvo. As such, this methodology is not quite as relevant to the current study as is the older tradition exemplified by Verba, Pye, and Almond.

Though this will be the first work to attempt an explicit study of the political culture of local self-government, the concept is not new to the study of Russian history. A number of historians and other social scientists have used the techniques of political culture and applied them to particular periods in Russia’s past. The dilemmas of analysis of the Soviet Union have proved particularly compelling, as scholars sought to explain Russia’s divergent historical path

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through an examination of a supposedly distinctive political culture. In 1986, for instance, Edward Keenan published an extensive article on the development of a uniquely Russian form of political culture, which he characterized as a combination of the Muscovite cultures of the peasantry, court, and bureaucracy. He suggested that, after a period of some dislocation surrounding the dissolution of the Romanov dynasty and the successive turmoil of revolution, civil war, and Stalinism, the late 1930s saw the development of “a new synthesis—that the new may be seen, in long historical perspective, as the continuation of the old.” In a similar vein, Stephen White contended that Soviet political culture was largely a legacy of the autocracy that preceded it. In particular, the “predominantly centralized, collectivist political culture” became ever more so in the wake of the Bolshevik takeover of 1917. Robert Tucker, in contrast, argued that Soviet political culture was due to the socio-political upheaval of that period, in which the national political culture shifted in a short period of time due to Lenin’s reformist efforts. Focusing more narrowly, Michael S. Fox analyzed the Institute of Red Professors during the 1920s, arguing that this period saw the development of a “political culture centering around conflict, polemic, and purge” at the Institute.

Given the various treatments of the Russian political tradition, it is intriguing that we have not seen attempts to expand this to the immediate pre-Revolutionary period. This was the

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18 Michael S. Fox, “Political Culture, Purges, and Proletarianization at the Institute of Red Professors, 1921-1929,” *Russian Review* vol. 52, no. 1 (Jan., 1993), 36. Fox’s work is an excellent example of the use of political culture analysis to examine a political subculture surrounding a particular institution, a methodology employed by this dissertation.

19 Keenan suggests that the 1890-1930 period represents a discontinuity of sorts in the progression of Russian political culture. Whether or not we accept his periodization, the culture of local self-government in particular and
period in which Russia most closely paralleled the democratizing nations of Europe in its political development, and as such a comparative study seems particularly relevant. It is my hope that the present work will help to fill that gap and explain the ways in which the day-to-day mechanisms of local self-government in Russia compared with those of its contemporaries.

However, such an understanding must also address the conceptions of the zemstvo in current historiography. The earliest histories of the zemstvos and city dumas came from the organs and leaders themselves. Various boards prepared summaries of their activities for presentation to their respective assemblies. These reports served to keep the assemblies up to date, but also served as an opportunity to tout their achievements and lay out a vision of the tasks that lay ahead.\(^{20}\) As the zemstvo activities grew more and more significant, the assemblies began to institute projects to commemorate their anniversaries and laud their contributions to the Russian countryside. Sometimes these works would simply be compendia of legislation or delegate names; in other instances they crafted a simple narrative around the assembled evidence.\(^{21}\) Though these initial efforts were sometimes quite involved, they were more laudatory than scholarly, and by design focused only on their designated areas, giving little sense of the state of local government as a whole.

liberalism in general was sufficiently well-developed that it is possible to analyze it as a sub-genre (or even dissenting culture) from the presumably dominant Russian political culture.

\(^{20}\) The Moscow board, for instance, issued assessments after three, six, and nine years of zemstvo operations. See: Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemskoe Sobranie, *Obzor deistvii Moskovskago zemstva v pervoe trekhletie ego suschestovaniia* (n.p.); Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemskoe Sobranie, *Obzor polozeniia zemskago dela v Moskovskoi gubernii s otkrityia zemskikh uchrezhdenii* (Moscow: Pechatnia S. P. Iakovleva, 1871); and Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemskoe Sobranie, *Obzor polozeniia zemskago dela v Moskovskoi gubernii s otkrityia zemskikh uchrezhdenii po 1874 god* (n.p.).

Alongside these works, we see the publication of numerous memoirs from local figures both notable and obscure. Such prominent activists as Dmitri Shipov, Boris Chicherin, and others devoted substantial portions of their reminiscences to discussions of the particular obstacles they faced in pursuing the “local task.” We also see a collection of memoir literature from other figures, notable for other reasons, who nevertheless devoted some measure of their endeavors to local service. These treatments allow us a glimpse into the lower-level workings of zemstvo and city duma activity. Unsurprisingly, both groups are susceptible to the same biases and predispositions as other works of this type. Local activists, like all memoirists, can be faulty in their recollections and self-serving in their presentations.

Over time, these treatments evolved into more scholarly analyses of the zemstvo program. A major touchstone was the publication of Boris Veselovskii’s four-volume *Istoriiia zemstva za sorok let* in 1909-1911. This mammoth tome focused on almost all aspects of the zemstvo program, devoting sections to their endeavors in health care, education, agronomy, and numerous other areas. Unlike many of his successors, Veselovskii readily recognized the differences among the various districts and provinces that made up the zemstvo apparatus. He devoted an entire volume to short sketches of each provincial zemstvo, with some mention of the subject district organs. However, despite the mammoth effort involved, this broad focus limits his ability to go into substantial depth on any particular area. Moreover, Veselovskii is hampered by his teleological conception of zemstvo affairs. His evaluations of particular organs are tinged with pejorative language, and carry the implicit suggestion that there is a single model of zemstvo development to be followed.

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Other contemporaries offered their own takes, often more particularistic and none as comprehensive in approach. I. P. Belokonskii was particularly active, authoring several works on the zemstvo during the first decades of the twentieth century, concentrating on the development of political liberalism among its members. His *Zemstvo i konstitutsiia* traced the development of zemstvo constitutionalism from the earliest days through the zemstvo activism surrounding the Revolution of 1905.23

Zemstvo studies did not progress much during the early years of the Soviet regime. On the Western side, we see a few scattered analyses from commenters, mostly echoing the concerns of Belokonskii et. al. in characterizing the zemstvo movement as a major contributor to Russian liberalism.24 These studies, however, were rather few and far between, and paid very little attention to the more mundane issues of local governance that made up the bulk of local endeavor.

Early Soviet scholarship was similarly uninterested, as local self-government in the late Imperial era seemed a sideshow to the burgeoning labor movement and its conflicts with tsarist authority. However, the 1960s saw a number of significant developments, with increased attention devoted to the questions raised by the turn toward local self-government on the part of the Russian state. Most of these, however, used the zemstvo and related matters as a model to explicate larger questions of Russian governance and administration under the tsarist regime. In

23 I. P. Belokonskii, *Zemstvo i konstitutsiia* (Moscow: Obrazovanie, 1910). Belokonskii would later add supplemental material to this work and re-issue it with a new title. See Belokonskii, *Zemskoe dvizhenie vtoroe izdanie (ispravlennoe, znachitel'no dopolnennoe, i illuistrirovannoe 260 portretami zemskikh i obschestvennykh deiatelei i gruppami* (Moscow: Zadruga, 1914). Also notable is his *Samoupravlenie i zemstvo*, a shorter treatment of issues related to zemstvo governance that also incorporates a comparison to the systems then in use in Western Europe. This latter work ultimately argues that the lack of peasant enthusiasm for the zemstvo is due to their limited opportunities for political participation. See Belokonskii, *Samoupravlenie i zemstvo* (Rostov: Donسكаа Reч’, 1905).

doing so, they largely followed the framework developed by Lenin in his articles on the local serf-government project. Lenin had characterized the zemstvo reform process as a “step on the path of transformation from the feudal monarchy to the bourgeois monarchy.” Unsurprisingly, subsequent historians echoed these general parameters in their works on the subject. The most significant early work, V. V. Garmiza’s *Podgotovka zemskoi reformy 1864-go goda*, traced the evolution of the reform legislation through the various commissions tasked with fashioning the reform legislation. A few years later, L. G. Zakharova issued *Zemskaiia konttreforma 1890 goda.*, which tracked the development of the second round of zemstvo legislation—the 1890 revision of electoral procedures and lines of authority for zemstvo delegates. Zakharova, like Garmiza, situates her study within Lenin’s larger framework, and quotes liberally from his treatments of the zemstvos in their respective introductions.

N. M. Pirumova’s *Zemskoe liberal’noe dvizhenie*, published a few years later, marks something of a departure from this tradition. Rather than concentrate on the zemstvo as a function of larger state politics, she attempts to unravel the origins and development of the fusion between zemstvo and liberal elements. This treatment was one of the first to draw extensively from the *zemtsy* themselves. Though focused on national politics, Pirumova’s conclusions are significant in that she presents a rather complex and variegated network of factors driving the zemstvos and the liberal movement. Moreover, though the two movements were clearly related, she emphasizes that the links were not absolute; though a substantial number of zemstvo activists (she estimates one-fourth of her sample size) were active in liberal circles, still more were not. In other words, the majority of zemtsy focused on the most immediate demands of zemstvo

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activity and did not actively participate in national political discussion. However, Pirumova’s discussion also reinforces some of the prior historiographical trends as well. Her consideration of the socioeconomic background of the *zemtsy* reinforces the class-focused analysis of the zemstvo movement, and of course her focus on zemstvo liberalism inevitably turns our attention to questions of national political development.

Interestingly, despite these larger conclusions that preoccupied many Soviet scholars, we also see a strain in the Soviet historiography that allows for the diversity and uniqueness of particular zemstvo experiences. The early years of Soviet scholarship also some developments with regard to the study of particular provincial zemstvos. A number of historians tackled particular provinces and particular zemstva, hoping to situate their particular organs within the larger Marxist narrative. However, these studies did not attract the same level of attention as their national counterparts. In part, one might blame the overly-centralized focus of much study of Russian history of the years. One might also note that some of these studies revealed conclusions that were rather opposed to their authors’ original intentions. Ultimately, local studies proved to complicate the Marxist narrative to a degree that was perhaps less than comfortable, and the local dimension was abandoned for the time being.

The increase in attention on the Soviet side was matched by western scholars, and during the same period we also see a substantial increase in the production of works dealing with local self-government. The western scholars (perhaps in part dictated by issues of archival access in the Soviet Union) generally focused on local issues in the context of larger political questions surrounding the evolution of tsarism and the direction of the Russian state. Frederick Starr in

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27 For a summary of these works, see E. G. Kornilov, “Problemy istorii zemstvo v sovetskoii istoricheskoii literature,” *Istoriograficheskiy sbornik*, vyp. 4./7, 1978, 56-57.
his *Decentralization and Self-Government in Russia*, traces the internal policy debates that led to the formation of the 1864 reform legislation. Like Garmiza and others, he drew on ministerial records in order to articulate the major points of contention in the debate over the zemstvo reform. Tellingly, Starr’s narrative ends after the first few years of the zemstvo reform, and does not make substantial use of documents from the zemstvos themselves. In so doing, he is effectively suggesting that the legislation, rather than its interpretation and implementation, is the heart of the narrative.28

Others used the zemstvos and city dumas as a means of examining a larger narrative of government activism in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Bruce Lincoln considers the municipal reforms in the larger context of the Alexandrine Great Reforms. His, too, is a bureaucratic history, tracing the evolution of the reform proposals through their various iterations in ministerial proposals and commissions.29

Somewhat surprisingly, questions of local self-government did not produce the same level of ideological conflict as did other topics in the study of tsarist Russia. One might point out that Starr, Emmons and other western scholars of Russian bureaucracy spent time studying under P. A. Zaionchkovskii, the most prominent of Soviet scholars on this particular topic. Moreover, though the Soviet scholars were under some ideological constraints, a decision to focus on local self-government or the liberal movement was a sign of relative liberal sympathies within the spectrum of Soviet historiography. For these and perhaps other reasons, the scholarly discussion is generally free of animus.

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The issues that did emerge were generally related to those larger concerns of the direction of the Russian state and its evolution in the waning years of the Empire. Marxist and Marxist-leaning historians, of course, sought to depict local self-government as a response by the central government to the difficulties posed by a rising bourgeois capitalist economic system. Thus, we see Garmiza’s argument that the 1864 reform represented a compromise with the emerging bourgeois element, while Zakharova characterizes the counter-reform as a return to a more feudal mode of operation.\footnote{Garmiza, \textit{Podgotovka}, 248-49. Zakharova, \textit{Zem skaia kontreforma 1890 goda}.}

In contrast, some western scholars, echoing the work done by Theda Skocpol, treated the tsarist state as an entity in its own right, rather than the product of socioeconomic classes. Thus, for instance, we see the work of Thomas Pearson, who depicts the “counter-reforms” of the late 1880s and early 1890s not as an attempt to re-assert seigniorial privilege, but as a rational state response to problems of tax collection and internal administration.\footnote{Thomas Pearson, \textit{Russian Officialdom in Crisis: Autocracy and Local Self-Government, 1861-1900} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). See also Theda Skocpol, \textit{States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).} George Yaney situates them within a large “Urge to Mobilize” that stretched even into the Soviet era.\footnote{George Yaney, \textit{The Urge to Mobilize: Agrarian Reform in Russia, 1861-1930} (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982).}

For the most part, however, study of local self-government does not demonstrate a clear ideological divide between east and west. So, we see Roberta Manning’s treatment of the gentry in the post-1905 period, which uses something of a class-based analysis and situates the zemstvo as a prime site of noble reaction in the aftermath of the first Revolution. Francis Wcislo, writing during the same period, looks to transcend the prior debates on the tsarist bureaucracy. He uses the reform of local self-government in the early twentieth century as a “case study” in the ability
of the tsarist administration to respond to the rapid social and economic changes taking place during this period. 33

The broadening of historical inquiry led to the incorporation of zemstvo and duma endeavors into larger narratives grouped around particular social concerns. Here, too, the question of conflict between various actors in the administrative apparatus is a frequent topic of discussion. In *Russian Peasant Schools*, Ben Eklof affords the zemstvos a rather prominent place in his treatment of education at the turn of the twentieth century. He concludes that the suggestion of conflict between the zemstvo and the officials from the Ministry of Education has been overstated. 34 Nancy Frieden has a similarly mixed take in her studies of doctors during the same general period. In her view, the third element professionals had a rather problematic relationship with the zemstvo delegates who oversaw their operations; they resented what they saw as meddling interference from overzealous politicians.35

Many of the above-mentioned historians contributed to the edited volume *The Zemstvo in Russia: An Experiment in Local Self-Government*, a collection of articles on the zemstvo’s impact and significance in a number of different areas. One cannot help but notice the central role given to the tsarist government and national politics in the volume. Kermit McKenzie discusses the zemstvo legislation as a means to examine the zemstvo role in the administrative structure, Roberta Manning tackles the question of the zemstvo and politics, Thomas Fallows examines the relationship to the national bureaucracy, and William Gleason looks at the All-

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33 Francis William Weislo, *Reforming Rural Russia: State, Local Society, and National Politics, 1855-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 3. Weislo attempts to find a middle ground between the Marxist depictions of the tsarist bureaucracy as a servant of class interests and the Western scholars (exemplified by Theda Skocpol) who depict the state as an actor in its own right. Ibid, 5.


Russian Union of Zemstvos in World War I. Jeffrey Brooks, Frieden, and Robert Johnson consider particular aspects of the zemstvo program (education, health care, and statistics), but draw largely on statistical materials to draw generalized conclusions about the entire of the Russian zemstvo system.36

This outpouring of scholarly endeavor flourished during the 1970s and early 80s, but then went through a period of relative dormancy. Recent years, however, have seen a revival of interest in local issues in general and the zemstvo in particular. On the Russian side, the stimulus was undoubtedly the decline of Communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, which led to a revision of prior historical scholarship in numerous areas. However, local studies were particularly affected, as the potential for the development of a more decentralized system of government in the new Russian Federation contributed to a revitalization of interest in Russia’s traditions of local self-government. Although the anticipated decentralization did not materialize to the degree expected in the post-Soviet era, the historical enthusiasm has continued. We have seen the production of numerous monographs and scholarly works by both former Soviet historians and a new generation of scholars. We also see attention paid to zemstvo actions during key points of national crisis; N. G. Koroleva echoes Manning in examining the zemstvo changes after 1905, and G. A. Gerasimenko considers the zemstvos’ actions between February 1917 and the fall of the Provisional Government eight months later.37 As in on the American side a few decades previously, this resurgence culminated in an edited volume bringing together top scholars in the field on a cluster of related articles.38

36 Terrence Emmons and Wayne Vucinich, eds., The Zemstvo in Russia: An Experiment in Local Self-Government (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).
Most notable, however, is the renewed attention to regional particularity in Russian scholarship. In recent years, we have seen the publication of several monographs and dissertations on duma and zemstvo operations in specific cities and provinces.\textsuperscript{39} Given the sheer number of works, it must be acknowledged that some are not particularly sophisticated in their treatment of the available source materials. However, the more sophisticated exemplars are quite scholarly in their treatment of these issues, with detailed analyses of the personages and priorities in their respective areas.

These local histories, while bringing an impressive attention to detail, have generally not moved beyond the bounds of their specific geographic regions of study. As such, comparative examination is ostensibly nonexistent. This is a major reason for my contention that a comparative local case study is a necessary means to continue our investigation of provincial norms and political culture. Such a treatment, of course, will of course not be exhaustive. For any number of reasons, Moscow and Penza cannot be considered entirely representative of the Russian Empire, or even of the zemstvo provinces of European Russia. Nevertheless, the comparison and contrast between the two will prove instructive, as it will highlight those areas where local government showed the greatest levels of convergence and divergence. In so doing, this contrast will serve to illuminate the most fruitful areas for potential further study.

Western scholarship has not been quite as productive over this period, but recent years have seen the rise of a new generation of scholars that are once again turning attention to the questions raised by the evolution of local self-government in late Imperial Russia. On the

administrative side, Natasha Assa has examined the fate of zemstvo petitions to the Ruling Senate.40 David Darrow has examined the Moscow zemstvo and land taxation policy in the context of the larger statistical debate of the 1870’s and 1880’s.41 Steven Nafziger has also examined statistics, but from a dramatically different perspective. His econometric analyses of zemstvo expenditures attempt to isolate the variables that could drive zemstvo spending.42 Though more data-focused than the present study (with a consequent lack of diversity in source material), Nafziger’s work marks an interesting new approach for zemstvo scholarship. He provides a level of mathematical precision and sophistication that has been missing from many other studies, and suggests an important route forward for researchers on issues of local self-government.

Moscow and Penza

Before commencing on my analysis, it seems appropriate to give some brief discussion on the two provinces that will stand as case studies. This project grew out of my participation in a World Bank study on possible interventions in local government in contemporary Russia. The study was conducted in the provinces of Perm and Penza and the Caucasian Republic of Adygeia. In the summer of 2004, another historian and I conducted archival research on the historical conditions related to local self-government in these areas. The bulk of our endeavors

were focused on the materials from the provincial and district zemstvos, including both their financial accounts and their statistical treatments of the countryside.43

This project, coupled with my work in a research seminar that same year, made clear the substantial openings for further work in zemstvo scholarship. In conceiving this project, I determined that a comparative case study was necessary; however, it remained to select particular provinces for deeper examination. Based on my World Bank experience, I knew that the records of the Penza zemstvo were reasonably complete and comprehensive. For my other province, I decided to focus on an area that could boast similarly ample records (even greater, as it turned out), and also offer a number of sharp contrasts to Penza in several different areas.

Moscow, for any number of reasons, proved an ideal choice. Moscow was an urban center, whereas Penza was overwhelmingly rural. Moscow’s economy was relatively diversified, while Penza remained concentrated in agriculture. These contrasts, it seems, applied to their local government organs as well. The Moscow zemstvo and city duma were quite active throughout the post-reform period, funding and promoting a wide variety of initiatives in the city and the countryside. On the other hand, the Penza zemstvo proved (in the perhaps-unfair words of Veselovskii) to be “lifeless and inert,” and in the early years of its operation “it seemed that the reform of 1864 had in essence changed nothing.”44

This contrast, I reasoned, would allow us to isolate those particular topics where we are most likely to see consistency or contrast in zemstvo operations, and ultimately lay groundwork for subsequent research. In other words, if we see commonalities between two areas as diverse as these, we might begin to speak more broadly of a common “zemstvo political culture” in certain areas, and examine other provinces to consider whether they, too, fit that pattern.

44 Veselovskii, vol. 4, 364-5.
Conversely, if these organizations and their members show demonstrate significance divergence in practice and mindset, we may work toward isolating the particular variables (whether economic, social, or more particularistic consideration) that contribute to the formation of a province’s unique political culture. Not surprisingly, we will see examples of both outcomes over the course of this study.

Lastly, it remains to say a few words about these particular localities, and the state of their population and economy as Russia entered the post-Reform era. The once and future capital needs no introduction; it has been characterized and chronicled for centuries. Although the official capital had long since moved to St. Petersburg, it retained its status as the ancient home of the dynasty and the nation. Administratively, Moscow province was divided into thirteen districts from 1802 onwards. The Moscow district stood at the center, surrounded by Zvenigorod, Klin, Dmitrov, Bogorodsk, Bronnitsy, and Podol’sk. Further to the south lay Serpukhov and Kolomna; a jut to the east held Vereia, Ruza, Volokolamsk, and Mozhaisk.

An 1859 survey put the total population of the province at just over 1.5 million residents; of these, slightly more than 450,000 were residents of incorporated towns. Residents of Moscow proper made up the overwhelming majority of this, with a population of 393,000. Of the other towns, only Kolomna and Serpukhov could claim more than 10,000 residents; they were also the only other districts with an urban presence of greater than ten percent. Moscow was by far the most populous district, with close to 500,000 residents. The other twelve ranged in population from Vereia’s 51,400 to Bogorod’s 135,300.45

Our next intensive survey of the population comes from the 1897 census, and reveals the effects of four decades of population movement. The city of Moscow had just exceeded a

45 Spiski naselennykh mest Rossiiskoi imperii, sostavlennye i izdavayemye Tsentral’nym statisticheskim komitetom Minsterstva vnutrennykh del, vol. xiv (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Karla Vul’fa, 1861-1885), xxiv-xxv.
million residents, and with the addition of the surrounding areas the district could boast a population of 1.2 million in total. A number of cities had grown in size, with Kolomna and Serpukhov still leading the pack, but the overall trend of urbanization was rather mixed. In fact, five districts had a lower proportion of urban residents in 1897 than they had had in 1859, and only Moscow and Kolomna could boast an urban population greater than seven percent of the total.

Penza, in contrast, is one of the less well-known areas of European Russia. Located on the banks of the Sura River (a tributary of the Volga), it lies approximately 400 miles to the southeast of Moscow. It was previously a dependant territory of the Kazan khanate, and came under suzerainty of the tsar with the conquest of the khanate in 1552. The various settlements that would eventually become towns originated as military outposts against the raiding Tatars. Mokshan, the first settlement, was established in 1535, but the majority of the towns were not founded until the middle decades following century. Penza itself was founded at the very end of this series, dating its founding to 1665. The province as a whole was ruled by a series of governor-generals until the end of 1780, at which point (along with Vladimir and Tambov), Penza was incorporated into a vice-regency under the direction of a namestnik.46

It would be quite a while, however, before those areas were brought into a consistent administrative order. Over the course of the various re-drawings of provincial borders during the 18th century, the surrounding towns were passed back and forth from one province to another. Only in 1801 did the province acquire the territorial holdings that it would keep for the rest of the pre-Revolutionary era.47 Within these borders, the district of Penza was in the southern central

46 Spravochnaia kniga Penzenskoi gubernii na 1901 god, tom 2 Penza: Tipografiia Gubernskago Pravleniia, 1901), 74.
47 After 1917, however, Penza was set to be changed yet again, and the province in its current state is substantially smaller than in its previous iteration.
area of the province. To the east lay Gorodishche. Mokshan was due north, with Insar and Saransk beyond it. The western region of the province ran from Chembar in the south, through Kerensk and Nizhnyi Lomov, then Narovchat, and culminated in Krasnoslobodsk, a sort of “peninsula” sticking into Tambov and Nizhnyi Novgorod provinces.

Penza’s population was heavily rural. As of 1864, the largest city was the capital, with a population of only 28,496. Kerensk and Sarank could count just over 10,000 inhabitants, but all other towns were 6,000 or less. The entire urban population of the province was 90,000, or about one-quarter of Moscow alone during the same period. The total population of the province was just over 1 million, with district totals ranging from Mokshan’s 76,000 to 141,000 in Insar.48

By 1897, certain areas had changed significantly. The population of the city of Kerensk dropped from 10,162 to 4,004, while Krasnoslobodsk, Mokshan, Nizhnyi Lomov, Penza, and Insar all more than doubled in size. If we take the province as a whole, the overall trend is one of steady growth and a slight increase in urbanization. The total population rose from 1.06 million to 1.47 million, spread over more than 1,800 settlements. This figure put it well behind its counterpart; the total provincial population was only slightly larger than Moscow district by itself. Nevertheless, we do see an increase in urbanization in the latter period of our study. By the time of the 1897 census, the proportion of residents living in urban areas increased from 8.4 to 9.5 percent. Penza was still by far the largest city; with a population of almost 60,000, it exceeded all others in the province by nearly four times.49

As these statistics would indicate, Penza was still largely agrarian at the turn of the century. Nevertheless, we do see some evidence that industrial development was expanding. A

1901 guidebook for the province informs its reader that the province now has some 37,616 non-residential buildings (i.e. stores and shops), and a total of 2,718 factories and plants. Education, too, was spreading, with 930 education institutions scattered across the province.\(^5\)

Though I do not wish to argue for an “ideal type” of rural or urban population, it does seem reasonable to argue that Moscow and Penza serve as relatively disparate examples on the spectrums that are of particular import in this study; overall population, population density and distribution, diversity of economy, and other factors. If two relatively contrasting examples demonstrate the same tendencies in local political culture, one may more plausibly extrapolate those tendencies to the broader zemstvo movement or to local self-government as a whole.

\(^5\) Spravochnaia kniga Penzenskoi gubernii na 1901 god, tom 2 Penza: Tipografiia Gubernskago Pravleniia, 1901), 54.
Part I: Leadership and its Limits

This part of the dissertation examines the political culture surrounding the exercise of leadership in the local self-government organs of Moscow and Penza, with a particular focus on the zemstvo. The structures created by the 1864 legislation established three formal relationships that could impact the preferences of would-be local leaders. First, we have the process of elections for zemstvo delegates and board members, in which voters could of course refuse re-election to the incumbent candidates. Second, one may consider the course of day-to-day business in the zemstvos, wherein the assemblies could choose to initiate or overrule board actions. Third, the central government still retained some measure of control through the provincial governors. By various mechanisms and rationales, the governors had the legal authority to halt particular zemstvo initiatives.

Thus, in each of these relationships, particular actors had the formal authority to direct, constrain or otherwise influence local leaders. However, this does not tell us whether and under what circumstances they chose to exercise that authority. For this, we must turn to political culture. We will focus particular attention on those aspects of political culture—deference and trust in particular—that would influence when those actors chose to exercise the influence granted to them by law. The three chapters in this section examine the political culture of each of these relationships in turn.

Chapter 1 examines the procedures and unspoken assumptions governing the selection of zemstvo leadership at multiple levels. Through an examination of electoral records, minutes, and rosters, I consider the factors that led to delegates’ election and re-election. The chapter considers voter preferences for the assembly delegates, and considers the development of
partisan political strategy on the part of the voting delegates. The second section considers
tenure in office, and posits a general model for the course of zemstvo leadership.

Chapter 2 considers the operational relationship between assembly delegates and the
various executive organs. Zemstvo assemblies could theoretically work directly on a particular
problem or give explicit direction to the zemstvo board, but they could also choose to exercise a
very loose and deferential manner of oversight. Through an analysis of meeting minutes,
attendance records, and memoir literature, I attempt to characterize the general tenor of
assembly-board relations in Moscow and Penza. For the most part, we see a hands-off approach
on the part of the assembly. Delegates were happy to defer authority to the board and to various
commissions and committees. The most active role in zemstvo decision-making, then, was left
to those individuals who were willing to take on the additional responsibilities.

Chapter 3 addresses the relationship between the provincial governors and the local self-
government organs through a study of the provincial committees established to rule on the
legality of local decrees. These committee included representatives from local government
organs and the tsarist bureaucracy, and had a wide mandate to act in cases of perceived
impropriety. The governors of course wanted to assert their authority, but they did not want to
render the zemstvos and city dumas inert through their interference. The discussions in these
committees suggest that all parties involved had a vested interest in preserving a harmonious
relationship, and as such the committees exercised a lighter hand than might have been expected.

In sum, though these actors had numerous formal opportunities to act as a restraining
force, they did so relatively rarely. With some exceptions, voters, governors, and assembly
delegates allowed the leadership to exercise a relatively free hand in operations. Certainly,
structural factors played a role in this evolution of this tendency, as the multi-tiered election
system, uncompensated service, and time-limited assembly meetings undoubtedly impacted the way in which local leaders approached their service. Nevertheless, the political culture that developed in conjunction with these structural factors was one in which individuals could rise to positions of significant responsibility based more on their own initiative than on their relationship with those who elected them.

This has significant implications for our understanding of political culture in Russia during this time period. Many of the local leaders came to join the emerging liberal movement in Russia, and drew on their experiences in these “democratic” organs to make the case for more representation at the national level. However, their democratic experience was a rather unusual one, in which they faced limited oversight from voters or from other elected and appointed officials. They did not form coherent parties or factions, and did not present particular policy platforms to their constituents. Thus, their re-election, when and if it occurred, was more a product of inertia than of a decided preference on the part of the voting public. These factors, most particularly their limited ability to engage with their own constituents, go a long way to understanding the travails of liberalism in the Duma era and after the February Revolution. Without the mechanisms in place to change course in response to demands from the public, the policies of the liberals remained at a distant remove from those they claimed to represent.
Chapter 1: The Right Men for the Job? Zemstvo Elections and Leadership Tenure

Introduction

The 1864 zemstvo legislation introduced rather tight guidelines for the election of the zemstvo representatives and officers. The law prescribed the number of delegates from each curia, the term length, the number of board members at the district and provincial level, and the manner in which they would be elected. Moreover, it established the parameters for interaction between the assemblies and their governing boards, and among the provincial and district zemstvos in a single guberniia.

These prescriptions, however, make up only one part of the process of establishing local self-government in the Russian countryside. They did not and could not manage the most important aspects of local self-government: the priorities of the localities themselves. Thus, in order to understand the political intentions of the voting public and the delegates they selected, we must take a closer look at the zemstvo election process. What sort of priorities can we discern from the choices that were made? Were voters looking for candidates with impressive biographies or charismatic leadership? Detailed policy prescriptions or extensive government experience? The following chapter will attempt to answer these questions with an in-depth look at patterns of elections and leadership in both Penza and Moscow province.

In the first section of this chapter, I examine the first set of elections after the passage of the 1864 zemstvo law. Do we see evidence of strong civic engagement, with active electorates, contested elections, and specific platforms for action? A decisive answer to this question could give some indication of the durability of local self-government traditions carried from the pre-zemstvo era. I will also consider the characteristics of the elected representatives. What sorts of qualities were voters looking for in selecting their leaders? Were candidates with extensive
experience in local affairs more likely to win election? Did *soslovie* or service have an impact on one’s prospects? I pay particular attention to the men selected to leadership posts—primarily the chairmen and members of the uezd and guberniia governing boards, but also those elected to positions on permanent zemstvo committees and commissions.

The second section uses similar data to examine the evolution of these trends over time. As with the other organs of local self-government, the process of re-election would require Russians to re-engage with their civic organs, and determine if their leaders had met their standards. Do we see any change in the level of participation in elections? As in the first section, I pay particular attention to the question of leadership over the course of this period. Do we see stability at the top, or is there rapid turnover and change? Ultimately, we hope to develop an understanding of the relationship between voters and their zemstvo delegates, and between the zemstvo delegates and their leadership.

Lastly, I consider the ways in which these tendencies varied from province to province. Moscow and Penza were chosen for this assessment in large part because of their dissimilarities. By tracing the contours of similarity and dissimilarity between the two, we can speculate about fruitful areas for further comparative research.

**Early elections**

Before elections could proceed, a number of steps needed to occur. The zemstvo law brought some measure of order to the process. In a detailed appendix, it listed the district-by-district landholding requirements for eligibility to vote in the first curia. The appendix also
enumerated the distribution of delegates among the three curia and for the provincial zemstvo. For our two case study provinces, the distribution was as follows.¹

### Penza

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<td>Nizhnyi Lomov</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chembar</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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</table>

### Moscow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>District delegates</th>
<th>Provincial delegates</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Landowners</td>
<td>Townsmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Moscow</td>
<td>--</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>--</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bogorod</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bronnitsk</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verei</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volokolamsk</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dmitrovsk</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zvenigorod</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Klin</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that Moscow was one of only three cities in the Empire (St. Petersburg and Odessa were the other two) to separate the provincial capital from its surrounding uezd. Most significantly for our purposes, the dumas from these cities were allotted their own quantity of delegates to the provincial zemstvo assembly, whereas all other cities were contiguous with their surrounding uezdy. In accordance with this altered regulation, a number of specific privileges were stipulated. Moreover, the dumas from these three cities were explicitly authorized the same privileges and responsibilities as were afforded the uezd zemstvos. The uezd zemstvos surrounding the capitals, then, would only have authority over the specifically rural areas.

Further measures to prepare for the elections were instituted in later legislation, and implemented at the local level. Before the elections could be held, it was necessary to gather the requisite information for an equitable distribution of votes. In Penza, provincial governor V. P. Aleksandrovskii called a special committee meeting for June of 1864; the committee was comprised of members of the Land Duties Board, the provincial procurator, select members of the Provincial Authority for Peasant Affairs, and “a few local nobles.” This committee met concurrently with local commissions established in the districts, which carried out most of the day-to-day work of preparing for the upcoming elections. It was their task to comb through the information available and compile lists of eligible voting delegates for each of the three curiae.

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2 Ibid., sec. 52.
3 Ibid., sec. 15. These three cities and their respective uezdy were also given the explicit right to hold joint sessions (with the permission of the governor or governor-general). See ibid., sec. 45.
Although the short timeframe for preparation made a thorough review next to impossible, the local committees did their task sufficiently well to win approval of their balloting lists from the provincial committee in October of that year, and from the Ministry of Internal Affairs in November.  

Unfortunately, we have few records from the original round of voting, so we have little sense of the level of interest or activity on the part of the local bodies. Thus, our first substantive glimpse of the elections themselves comes at the level of the uezd assemblies, which in both provinces met in early 1865. The early meetings of the district assemblies consisted of a number of preliminary tasks: verifying the eligibility of the delegates, establishing rules of protocol for future meetings, and determining compensation levels for the provincial board. These tasks complete, however, they moved to the most important business at hand: the election of officers for the first term of zemstvo activity. Three separate elections were necessary: first, the chairman of the district board; second, the election for the other members of the board (generally there were two other members, although some elected three or more); third, the districts representatives to the provincial zemstvo assembly. Some uezdy also held elections for lesser offices, such as a zemstvo delegate to the district school board.

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4 Evgrafov, N. (ed.). *Dvadtsatipiatiletniaia deiatel’nost’ Penzenskago zemstva 1865-1889 g.* (Penza: Tipolitografiia V. N. Umnova, 1894), 10-12.

5 *Zhurnaly uezdnykh zemskikh sobranii Moskovskoi gubernii* (Moscow: Universitetskaia Tipografiia (Katkov i Ko.), 1866), 1-174. We should also be aware of the possibility that the assembly secretaries had different styles of record-keeping. Unfortunately, the various assembly secretaries had different standards for recording electoral data. Thus, some uezdy only recorded the winners of the various elections, with no discussions of losing candidates or margins of victory. Likewise, some provinces mention the names of candidates who refused nomination, whereas others are silent on this score. Even basic information, such as the full name and service rank or social class of the candidate, is included in some records but omitted in others. In Penza, the dearth of information is even greater. Our only minutes from the earliest round of meetings come from the Penza uezd assembly. As the home of the capital city of the province, it is doubtful that trends in election results from Penza district could be extrapolated for the province as a whole. Thus, the bulk of our assessment of the Penza zemstvo will come from *pamiatnye knizhki* and from the work of N. P. Evgrafov, the compiler of the first history of the Penza zemstvo. Evgrafov himself complained about the dearth of available records for writing a history of the Penza zemstvo. See Evgrafov, *Dvadtsatipiatiletniaia,* 3.
Although the zemstvo legislation did not specify the format of the elections, the procedures were the same in both provinces under study. As with elections to other organs of local self-government, elections were based on a multi-vote system. In a secret ballot, electors voted ‘yee’ or ‘nay’ on each candidate, with no limit to the number of up or down votes that they could cast. In elections where multiple offices of one type were available, a single balloting was held, with all candidates on the docket at once.

Based on the information available, we can draw a number of conclusions about the level of interest on the part of candidates and voters. At the very least, the records show a solid level of interest in the uezd zemstvo meetings. The sessions were well-attended, with quorum never in doubt. The zemstvo law required that one-third of all uezd delegates be present in order to establish quorum. None of the thirteen districts of Moscow presence had an attendance rate below eighty percent, and most of them were well over ninety. Just as important, there was sufficient interest on the part of candidates that all offices were able to be filled. No district was forced to leave a position vacant.

However, these positions were often filled with little room to spare. Six of the thirteen uezdy had exactly as many candidates for provincial delegate as they had seats available. In most of the others, there was only a slight excess—five candidates battled for four spots in Zvenigorod, seven for five spots in Moscow, and nine candidates for seven positions in Bronnitsk and Bogorod. The voters at these assemblies would not have had a wide range of candidates from which to choose.

There are only a few locales which demonstrated overwhelming interest from candidates seeking office. Not surprisingly, the city of Moscow was one of them. Although the convention

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6 Zhurnaly uezdnykh zemskikh sobranii, 1-174.
7 TsIAM, f. 184, op. 2, d. 210, l. 16, 18, 25, 29.
itself only counted 81 voting members, a full 96 candidates stood for election. The voters of Dmitrov uezd, one of the largest districts in the province nominated seventeen candidates for seven posts.\(^8\)

On the whole, the elections for the board members generated a greater amount of interest and contestation than the elections for the provincial delegates. More candidates were nominated for the uprava relative to seats available, and the assembled delegates were more likely to cast ‘no’ votes on given candidates. For example, in Klin district, there were seven candidates for three board positions, and the winning candidates were elected by margins of 24-7, 22-9, and 17-14. The elections to the provincial assembly saw eight candidates nominated for five posts, with the winners garnering, respectively, 28, 26, 26, 24, and 21 affirmative votes.\(^9\)

One may postulate a number of reasons for the greater interest in the district board than in the provincial assembly. For one, we might look at the offices as sinecures for their holders. Positions on the uprava were reasonably well compensated—in Penza, the salaries for uezd uprava members ranged from 150 to 1500 rubles per year, while in Moscow they could go as high as 2400.\(^{10}\) Conversely, members of the assemblies (district or provincial) were not compensated for their service.\(^{11}\)

In addition to the more mercenary considerations, there are two other factors that should be considered. Employment at the uezd level would presumably take the place of one’s prior post, whereas membership in the assembly would be in addition to other duties. And, while

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8 Ibid., l. 6-10, 20.
9 Ibid., l. 13.
10 Evgrafov, *Dvadtsatipatiletniaia*, 16. For the Moscow figures, see *Zhurnaly uezdnykh zemskikh sobranii*, 1-174. The 150 rubles/year figure (from Mokshan uezd) should be treated as an outlier. All other districts in Penza provided their board members with a salary of at least 900 rubles per year.
11 One might contend that election to the provincial assembly offered the potential for even greater compensation through election to the provincial board. This is true, but for most office-seekers the additional rewards would not have justified the additional risk. The original salaries for provincial board members were set at a flat 1000 rubles per annum—greater than that for some district board members, but less than others.
service in the zemstvo assembly does not appear to have been particularly onerous, it did require a certain investment of time.

Lastly, one must consider the appeal to public service that the district board offered. A prospective zemstvo member, committed to improving the lives of those around him, would have seen many benefits to choosing to focus solely on his district. Service on the uezd uprava provided an opportunity for daily action to improve life in the countryside, rather than the more limited commitment offered by a seat in the assembly.

Those candidates who did seek election, however, saw a considerable amount of support from their fellow electors. The early elections to the zemstvos demonstrate a high degree of approval for the nominated candidates. Candidates often lost despite receiving ‘yea’ votes from over 80 percent of the voting delegates. In districts with the same number of candidates as seats, this stands to reason. The zemstvo delegates of Volokolamsk, for example, only managed to nominate five candidates for the five provincial zemstvo positions available. One is not surprised, then, to see that these candidates were approved by margins of 26-0, 26-0, 26-0, 25-1, and 24-2.12

But, these levels of support even extended to districts in which there were substantially more candidates than seats. Bogorod district provides an extreme example of this phenomenon. In the election for delegates to the provincial assembly, seven seats were available, and nine candidates were nominated for the posts. The seven winning candidates were all elected unanimously, whereas the two other candidates came up short with totals of “only” 35-1 and 34-2.13

12 TsIAM, f. 184, op. 2, d. 210, l. 14.
13 Ibid., l. 16. This conclusion is somewhat circumstantial, because in most instances the minute-takers in the Moscow uezdy did not mention the losing candidates, and it is only by cross-referencing with balloting lists that we
The format of the election provides partial explanation for this phenomenon. Under these circumstances, a candidate would be well-advised to pursue a cautious electoral strategy. Election depended not on motivating a strong core of supporters, but rather on minimizing ardent opposition. This would be particularly true in multiple-office, multiple-candidate elections. Even if one commanded the ardent support of a near-majority of electors, one would also have to ensure that those supporters voted ‘nay’ on all other candidates. While this strategy may have worked in a select number of cases, it seems that in the majority of situations it would have backfired, producing a backlash effect and denying office to the more contentious candidates.\footnote{These tactical considerations, of course, would not directly apply in a two-candidate, one-office election (which did occur regularly). There, the vote would ultimately be decided based on which candidate was more preferred by a majority of electors. Even in these situations, however, we can imagine that tactical considerations would have dictated a less confrontational approach, for fear of poisoning the well in future elections. And, indeed, this often appears to be the case.}

The distribution of the votes is particularly enlightening, given the format of the election. Scholars of the connection between election laws and political outcomes theorize that a multi-candidate, multi-vote election format will ultimately lead to a magnifying effect for any factions that may exist.\footnote{See, for example, Andrew Reeve and Alan Ware, \textit{Electoral Systems: A Comparative and Theoretical Introduction} (London: Routledge, 1992), 146-48.} These scholars, of course, are assuming the existence of various blocs or political parties, each of which is capable of fielding one candidate for each available seat. Political parties, of course, were illegal in Russia, and the low number of candidates in most districts means that we certainly don’t have multiple factions offering slates of candidates. But, the model can be applied to analysis of voting blocs in general, whether classified by region, estate, or political inclination. These voting blocs might not have been robust enough to offer competing slates of candidates, but their effects could be seen in the election results. One might postulate, for instance, the existence of a bloc of voters from the gentry estate who sought to can discern the full picture. Unfortunately, the balloting lists are generally only available for the elections to the provincial assembly.
elect nobles to office and keep other estates out. Under such a scenario, we would see sharp differences in voting totals among the various candidates, as the members of this bloc shifted their ‘yea’ and ‘nay’ votes en masse.

The actual vote totals, however, strongly argue against the presence of factionalism in zemstvo voting. The candidates’ tallies are too graduated to allow for the presence of a voting bloc of any significant size. Consider, for example, the following two charts, which plot the vote totals for all candidates for zemstvo delegate in Moscow (city) and Dmitrovsk uezd (the two areas with the greatest number of candidates):

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16 Compiled from TsIAM, f. 184, op. 2, d. 210, l. 6-10.
These charts show a graduated decline in support from the first-place candidates downward. If there were a voting bloc of any size or influence, we would see much more consistency in vote totals, and sharp declines after the requisite number of seats had been filled. Such an arrangement suggests that the delegates to the uezd assemblies had not yet coalesced into factions of any sort. While this means that there was little to no voting on a class basis, there was also no coalescing around different economic interest groups (urban vs. rural) or around differing approaches to zemstvo government (high taxes vs. low taxes, for instance).

In the absence of clearly-defined factions, this particular voting system requires a fair amount of strategy on the part of the voters. Under a multi-candidate multi-seat system, every additional vote for a non-favorite candidate reduces the likelihood that one’s preferred candidate will win election. In supporting five candidates rather than one, for instance, a voter increases the chance that his fifth-most-preferred candidate will be successful, but reduces the chance that

\[17\] Ibid., l. 20.
his most preferred candidate will be. Voters have to weigh the likelihood of various outcomes when deciding how many of their top candidates they will actually support with a vote.

The election results show a number of instances where voting delegates failed to take these strategic considerations into effect. Consider the example from Bogorod cited above, in which the losing candidates had only one and two opposing votes, respectively. The thirty-three (or perhaps thirty-four) voters who cast ballots in support of all five candidates essentially declined to express any preference at all, leaving the election to be decided based on the preferences of only two or three voters. This dynamic persists anywhere that we see an overwhelming amount of support for a large number of candidates. In these contests, we can only conclude that a large portion of the voters either did not have strong preferences among the various candidates, or did not consider the tactical ramifications of their choices.

While we can rule out the existence of any significant factionalism in these votes, the voters had to express some sort of preferences with their votes, and the results allow us to generalize about what those preferences were. One obvious factor was previous experience with local government organizations. The early elections show a fairly strong degree of continuity between the prior local government organizations and the new zemstvo assemblies. District marshals of the nobility were popular in elections for both district and provincial zemstvo posts. Of Moscow’s twelve district marshals, seven were elected to a zemstvo post—four board chairmen, two delegates to the provincial zemstvo, and one delegate to the uezd school board. Delegates to the noble assembly proved almost as popular as the marshals themselves. In Moscow, three current and two former Noble Assembly delegates were elected to the original gubernia zemstvo class, and another would join a few years later.¹⁸

¹⁸ Compiled from Kniga adresov zhitelei Moskvy, sostavlena po ofitsiannyh svedeniiah i dokumentah K. Nistrenom (Moscow: Tipografiia T. T. Volkova i Komp., 1858), 87; Moskovskaya pamyatnaya knizhka na 1866 god.
What is striking is not so much the electoral success of these candidates (after all, they had won elections before) but their overwhelming popularity with the delegates. P. V. Bakhmetev, marshal of Dmitrovsk, was chosen as a delegate to the provincial zemstvo by a 38-0 margin, while D. D. Golokhvastov of Zvenigorod was elected to the same post with a 25-0 margin in a contested election, and P.D. Kropotkin of Mozhaisk was elected uprava chair with only one dissenting vote. Only one of the seven marshals elected faced any sort of opposition, and even that was rather mild: Smirnov (the marshal for Klin district) was nominated for chair on 29 of the 31 ballots, but when actual voting came about received a count of 20 in favor, 11 opposed. That margin proved strong enough, however, to convince his three prospective opponents to withdraw themselves from consideration.19

In Penza, we see a similar phenomenon. The pamiatnaia knizhka for 1869 (during the second zemstvo term) shows that in four districts the marshal of the nobility was also serving as chairman of the zemstvo board. And, of the ten delegates to the noble assembly in 1864, four would serve in the provincial zemstvo within the first ten years of its operation.20 Without concrete data, we can only speculate as to whether their vote totals were as high as those for their Moscow counterparts. However, the fact that they were selected in comparable numbers would suggest that their overall level of popularity was relatively similar.

Significantly, the fact that incumbent or prior noble officeholders were able to win election to zemstvo positions is an indication of the level of support they had from their

19 Zhurnal uezdnykh zemskikh sobranii, 36.
20 Compiled from Pamiatnaia knizhka Penzenskoi gubernii na 1864 god (Penza: Tipografii Gubernskogo Pravleniia, 1864), 13-14; Pamiatnaia knizhka Penzenskoi gubernii za 1865, 1866, i 1867 gody (Penza: Tipografii Gubernskogo Pravleniia, 1868, 30-34; Pamiatnaia knizhka Penzenskoi gubernii za 1868 i 1869 gody (Penza: Tipografii Gubernskogo Pravleniia, 1869), 26-30; and Pamiatnaia knizhka Penzenskoi gubernii za 1870 god (Penza: Tipografii Gubernskogo Pravleniia, 1871), 26-28. A fifth member of the 1864 Noble Assembly, A. D. Obolenskii, would join at a later date.
constituents. This much is unsurprising—the distribution of votes among the curiae skewed
towards the wealthy, and as such they wielded significant influence over the selection of
new officeholders. The sheer scale of the margins of victory, however, argues for a much
broader conclusion. These officials were able to garner overwhelming support from those who
had not previously been their constituents—namely, the delegates from the rural councils and the
townships. By whatever means, these delegates came to believe that it was in their interest to
have these candidates continue in positions of power in the new organs as well.

While both provinces show some level of influence from noble-specific organizations,
there is a sharp difference in the overlap that we see between the zemstvo and the organizations
in the cities. The Moscow Duma, of course, would have significant representation just by virtue
of delegate distribution. As discussed above, the law allocated twenty-four provincial delegates
to be elected by the Moscow City Duma. Technically, they did not have to elect their own
members, but it is little surprise that they did so. In all, twenty-eight duma delegates were
elected to the first provincial assembly (four were elected as delegates from other uezdy). Out of
the 1866 Moscow Duma, a full thirty-seven would serve in the zemstvo at some point in their
careers.21

In Penza, however, there was only a minimal level of overlap between the duma and the
zemstvo. No members of the 1867 or 1869 Penza city dumas ever served in the provincial duma.
Admittedly, these dumas were composed of only five members, but in the first assembly after the
1870 reform of city government, only five out of the seventy-two delegates would eventually
join the provincial zemstvo. One might contend that the duma delegation was so small not

21 Compiled from Moskovskaia Pamiatnakia Knizhka na 1866 god, sostavlenaia po ofitsial'nym svedeniiam i
dokumentam (Moscow: Tipografii Smirnova i Bakhmeteva), 210-218 and Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo,
Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo v poluvekovuiu godovshchinu osnovaniia zemskikh uchrezhdenii 1864-1914
(Moscow: A. A. Lebenson, 1915).
because of their own lack of initiative but because of electoral resistance on the part of zemstvo voters. However, this supposition seems less tenable when one considers the fact that of the five duma delegates who did join the zemstvo, four would go on to leadership positions at some point in their career. One was the Noble Marshal for the entire province, two were on the zemstvo board, and another was the zemstvo secretary.\textsuperscript{22} Were there a strong rural bias in zemstvo voting patterns, it is very unlikely that the zemstvo voters would have been so ready to elevate city delegates to higher office.

To a certain extent, the disparity in representation can be explained based on the fact that the Moscow Duma was granted a specific allotment of delegates in the zemstvo, whereas the duma delegates in smaller cities like Penza competed against the candidate pool of the entire district. But, this provision does not tell the entire story. The Moscow Duma took the zemstvo seriously enough to send almost all of its most important members. In fact, the top four vote-getters in the duma’s zemstvo elections were duma officers: the mayor, Prince A. A. Shcherbatov, was the highest vote-getter, with 73 votes in favor, 8 against. He was followed very closely by S. N. Goncharov, (70 for, 11 against), K. K. Shil’dbakh (63-18), and F. F. Rezanov (63-18), who were the senior estatesman (\textit{soslovnye starshiny}) for the hereditary nobility, non-hereditary nobility, and merchanty, respectively. In all, of the eleven leadership posts in the Moscow city duma (the mayor plus a senior member and associate for each of the five sosloviia), eight were elected to serve in the provincial assembly.\textsuperscript{23} Meanwhile, in Penza,


\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Moskovskaia Pamiatnakia Knizhka na 1866 god}, 210-218 and TsIAM, f. 184, op. 2, d. 210, l. 6-10.
the crossover delegates those who did join the zemstvo were merely rank-and-file members of
the duma—their leadership ranks were completely absent from the zemstvo.

On the whole, we see a significant amount of movement among the major organs of local
self-government in the years immediately after the zemstvo reform. The designation of the
Noble Marshals as the *de jure* chairmen of the zemstvo assemblies ensured at least a modicum of
overlap, but the available evidence shows that the local government elites went far beyond that.
Delegates in one assembly often served as delegates or leaders in another, often serving
concurrent terms in both.

The one exception to this rule is the lack of overlap between the Penza Duma and the
zemstvo apparatus. This is particularly surprising given the difference in size between our two
test provinces. One would expect Russia’s chronic shortage of quality officials to be even more
pronounced in the smaller towns, leaving the more capable leaders to fill multiple posts.
Although this postulation holds true in relation to the delegates to the Noble Assembly, when
considering the members of the city dumas it most decidedly does not.

Less decisive than the preference for local government experience, but still notable, was
the relationship between a candidate’s estate or occupation and his electoral prospects. In the
city duma elections to the zemstvo, the most successful class was the hereditary nobility, which
saw 10 of its 30 candidates selected, with an average vote count of 46 for and 35 against. The
top three individual vote-getters and five of the top eight were hereditary nobles. The merchants
fared only slightly worse, with 8 of 18 candidates chosen and an average tally of 45-36.

The other three classes who presented candidates were far less successful. Non-
hereditary nobles saw only four of their twenty-five candidates elected, for meshchane it was
only two out of fourteen, and the artisans saw not a single one of their eleven candidates receive
sufficient support. None of these three categories averaged even fifty percent support, with the artisans pulling an abysmal average of 30 votes for, 51 against.\(^{24}\)

The results from zemstvo elections in the countryside indicate similar preferences. Candidates with government ranks averaged nearly 84 percent approval, and overall 43 of 49 candidates who stood for office were successful. Non-service candidates (mostly merchants and peasants of various classes) garnered only slightly more than 70 percent approval, and were successful in only 12 out of 22 bids for office.\(^{25}\)

Interestingly, while a candidate’s estate or type of service did affect his electoral prospects, his rank in service most certainly did not. The scatterplot below shows the correlation between rank (in either civil or military service) and electoral success for forty-nine candidates during the first slate of elections during the Moscow uezd zemstvo assemblies.\(^{26}\)

\(^{24}\) TsIAM, f. 184, op. 2, d. 210, l. 6-10.

\(^{25}\) Ibid., l. 13-30. Because the secretaries recorded different personal data about the district candidates than did the note-taker for the Duma session, a comparison between the two is necessarily imperfect. The city records list only the candidate’s estate, whereas the district records list rank in service, and do not specify the candidate’s estate.

\(^{26}\) Ibid. This chart includes all those candidates for whom a rank was specified on the balloting lists. Note that in certain instances a candidate’s precise place on the Table of Ranks could not be determined. For example, a poruchik (lieutenant) in the infantry or cavalry was at the eleventh rank, whereas a poruchik in the engineers or the navy was listed at the tenth rank. For the purposes of this analysis, a candidate whose branch of service is in doubt is assumed to be in the infantry or cavalry. Even if incorrect, these assumptions have a negligible effect on the overall results.
Clearly, the relationship between the two factors is negligible. We see high levels of support for candidates of all ranks, and the lower-performing candidates are widely scattered among the various levels of service. Although the polynomial trendline ticks slightly upward, the overall coefficient of correlation (r-squared) for this data set is .0056, well below the level of statistical significance.

The district elections successfully completed, the provincial zemstvo assemblies held their first meetings in October (Moscow) and March (Penza) of 1865. Given the emphasis on local government experience in the elections at the district level, it is surprising to note that the delegates to the provincial assembly went in the opposite direction. The leaders they elected had, on the whole, rather limited experience with local government affairs. Of the fourteen men who were elected to the provincial board in Moscow or Penza, only one, L. I. Vladykin of Penza,
had previously served in the Noble Assembly, as a marshal of the nobility, or in a leadership post in the city duma of the provincial capital.²⁷

This lack of concern for experience extended all the way to the highest office in the zemstvo apparatus—that of chairman of the provincial board. The Moscow assembly, by a rather decisive margin of 58 for, 17 against, chose a thirty-five-year old delegate from the city of Moscow by the name of Dmitrii Alekseevich Naumov. Naumov’s election seems counterintuitive for any number of reasons. In addition to his age, his prior experiences give little sense that he was the most capable and qualified candidate for the post. Although an excellent student in the juridical department of Moscow University, Naumov had moved rapidly among occupations in the years after his graduation in 1853. He served in the Moscow Duma concurrently with his time in the zemstvo, but he did not hold a leadership post.²⁸

In Penza, the selection went to Aleksei Nikolaevich Beketov. Beketov was slightly older than his counterpart in Moscow—he finished his course at university in 1844—and his early career was spent in the military rather than the civil service. The differences between the two new leaders, however, were outstripped by their similarities in many areas. Both were young, and neither had ample experience with local government organizations. Beketov was in the artillery corps until his 1857 retirement, and did not commence involvement in local affairs until several years later. Both men had served in the various offices that sprung up in the wake of the peasant liberation in 1861. Beketov was named as a peasant mediator in 1861, and from 1862-64

²⁷ Compiled from Spravochnaia knizhka Penzenskoj gubernii na 1854 g. (n.p.); Spravochnaia knizhka Penzenskoj gubernii na 1858 g. (n.p.); Pamiatnaia Kniga Penzenskoj Gubernii na 1864 god (Penza: Gubernskaia Tipografiia, n.d.); Pamiatnaia Knizhka Penzenskoj gubernii za 1865, 1866, i 1867 gody (Penza: Tipografiia Penzenskago Gubernskago Pravleniia, 1868); Moskovskaia pamiatnaia knizhka na 1866 god; Kniga adresov zhitelei Moskvy; and Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo v poluvekovuiu godovshchini, 55.

²⁸ Moskovskaia pamiatnakia knizhka na 1866 god, 206 and Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemskoe Sobranie, Sbornik postanovlenii Moskovskogo Gubernskogo Zemskogo Sobraniia s 1865 po 1897 g., posviashchenyi pamiati Dmitriia Alekseevicha Naumova, vol. 1 (Moscow: Pechatnia S. P. Iakovleva, 1899), 8-11.
he served as a member of the Penza Bureau on Peasant Affairs.29 Perhaps not surprisingly, both men had family ties to the organizations that they were joining. Naumov’s brother, Alexander Alekseevich, served in the assembly with him from 1865-68 and from 1877-86.30 Beketov’s father was the district Marshal of the Nobility for Penza, which means that he chaired the meeting that saw his son elected as zemstvo delegate.31

The most significant similarity of all, however, was the level of dedication that each man brought to his chosen task. Naumov, in contrast to the flightiness of his prior career, would remain as the chairman of the Moscow zemstvo for almost twenty-nine years, resigning shortly after being elected to a tenth term in early 1893.32 Beketov surpassed even that impressive feat, serving as Penza board chairman until his death in 1896.33

Trends over Time

In the first round of zemstvo elections, we see the development of a number of trends common to both Moscow and Penza. Most significantly, the races showed only limited competitiveness, with low numbers of candidates and limited engagement on the part of the voting delegates. With the exception of the provincial boards, they focused primarily on continuity and stability in demonstrating overwhelming support for men with experience in local affairs. Voters did not see the zemstvo as a vehicle for rapid or dramatic change.

30 The younger Naumov’s tenure of service is listed in Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo v poluveskovoi godovshchinu ..., 53, while his relationship with his brother is detailed in Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemskoe Sobranie, Sbornik postanovlenii..., 18.
31 It is doubtful that nepotism played any great role in the younger Beketov’s election to his post. The chairman of course could not dictate election results, and in any event Beketov senior only presided over the district-level assembly that elected his son as a delegate. He did not participate in the provincial assembly that elected Aleksei chairman.
32 Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemskoe Sobranie, Sbornik postanovlenii..., 68.
33 Rozaliev, “Alesei Nikolaevich Beketov – nekrolog.” The author of the obituary memorialized him as the longest-serving zemstvo chairman in all of Russia.
Over the course of the zemstvo era, we continue to see overlap between the zemstvo and the other organizations of local self-government in the countryside. Of the ten delegates to the 1871 Penza Assembly of Nobles, four were serving concurrently in the provincial zemstvo assembly, and another would join several years later. In 1889, the figures were three current and one future member, respectively, and the 1891 class had three and five. However, as in the first elections, a scant few of these delegates were elected to positions of leadership. After Vladykin (mentioned above) finished his tenure, we have no record of any current or former delegates from the Noble Assembly being elected to the provincial zemstvo board in either Penza or Moscow.\(^{34}\)

In Moscow, the ties with the city duma remained strong. The 1872 roster included an astonishing sixty-three men who would serve in the provincial assembly at some point in their careers. In 1897, a reduced city duma (121 members, instead of the previous 181) still included thirty-three such delegates.\(^{35}\) In Penza, on the other hand, the disassociation continued. Only three members of the 1891 duma class ever served in the zemstvo. As before, these crossover delegates were mere rank-and-file members in the city organ. There is no record of any member of the city board ever serving as a delegate in the Penza assembly.\(^{36}\)

The general tendency towards consistency and stability also manifested itself in strong support for incumbents when they ran for re-election. Dmitri Naumov was re-elected chairman in 1868 by a margin of 46 votes to 4. Although he did not match this 90 percent approval rate in

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\(^{34}\) Compiled from *Pamiatnaia knizhka Penzenskoi gubernii za 1870 god* (Penza: Tipografiia Penzenskago Gubernskago Pravleniia, 1871); *Pamiatnaia knizhka Penzenskoi gubernii na 1889 god* (Penza: Gubernskaia Tipografiia, 1888); and *Spravochnaia Kniga Penzenskoi gubernii na 1892 god* (Penza: Gubernskaia Tipografiia, 1892).

\(^{35}\) Compiled from *Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo v poluvekouiu godovshchine*....

\(^{36}\) Compiled from *Pamiatnaia knizhka Penzenskoi gubernii za 1870 god*, *Pamiatnaia knizhka Penzenskoi gubernii na 1889 god* (Penza, Gubernskaia Tipografiia, 1888); *Spravochnaia Kniga Penzenskoi gubernii na 1892 god* (Penza: Gubernskaia Tipografiia, 1892); and *Adres-kalendar sluzhashchikh v Penzenskoi gubernii na 1891 god* (Penza: Gubernskaia Tipografiia, 1891), 71-75.
succeeding years, he never fell too far from it, either; later elections produced victory margins of 49-6, 59-17, 51-16, and 55-9. Although the election records are not complete for the entirety of his tenure, it is unlikely that he was ever in serious danger of losing his position.  

In Penza, we can postulate the same for Beketov, although with less certainty. Our only record of balloting for the uprava chair shows Beketov being re-elected in 1895 with a Naumov-like margin of 33-5. There is, of course, a possibility that he faced stiffer opposition in other years, but his continued record of electoral success is a strong indicator of the popularity he enjoyed.

The members of the provincial zemstvo board also enjoyed robust support from their electors, but their success was not quite as smooth as that of the chairmen. In the 1868 elections, the first for the incumbent board members, three of the four incumbent members were re-elected to their seats. The fourth, G.N. L’vov, lost narrowly (27 votes for, 27 against). Interestingly, the dominant votegetter in this election was one of the newcomers to the board, a delegate from Klin District named V. V. Leonov, who had not even served in the assembly during the prior term. Leonov polled an astonishing tally of 51 votes for, 2 against, one of the highest ratios recorded for an election at this level. Even more strangely, the ensuing election saw a dramatic reversal in Leonov’s fortunes. Just three years later, he was voted out of his office with a vote of 18 for, 36 against, while his four fellow incumbents were re-elected by comfortable margins.

The more concentrated opposition during these elections soon dissipated. In fact, L’vov and Leonov are the only members of the board recorded as having lost their bids for re-election.

T. I. Obukhov, a four-term incumbent in 1880 narrowly avoided becoming a third member of

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37 TsIAM, f. 184, op. 2, d 130, l.  
38 Zhurnalny Ocherednago Penzenskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobraniiia zasedaniia 2-14 Dekabria 1895 goda i prilozheniia k onym (Penza: Tipo-Litografiia V. N. Umnova, 1896), 348.  
39 TsIAM, f. 184, op. 2, d. 130, l. 43, 53.
that group by winning a drawing of lots after a tie vote. Over time, the elections to the provincial board saw greater and greater levels of support for the incumbent candidates. While incumbency provided only a moderate benefit in the zemstvo’s early days, in later years it proved a nearly insurmountable guarantee of future electoral victories. By 1889, the board candidate with the lowest vote total was elected by a tally of 51 to 13.\footnote{TsIAM, f. 184, op. 2, d. 130, l. 109.}

While all these trends combined to give a sense of stability and continuity to zemstvo leadership, we see a number of concurrent trends that run counter in the opposite direction. Most significantly, membership in the zemstvo assembly turned over with astonishing rapidity. Our most complete record of service in the Moscow provincial zemstvo service lists 589 delegates who sat in the assembly for any length of time (apparently excluding those who were elected but proved unable or unwilling to serve). Of these delegates, 241 (over one-third) served for one term or less, and 374 (over sixty percent) served for two terms or less.\footnote{Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo v poluvekovuiu godovshchinu…, 40-54. Before continuing with an analysis of the tenures in the Moscow zemstvo, a brief clarification of methodology is required. The anniversary book sorts the delegate lists by the uezd which they represented. As we will see below, a great number of zemstvo delegates served as representatives for multiple districts during their careers, meaning that they would be listed several times in the anniversary book. In compiling the tenure statistics for the entire assembly, I assumed that listed delegates from separate uezdy with the same last name and initials (full name and patronymic were not listed) were, in fact the same person. In almost all cases, the years of service were roughly consistent, so that one could imagine the delegate switching from one jurisdiction to another in various election cycles. This method does create the danger of slightly underestimating the overall number of zemstvo delegates and overstating the average tenure in service, but on the whole I believe it provides the most accurate picture possible from the data available.} The rather dramatic split between the short-term and long-term delegates is evidenced by the following chart:
Interesting, this level of turnover proved remarkably consistent throughout the entirety of the zemstvo era. Of the 97 delegates who entered in the original zemstvo class of 1865, only 25 (26 percent) were still in the assembly ten years later. Of the 93 listed delegates in the 1875 zemstvo, only 26 (28 percent) were still serving in 1885. The ensuing ten-year periods saw similar retention ratios: 22 percent between 1885 and 1895, and 36 percent between 1895 and 1905. In considering these numbers, we must of course account for the reformed zemstvo statute of 1890, which modified the criteria for zemstvo elections and reduced the overall number of delegates. Thus, it is not surprising that the retention rate drops slightly during the 1885-95 period. The ensuing period shows a slight uptick in stability, but not a dramatic change, indicating that the changes to the electoral laws had at best a moderate effect on increasing zemstvo tenures.

42 Ibid. The aggregate numbers are not precisely consistent from year to year, presumably because of candidates who were elected, left office and were replaced all in the same calendar year.
This rapid turnover also extended into the leadership ranks. Of the 43 officers who served on the Moscow Board in the first half-century of its existence, nineteen (nearly 45 percent) served the equivalent of one term or less. Over the same time period, however, fifteen board members (35 percent of the total) served eight years or more.\(^4\)

![Tenure Chart]

Although the records from Penza are not as consistent, we see a similar pattern taking shape. Between 1871 and 1889, the Penza provincial zemstvo retained 10 of its 66 members (15 percent), while the Moscow zemstvo retained 12 of 90 (13 percent).

The rapid turnover among local leaders was, if anything, even more extreme at the district level. During the period 1888-1900, the various Penza uezdy saw a total of forty-nine new arrivals (nineteen chairmen and thirty regular members) to membership on the uezd boards. Only eleven of these men were serving in their respective assemblies at the beginning of this period.

\(^4\) Ibid., 55-57.
period. Moreover, of the nineteen chairmen, only two had previously served as regular members of the board. There is little sense of a zemstvo “career path,” with responsibilities increasing commensurate with experience.

What, then, can explain the rapid turnover in the zemstvo assemblies? Electoral defeat seems a very unlikely proposition. As we documented above, voters at the provincial level showed a pronounced tendency to support the incumbent candidates when they sought reelection—a tendency that only increase over time. It would be extremely odd were the voters at lower levels to have a strong anti-incumbent bias, particularly because the new delegates tended to support the decisions of their predecessors. If the voters at the curial and district level overwhelmingly wanted a change in the direction of zemstvo policy or leadership, we would have seen more of a push for change at the upper levels.

Part of the explanation may come from the fact that these positions required a substantial quantity of effort for sometimes limited reward. Delegates were required to attend the yearly sobraniia, which would last for up to twenty days. In addition, there was a certain amount of preparatory work required for each assembly meeting—for example, the review of reports from the uprava or review commissions in anticipation of an upcoming vote. In short, service in the provincial assembly could certainly be seen as a greater deal of work with little payoff.

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44 Compiled from: Pamiatnaia knizhka Penzenskoi gubernii na 1889 god; Penzenskii Gubernskii Statisticheskii Komitet, Spravochnaia kniga Penzenskoi gubernii na 1892 god (Penza: Gubernskaia Tipografiia, 1892); Penzenskii Gubernskii Statisticheskii Komitet, Adres-kalendar’ sluzhashchikh v Penzenskoi gubernii na 1893 god (Penza: Tipografiia Gubernskago Pravleniia, 1893); Penzenskii Gubernskii Statisticheskii Komitet, Adres-kalendar’ sluzhashchikh v Penzenskoi gubernii na 1895 god (Penza: Gubernskaia Tipografiia, 1895); Penzenskii Gubernskii Statisticheskii Komitet, Adres-Kalendar’ sluzhashchikh v Penzenskoi gubernii na 1898 god (Penza: Gubernskaia Tipografiia, 1900). It is unfortunate that the time period under study straddles the 1890 reforms, as the changing composition of the uezd assemblies would have some effect on the outcome of the elections. This is unavoidable, because the 1888-1900 period has the most comprehensive data available. In any event, the changes to the electoral law would have had less of an effect on the board elections than on the delegate elections, because the number of proscribed board members remained unchanged.

45 PSZRI, no. 40457, sec. 52.
Coupled with this rapid turnover was another dynamic that served to destabilize zemstvo representation. Many of the candidates who did stay for long period of time were elected by different districts over the course of their tenure. Dmitri Naumov, the longtime chairman of the uprava, served as a representative for three different districts: the city of Moscow from 1865-1880, Serpukhov from 91-95, and Podol’sk from 77-94. Although such delegates lent consistency to the zemstvo organization as a whole, the frequency of such arrangements suggests that there were only tenuous links between the zemstvo delegates and the constituencies they professed to represent.

The picture that ultimately emerges, at multiple levels, is of a rather sharp split between short-term delegates and career zemstvo men. The vast majority of the delegates to the provincial assemblies only lasted for a few years, making little impact on the course of deliberations. Even those that did make it to the uprava usually had the same result; a short tenure with no discernible influence.

**Conclusion**

The introduction of the zemstvos into the provinces of European Russia was met with reasonably strong activity on the part of the local governing elites and the populace at large. The elections were set up in a rather hasty fashion, but by and large functioned smoothly with few challenges to the voting procedure or disputes about eligibility.

The elections in the uezd assemblies were well-attended, but did not show a particularly high level of political engagement. For the most part, there were only slightly more candidates than offices available. Even in those situations where voters did have a choice, many of them simply voted in favor of all candidates.

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46 Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo, *Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo v poluvekovuiu godovshchina...*
The results of the elections displayed a strong preference for the existing political elite. Leaders of noble organizations, whether Marshals or delegates to the Assembly of Nobles, were elected with overwhelming, often unanimous, support. Given that many of those who elected them were not previously constituents, this demonstrates a remarkable ability at convincing the new voters of their qualities. In examining the overlap with the city elite, we see strong overlap in Moscow, but in Penza the overlap was minimal.

There is evidence of a certain class bias in the voting, with merchants and hereditary nobility polling better than peasants and artisans. However, this bias was not universally applicable; quite a few members of the lower estates were able to win election against their supposed social superiors. Moreover, there is no evidence that voters used soslovie as a decisive criterion; in fact, the numerical distribution of votes in the larger elections argues against the existence of blocs of any type.

As time progressed, most of these trends remained consistent. Even as the zemstvo broadened the number of individuals who could claim experience with affairs of local self-government, the officers of other organizations (Marshals of the Nobility, for example) maintained their place in zemstvo affairs.

What is uniformly lacking, however, is any sense that the zemstvo elections—whether in the early years or later in the process—provided a real occasion for democratic engagement on the part of the populace. The elections seemed driven by those figures actually willing to run for office, rather than the particular demands of the voters. At the same time, there appears a strong preference for consistency in the ranks of the zemstvo leadership: rare is the situation where a board member or chairman faces significant obstacles to his reelection.
Along with these trends, however, we see a number of others that produced a
destabilization of the zemstvo’s leadership ranks. Most prominent among these is the extremely
low tenure of both assembly delegates and officers. The rapid rate of turnover at all levels meant
that individuals could be thrust into leadership roles with very little experience in zemstvo
affairs, and those who did choose to stay on could be confident that they were much more
capable than their younger counterparts. Moreover, the extra experience of these senior
members made them more likely to be elected to concurrent leadership posts, and thus direct
many different aspects of zemstvo affairs.

The pattern that emerges, both in Moscow and in Penza, is of a small cadre of long-
serving individuals in leadership positions. The leadership of the zemstvo essentially split
between active and inactive figures. The vast majority of delegates and a sizeable portion of the
board members served for very short tenures, while a small, ostensibly self-selecting group held
power almost by default.

One might argue that this pattern persists in democratic organizations of any size. This is
ture for almost any organization of this type, but there are two factors that distinguish the
zemstvos under study (and, potentially, the majority of zemstvos throughout Russia). The first is
the narrowness of the leadership stratum. Even within the board, we see a rather sharp
distinction between the more and the less active board members. There was only a small cadre
of officials that could truly be called “zemstvo careerists.” The second factor is the magnitude of
the experience gap between the more elite cadre and their less experienced counterparts. These
careerists not only served longer, but were far more likely to hold positions of leadership on the
uprava or the various temporary and standing committees that assisted zemstvo operations.
Moreover, the rapid turnover of the rank-and-file membership meant that it was all the more difficult to develop a significant challenge to the existing leadership. A potential “opposition candidate” would have found it tremendously difficult to develop a sufficient base of support to make a serious challenge for zemstvo leadership. The dynamics of the elections contributed to consistency at the very top levels, but made popular-driven policy changes a near impossibility.

Ultimately, these combined dynamics—predominantly short tenures, electoral passivity, and an inclination to support the status quo—point towards the possibility of a certain model of zemstvo leadership. A potential leader, if he were able to break into the leadership stratum to begin with, could reasonably expect to stay there as long as he wished, to be a leader in many different spheres of zemstvo affairs, and to face few encumbrances to his reelection. Moreover, he could expect that within a few years, his experience would greatly outstrip that of his counterparts.

It seems likely that this model would have an impact on the eventual development of zemstvo policies. The relative longevity of this small class of leaders meant that their experience would dwarf that of their less-experienced counterparts. The relative acquiescence of the voters (at both the curial and district levels) meant that they rarely faced significant opposition to their continuation in office. And their connections to other organs of self-government only reinforced their status in the province. In short, these combined factors made it possible for a very small group of men to direct local affairs with very little opposition. In the ensuing chapters, we will examine how they made use of that opportunity.
Chapter 2: The Exercise of Local Leadership

The previous chapter established that the election and re-election of zemstvo leaders proceeded according to a familiar pattern. Despite the alleged enthusiasm for the new institution, voters at the local level did not see it as a chance to overturn existing norms, instead giving overwhelming preference to those leaders with prior governing experience. Once in office, these men had little trouble maintaining their standing, as incumbency proved to be an almost ironclad guarantee of re-election. At the same time, however, many of those chosen found zemstvo service not to their liking, and many departed of their own accord rather than seeking subsequent terms. In turn, this tendency further heightened the gap between the veteran officeholders and the new (and very often short-tenured) delegates selected to serve alongside them.

In this chapter, I turn my attention to the ways in which this particular dynamic, in conjunction with other local and national conditions, served to influence the tendencies in local leadership. We will examine their day-to-day operations, their methods of collaboration (or lack thereof), and their development of an executive infrastructure to deal with the growing demands of zemstvo leadership.

In the opening section, we will consider the role of the zemstvo assemblies (*sobraniia*) in the process of governance. The authorizing legislation invested these bodies with a substantial amount of oversight capacity, yet restricted their actual operation to one session per year. As a consequence, some sort of accommodation was necessary in order to maintain the oversight required by law. The assembly delegated a substantial amount of responsibility to the zemstvo boards, but also relied heavily on the establishment of commissions to investigate various topics.
These commissions varied widely in their composition, tasks, and permanence, yet combined they provided a means for the assembly to make its decisions with reasonable confidence.

In the latter section of the paper, we will consider the evolution of this system over the course of the zemstvo era. In order for a democratic institution to function effectively in this manner, it requires the active participation of its members in both committee services and oversight. In the first decades of its existence, the zemstvo dramatically expanded its sphere of operations, and consequently increased the level of engagement necessary from the elected delegates. To the contrary, however, several trends combine to suggest that the delegates’ overall level of involvement actually decreased over this period. As a result, the zemstvo took on an almost oligarchic character, with a small minority exercising an overwhelming influence on the course of events.

This consideration is particularly relevant in comparison with the role of the city dumas and the Noble Assemblies. All three organizations functioned under a roughly analogous framework, with a large assembly exercising legislative authority and wielding oversight over a relatively small executive apparatus. However, various differences—both formal and informal—among these institutions led to significant differences in their ways of conducting affairs, and significant differences in the role played by the larger assemblies in the organ’s overall operation.

My source base for this assessment will consist primarily of the minutes (zhurnaly) of zemstvo assembly meetings and the reports and accounts (doklady and otchety) from the zemstvo boards and various permanent and temporary committees established to handle particular problems. As before, the local self-government organs from Moscow and Penza will serve as test cases for my analysis. In this instance, it should be noted that the Moscow resources are
particularly rich in both quantity and depth. Consequently, those records will take a more central role in the discussion of these issues. Where appropriate, I also draw from the *zhurnaly* of zemstvos and local government organs in other provinces. I have not been able to gather these records in nearly as comprehensive a fashion, they will be instructive for comparative purposes.

**Existing Scholarship**

The early literature on the zemstvos, in fact, paid a great deal of attention to the personalities at the center of zemstvo operations. Boris Veselovskii, in his province-by-province rundown of the individual zemstvos, often remarks on the characteristics of particular individuals. Thus, we have a depiction of Moscow Board Chairman Dmitri Alekseevich Naumov as “an educated man, devoted to zemstvo affairs,” and discussions of the positive contributions made by many of his contemporaries and collaborators. The Penza zemstvos, on the other hand, are (perhaps unfairly) described as “lifeless and inert” under the leadership of A.N. Beketov and D. K. Gevlich; in the early years after the new law “it seemed that the reform of 1864 had in essence changed nothing.”

Of course, such fine distinctions are possible when writing with as much depth as does Veselovskii. Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that later historians have spoken much more generally in their treatment of the zemstvos and the individuals serving within it. There has been a tendency to speak generally of “zemstvo men” or “the zemstvo” as if it were a generally coherent entity, rather than several hundred bodies spread over thirty-four provinces.

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1 The Moscow *zhurnaly* generally provided a near-transcript of the proceedings, whereas the Penza minutes are usually in summary form.
2 Veselovskii, *Istoriia zemstva*, vol. 4, 520-548.
4 See, for instance, the essays in Emmons and Vucinich, eds., *The Zemstvo in Russia: An Experiment in Local Self-Government*. 

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Even those historians who have emphasized the distinctions in mentalite among zemstvo members have sometimes failed to adequately account for the differences between various offices. Thus, for instance, N. M. Pirumova readily acknowledges that liberals made up only a portion of zemstvo activists, yet her attempts at a statistical analysis do not take into account the substantial differences in status. For her purposes, Gevlich and V. N. Ladyzhenskii are both to be counted among the liberals from Penza province, though the former served only as a delegate to the uezd assembly for a few terms, whereas the latter served for nearly three decades and ultimately wound up as the provincial Marshal of the Nobility.⁵

As we will see from this survey, one’s position as a zemstvo delegate (or, sometimes, even a board member) was no guarantor of influence over policy. Rather, the leadership model most commonly used in the zemstvo ensured that a small group of officials would have a substantial amount of sway over particular policy decisions. Only by understanding this model can we comprehend the ways in which potential avenues for action were raised, discussed, and settled.

**Legal Dictates**

The original legislation clearly envisioned an active role for the zemstvo assemblies. It establishes a general parameter for the division of responsibilities between the two bodies: “In the sphere of duties laid on the zemstvo authorities [in] this Act, belong: to the Zemstvo Assemblies—administrative power and general oversight for the course of affairs, and for the Zemstvo Boards—executive management, and in general the closest possible management of local affairs.”⁶

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⁵ N. M. Pirumova, *Zemskoe liberal’noe dvizhenie*, 252.
⁶ *PSZRI*, no. 40457, sec. 65.
Subsequent sections elaborate on the specific form that “general oversight” is to take:

“The auspices (vedomstvo) of the Provincial Zemstvo Assemblies shall, in particular, include the following:

- Examination and approval of provincial zemstvo estimates and apportionments of financial and natural duties, compilation of the local tax schedule;
- Permission for the acquisition and disposition of zemstvo real estate;
- Management of provincial zemstvo capital funds;
- Raising, in addition to capital funds for public health, (narodnago prodovol’stvia), and insurance, other permanent capital funds for matters of provincial zemstvo needs;
- Approval of proposals about loans for the needs of the province’s zemstvos; approval of short-term loans from the provincial zemstvo funds designated for that purpose;
- Assignment of country roads to the category of zemstvo provincial [roads], and vice versa; changing the direction of zemstvo roads;
- Establishment of new collections for provincial zemstvo needs;
- Designation of collections from bridges and crossings on provincial zemstvo roads;
- Designation of provincial exhibitions of local production, with the goal of promoting local industry;
- Consideration of the conclusions and information presented to the higher government (either through its own request or by request of the Boards and members of the Assembly);
- Submission, through the Governor, of proposals to higher authorities for permission to establish Provincial Zemstvo Banks, and likewise conclusions on matters of local trade, land affairs, and industry, in those situations when measures deemed useful by the Zemstvo Assembly exceed established limits;
- Authorization and permission to the Provincial Boards on misunderstandings that arise, or on particularly important questions;
- Examination of petitions to the Provincial Zemstvo Boards;
- Approval of accounts for zemstvo administration;
- Holding of elections of the Chairman and members of the Provincial Boards and designation of sums for their support; verification of Provincial Delegate elections.\(^7\)

Interestingly, the duties of the board are dispensed with in a much more cursory fashion:

“The duties of the Provincial Boards, in addition to the execution of the orders from the Provincial Assemblies and the administration, under the advisement of the Provincial Zemstvo Assemblies, of the holdings of the zemstvo and of general zemstvo administration of the province, include: compilation of provincial budgets, allotments, and accounts; preparation of all information and findings needed for the Assembly; oversight for the receipt of zemstvo revenues; expenditure of provincial zemstvo sums; maintenance, under the supervision of the Zemstvo Assemblies, of lawsuits regarding zemstvo holdings, and examination of petitions to the Uezd Zemstvo Boards.”\(^8\)

Strange, then, that the legislation established such tight strictures on the parameters of zemstvo meetings. Uezd assemblies were to last no more than ten days, and guberniia assemblies no more than twenty.\(^9\) District assemblies could extend their session by appealing to the provincial governor; a prolongation of the provincial meeting required the consent of the

\(^7\) Ibid., sec. 68.
\(^8\) Ibid., sec. 69.
\(^9\) Ibid., sec. 77
Ministry of Internal Affairs. Should the need arise, an extraordinary (чрезвычайные) session could be called, but these also required the consent of the Minister of Internal Affairs (and, of course, the logistical and preparatory work necessary to bring delegates together at the necessary time). Even if we are to assume extraordinary sessions on a near-annual basis, the zemstvo boards would be required to work with minimal guidance for much of the year. Assembly delegates would have to go to extraordinary lengths to exercise the oversight expected of them.

The Delegation Model

The early meetings of the zemstvo assemblies show an apparent recognition of this paradoxical situation. Even as delegates began to grasp the enormous complexity of the task that lay before them, they simultaneously realized that they would have to delegate a substantial amount of responsibility to their executive organs. One of their first orders of business was the establishment of further rules demarcating the respective responsibilities of the delegates and the board. These “rights and obligations,” forty-four sections in all, seem to indicate that the sobraniia intended to keep a close eye on the board’s progress in meeting the goals laid before it.

Turning to more concrete matters, the assembly once again took pains to provide ample direction to the board. Over the course of their ensuring deliberations, the delegates produced a long list of both instructions and directions for the newly-formed uprava. There were a total of twenty matters about which the board was to petition higher authorities, on topics ranging from to the cancellation of a planned expenditure for land surveyors and assessors to permission to elect two zemstvo delegates to a committee for the betterment of the clergy. There were nineteen individual “obligatory instructions” (обязательных поручений), mostly on fairly

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10 Ibid., sec. 78.
narrow topics. Lastly, the sobranie issued sixteen (presumably non-obligatory) instructions. These were largely general inquiries, asking for further investigation of particular topics. The requests ran the gamut of zemstvo operations, from the development of a plan for a provincial zemstvo gimnazia to a strengthening of food production to an examination of ways to improve the transport, communication, and postal networks along the roads in Moscow province.

However, as we look at the tasks assigned, many of them provide little in the way of concrete direction for the board’s actions. Many of the areas specified corresponded to the main projects that had been assigned to the zemstvo by the central government. So, in certain respects, the assembly was merely mandating that the board conform to its-already established responsibilities. Beyond these often-vague prescriptions, the board would make the more concrete decisions about specific projects and priorities. Within a broader framework of assembly oversight, the uprava had a fair amount of leeway on the most pressing tasks facing the new body.

In addition to the lengthy list of tasks given to the board, the early sessions also show the first signs of the bureaucratization of zemstvo affairs. At numerous points during the deliberations, the assembly decided that a particular issue or topic required scrutiny more intensive than they could avail. Their standard response was to form a commission of a small handful of delegates, who would be responsible for studying the issue and preparing a report (doklad) for a future assembly to assess.

The resort to committees was frequent and recurrent. Even before the election of the initial provincial board, the assembly established three committees of seven delegates each—the finance committee, the agricultural committee, and the “Committee on Local Interests and

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11 Zhurnal pervogo Moskovskogo Gubernskago Zemskago Sobraniia oktiabr’ 1865 goda (Moscow: Universitetskaya Tipografiia, 1866), 433-435.
12 Ibid., 433-437.
Needs.” A few days later, they added an Audit Commission, comprised of five members, and on
the 25th of October yet another Commission was formed. “The Provincial Assembly [no specific
delegate’s proposal is mentioned] recognized the need to choose from among the delegates a
permanent commission of 21 members, which together with the board would engage in the
consideration and resolution of various questions and projects, passed to the former [the board]
by the present Assembly.”13

The ensuing years saw new committees and further delegates. An extraordinary session
in March 1866 saw seven delegates elected to a Commission on Public Health.14 The regular
meeting that fall brought yet another committee, this one to examine the potential for developing
the Moscow–Smolensk rail line.15 Sometimes, these committees were of extremely short
duration: March 1866 meeting saw the nomination of a commission to examine the governor’s
comments on the uezd zemstvo financial accounts. The Committee, comprised of one delegate
from each uezd, was formed on March 10th, and five days later delivered its report, receiving
unanimous ratification from the full assembly.16

However, the sobranie was apparently doing all it could to maintain a high level of
involvement and oversight. In the first few years of operation, it held several extraordinary
sessions to consider additional matters for discussion. There were fifteen days of meetings in
March 1866, followed by a separate one-day session in April.17 September of 1867 brought
twelve more days of additional deliberations.18 In 1868, there were nine days of meetings to

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13 Ibid., 394.
14 Zhurnaly Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobraniiia Mart 1866 goda (Moscow: Sinodal’noi Tipografiia,
1866), 145.
15 Zhurnal Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobraniiia 1866 goda (Moscow: Universitetskaia Tipografiia
(Katkov i Ko., 1866), 107.
16 Zhurnaly Mart 1866, 44, 134.
17 Ibid.
18 Zhurnaly Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobraniiia sentiabr’ 1867 goda (Moscow: Universitetskaia
Tipografiia (Katkov i Ko.), 1868).
discuss the establishment of a zemstvo bank.¹⁹ And, in 1870, the assembly gathered for four
days in September to consider the response from the Ministry of Education to a proposal for the
creation of a school for training teachers.²⁰

As the zemstvo era progressed, of course, the sobraniia meetings consisted not only of
developing new tasks for their executive bodies, but of reviewing the proposals they had
commissioned on various topics. In most subsequent assemblies, in fact, he reports from the
board and assorted commissions ended up providing the engine of debate in the zemstvo
assembles. The majority of discussions in any given meeting, surprisingly, revolved around the
new reports and proposals before the body.

Interestingly, this means that the structure and topics of assembly meetings could vary
widely from year to year. Certain standing requirements were mainstays, such as the approval of
the reports on tax estimates, allocations, and expenditures, but these were generally dispensed
with in pro forma fashion, allowing for prolonged discussion of particular issues of interest. The
1878 meeting, for instance, saw the assembly reviewed reports on the following topics over the
course of its ten sessions: provincial accounts, general comments from the audit commission,
public education, establishment of public lectures, the progress of statistical work, provincial
roads and bridges, the governor’s comments on uezd accounts, drainage of swamps in Dmitrov
Uezd, expenditures in the event of a time of war, veterinary affairs, estimates for the coming
year, and mutual zemstvo insurance. Some of these issues were covered in a matter of minutes;
the education report, on the other hand, stretched over the course of three days of discussion.

¹⁹ Zhurnaly Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobraniia mai 1868 goda (Moscow: Universitetskaia Tipografiia, 
1869). The bank was later ruled out of bounds by the Ministry of Interior. See Zhurnaly Moskovskago 
²⁰ Zhurnaly Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobraniia, ekstrennoe sobranie, sentiabr’ 1870 goda (Moscow: 
Universitetskaia Tipografiia (Katkov i Ko.), 1871), 1.
Despite the apparent intensive oversight, there seems to be a general regard for the opinions of the special designates, and their proposals generally passed by wide margins. In particular, the annual budgetary figures for the zemstvo were one of the prime areas where leadership’s prerogative held sway. At some point in each annual meeting, the Audit Commission would present its report for debate and ratification. The annual budget for expected receipts and expenditures was generally accepted almost entirely intact after a minimum of debate. During the 1878 session, the entire package of financial projections, consisting of over six hundred thousand rubles’ worth of income and expenditure, passed by a unanimous vote.21

Evidence from other provinces seems to echo these trends of delegation and deferential oversight. The Penza minutes are generally not as numerous or as detailed as those from Moscow, so we are less able to speak to the specifics of the oversight, but there are a number of similarities. One of the first orders of business of the provincial zemstvo during its 1865 was the selection of a nine-member Audit Commission. Immediately thereafter, upon receiving a financial report from the newly-formed uprava, the assembly immediately turned it over to the commission and “instruct[ed] it to compile a report on this matter.”22 As in Moscow, the Commission’s annual review of zemstvo funds went in a rather pro forma fashion.23

Memoirs from zemstvo officials give a more intimate view of the inner workings of the zemstvo, and tend to convey the same sense of confidence both in the organization and in its leadership. Boris Chicherin, the noted historian and future mayor of Moscow, was a zemstvo delegate in his home district of Kirsanov (Tambov Province) in the early years of the zemstvo.

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His memoirs speak fondly of this time, characterizing them as “the cusp of youth and freshness of the zemstvo organizations.”

He makes use of similarly elevated language in characterizing the leadership of the district: “The Kirsanov assembly was excellently chosen… The chairman of the board for twelve years was Mikhail Sergeevich Baratynskii, a man of noble character, bringing together all the best traditions of his family and faithful with his whole spirit to societal action. The uprava was composed of practical (del’nyi) and industrious men.”

Chicherin was eventually elected to serve in the provincial zemstvo, and while there was chosen as member of one of the ubiquitous special commission. This time, the topic was the potential transfer of Tambov Province from one educational district to another. It is noteworthy that he describes in detail the reaction from the Editing Commission (only one of the six members had an objection to his proposal, and this objection was technical rather than substantive), yet devotes no attention to the discussion in the assembly or any efforts to convince fellow delegates to support his views. Apparently in Tambov, as in Moscow, the assembly’s okay was taken as a matter of course.

The model that emerges from these examples was one in which the assemblies delegated much of the decision-making responsibility to their board and an assortment of standing and temporary commissions and committees. Over time, however, we see the development of a number of trends that, taken together, undermine the original model. The first is the ever-growing proliferation of these committees. This occurred in part because zemstvo activities expanded over the course of their operation. However, we should also recognize that this

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25 Ibid., 21
26 Ibid., 30.
organizational system ultimately created its own momentum. Special commissions tended to multiply, as the questions raised by one report would require the creation of two more.

By the time of its 50th anniversary in 1914, the Moscow provincial zemstvo claimed a total of thirteen official commissions. These included such longstanding exemplars as the finance commission, audit commission, and regular commissions dealing with such ordinary zemstvo responsibilities such as roads, insurance, education, and the reception of petitions and grievances. However, the ranks also included such oddities as the Committee for the Honoring of S. T. Morozov, the Commission for the Drawing Up of the Historical Overview of the 50th Anniversary of the Activities of the Moscow Zemstvos, and the Commission for Clarification of the Question on the Introduction of New Rules about Reductions and Durations of Worn-Out Machines.27

In addition to these commissions, the zemstvo organizational structure also included five councils (sovety): the Provincial Economic Council, the Sanitation Council, the Council on Public Health, and the Verification Council of the Moscow Provincial Zemstvo Small Loan Account. These councils added an additional 68 posts to the overall workload. Lastly, the Moscow Zemstvo was to elect delegates to numerous provincial boards and committees. Some of these designations were longstanding (for instance, the provincial school councils had existed from the very beginning of zemstvo operations), but the dramatic expansion is indicative but the 1914 register shows delegations to thirty-one separate organs or positions, involving a total of fifty-eight posts. In total, then the Moscow zemstvo required that its delegates fill 228 positions on various councils, committees, and commissions.28

28 Ibid.
Such a trend would not be worrisome on its own; indeed, it seems to be a rational response to the increasing complexity of zemstvo activities and programs. It would have required a commensurate increase in oversight on the part of the sobraniia to maintain its intended level of engagement in operations, but such a development was at least conceivable. In fact, the reverse is true. Over the ensuing years, we see several signs of increasing disengagement on the part of the assembly.

First, the extraordinary assemblies became fewer in number, shorter in duration, and less comprehensive in the scope of their inquiries. After the almost annual extraordinary sessions during the first half-decade or so, we see one in March of 1874 (six days of deliberation), one in February of 1879 (one day) and one in February of 1881 (five days).29

Combined with these tendencies was another worrisome trend—the failure of delegates to even show up for assembly meetings. The most immediately striking characteristic of these meetings is their weak attendance. Officially, the Moscow Provincial Assembly had 96 delegates. The first meeting, in October of 1865, had anywhere from 76 to 81 members present, a healthy but not overwhelming ratio. The next year the number of delegates in attendance dropped to 41, and in 1867 the total fluctuated from 33 to 36—barely enough to make up the one-third required for quorum.30 In later years, the numbers did not improve significantly—attendance figures ranged from 38 to 43 in 1875, 37 to 52 in 1880, and 33 to 41 in 1882.31

Moreover, even within these reduced numbers, the debate was dominated by a handful of figures. Of those 36 delegates in 1867, only twenty or so actually spoke up in the meeting. And,

29 After 1890 or so, the records of the regular zemstvo meetings are more sporadic, so I am less confident that records of any particular extraordinary meeting would necessarily be available.
30 MGZS, Zhurnaly MGZS sent 1867.
even within this smaller group, the conversation was dominated by a handful of delegates. Even within the uprava members, there is wide variation in the level of participation in the proceedings. Chairman D.A. Naumov, of course, fielded questions and made suggestions on nearly every issue under discussion, and his fellow board members P.A. Vasil’chikov and I.I. Musin-Pushkin were almost equally verbose. The other board members, however, were more reticent. G.N. L’vov gave only one speech and made brief comments on two other matters. A.A. Il’in and Count A.V. Bobrinskii were almost equally quiet, and I.V. Fon-Mengden, who had been added to the board only a year before, was entirely silent—possibly he did not attend the assembly at all.32

Similarly, service on zemstvo committees became more and more clustered around a small group of zemstvo activists. The 1914 records list 90 “regular” zemstvo members—those who by virtue of their position would participate fully in the assembly’s activities.33 Of these, 44—that is, slightly less than half—served on more than one zemstvo commission or committee. Of the remainder, 21 served on only one body, and 25 held no additional position whatsoever.

The concentration at the top was particularly notable. Sixteen delegates combined to hold almost one-half of all seats available. Thus, for instance, N. N. Khmelev, a delegate from Serpukhov Uezd, was a member of eight of thirteen commissions, one of five councils, and served as a delegate to two separate local commissions—one charged with oversight of and one

32 Perhaps not surprisingly, a number of the more reticent actors did not stay long on the provincial board. L’vov was defeated in his bid for reelection to the board, Bobrinskii chose not to run again, and Il’in resigned his post about a year after reelection. On the other hand, Musin-Pushkin left the board after three years of active service, and Fon-Mengden remained a board member until 1877. See Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo v poluvezovuiu godovshchinu... 55-57, and TsIAM, f. 184, op. 2, d. 130, l. 43.

33 Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo v poluvezovuiu godovshchinu... , 62-63. Four other members were included by virtue of their connection to a specific bureau or agency—one from the clergy, one from the Department of Land Affairs and State Domains, and two from the manager of the Moscow district (upravlialishchi Moskovskim udel’nym okrugom). We may assume that they were intended to contribute primarily to the deliberations pertaining to their area of expertise, thus their limited participation is unsurprising. Of the four, only one served on a zemstvo council or commission of any type, and that just one.
on the analysis and care of the indigent. Moreover, these individuals combined their committee service with substantial other contributions to zemstvo life. Of the seven most active committee members, four were concurrently serving as chairmen of their district boards, a remarkably demanding endeavor in its own right.34

To recap, a general survey of the zemstvo sobraniia and their relationship to their leadership reveals a number of conclusions. First, we should consider the leadership ranks of the zemstvo not only in terms of the members of the district and provincial boards, but also of the members of the major committees set up to resolve key questions and provide guidance to the assembly as a whole. Both the boards and the commissions could usually count on ratification by the assembly at large, but the commissions were particularly notable because they grew in scope over the course of the zemstvo era. By the early twentieth century, one assembly could require several hundred different offices to be filled. In tandem with this development (indeed, perhaps in part because of it), we see a disengagement in zemstvo affairs from a significant portion of zemstvo delegates; many of these declined to attend the annual assembly meeting, declined to offer opinions during debate, or participated only minimally in the outside committee work.

Of course, there were exceptions to these trends—contentious debates, narrow votes, and leaders losing the confidence of their constituents. But, these exceptions are relatively few and far between. One episode, however, so strongly counters the prevailing narrative that it is worth studying in some depth. In the early 1890’s, Naumov’s leadership as board chairman came under sustained attack by a coalition of dissatisfied zemstvo delegates. This alone is worth noting; as we have seen, Naumov had served for twenty-five years, was widely respected, and

34 Ibid., 63-66.
had never faced more than nominal opposition to his re-election.\textsuperscript{35} As we will see, however, the course of events that ensued reveal a good deal more about the interplay between board members and the assembly to which they answered.

D. N. Shipov, who succeeded Naumov as board chairman, was a very involved witness to these events. In his account, the first major point of contention was the question of the zemstvo’s role in providing psychiatric care for the population of the province. During its 1887 session, the assembly requested that the board “seek out and obtain property for the construction of a hospital for the mentally ill,” but by the next year’s meeting the board had made no progress on the task. The assembly dutifully repeated its request, and returned once again a year later to find its instructions unfulfilled. After yet another delay, the 1890 session saw progress on several fronts. The uprava developed a proposal for funding the hospital and managed to secure the governor’s approval for the additional taxation. What happened next apparently surprised everyone. A lone delegate, N. A. Alekseev, apparently acting under his own initiative, announced that he had rented a property on the zemstvo’s behalf. Naumov, perhaps unsettled by the unorthodox manner in which this question had been settled, protested that the property in question was unsuitable for the purpose intended. The assembly agreed, and proposed another route, but one can imagine that more than a few delegates saw this as further foot-dragging on the part of the board.

Concurrently, there were questions about certain irregularities in the management of the roads department within the zemstvo. Naumov tended to avoid direct supervision in this area, leaving his board colleague N. F. Rikhter with essentially complete oversight over day-to-day operations. The audit committee ultimately concluded that there was no malfeasance, and that the irregularities were the result of Rikhter’s “lack of vigilance.” The committee’s report

\textsuperscript{35} See above, pp. 54-55.
declined to level a direct judgment on the board members, and the assembly instead chose to reiterate its belief that administration of the roads department should be collegial, rather than under the auspices of only one individual. Coming on the heels of the prior conflict, this was another potential indictment of the existing board leadership.

The contention came to a head during the December 1890 assembly meeting. Boris Chicherin, now mayor of Moscow, suddenly presented a petitioned signed by twenty-five delegates, proposing the formation of a new commission “for the prior examination of accounts and reports from the uprava.” This commission would be accorded the right to call members of the board to its meetings and request clarification of particular issues. Naumov protested the introduction of the petition (according to him, it was the manner of the petition’s presentation, not its content, to which he objected), but the writing was on the wall. The ensuing debate saw rather sharp criticism of certain board members, and at the end of the session the board en masse announced its refusal to continue in the execution of its duties. The sobranie requested that they stay in office for the time being, but resolved to request authorization from higher authorities to hold a special election for an entirely new board.36

The revised elections were put on hold until January 1892 on account of the need to reconstitute the assembly in the wake of the revised zemstvo statute of 1890. During the interval, relations between the assembly and the board remained at a low ebb, with various delegates taking the opportunity to express their lack of confidence in the existing leadership. When the elections finally commenced and the nominations, Shipov actually received substantially more ballots than Naumov (37 to 28, with four others receiving nominal support),

36 D. N. Shipov, *Vospominaniia i dumy o perezhitom* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2007), 50.
but he refused to enter the balloting. Naumov was re-elected by the very narrow margin of 35 in favor, 32 against.\textsuperscript{37}

Despite Naumov’s narrow escape, or perhaps because of it, the contentious discussions persisted. The last straw, apparently, was a case that arose during the assembly in February 1893. It concerned an allegation of wrongdoing by N. F. Rikhter, now surprisingly in the opposition camp, against V. N. Karazin for his conduct as board member overseeing the roads department. The matter was referred to N. N. Shchepkin, the chairman of the Audit Commission, and Shipov, who was a member of that body. After a short examination of the accounts, the two concluded that the errors were not malfeasance, but simply a case of “a few formal irregularities due to the unsatisfactory direction of affairs in the roads section.”\textsuperscript{38} Despite this judgment, Rikhter persisted in pursuing his case in the greater assembly. Shchepkin refuted Rikhter’s arguments on a point-by-point basis, and at the conclusion of the debate the assembly unanimously expressed its “…regret, that such a baseless assertion could have a place in the Moscow Provincial Zemstvo Assembly.”\textsuperscript{39}

Despite the implicit vote of confidence, Naumov took the floor three days later and announced his intention to resign as chairman of the provincial board. Interestingly, all his fellow board members echoed his actions, clearing the deck for an entirely new slate of candidates in the next election. The next day, according to Shipov, “many delegates” came to him to express a desire that he declare his candidacy for the chairmanship. After some deliberation, he concluded that “the assembly did not have any other candidate on whose election the majority of delegates could agree.”\textsuperscript{40} After some collaboration with potential fellow board board

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 50-51. 
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 52-3. 
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 53. 
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 54.
members, Shipov was convinced of the need for his candidacy. He declared himself prepared to stand for election, and was duly chosen by a vote of 46 in favor, 12 against.

Shipov, for his part, seems somewhat ambiguous about the events that transpired. On the one hand, he is effusive in his praise for Naumov as a zemstvo activist. He describes a “feeling of great respect, both for the man himself, and for his understanding of zemstvo affairs.” Under Naumov’s twenty-five years of leadership, the Moscow zemstvo’s initiative “Moreover, he demonstrates little regard for the agitators pressing for the leader’s removal. He refused their nomination to oppose Naumov, and in his account of events regularly points out that their critical reports have little in the way of positive suggestions.

Yet, at the same time, there is a sense of rationalization of Naumov’s exit. In discussing the surprising groundswell of opposition, Shipov makes mention of new directions for the zemstvo, suggesting that perhaps Naumov’s particular brand of leadership had become obsolete: “During that period [the early 1890’s], actually, the sense of local [zemskii] needs underwent significant development, and life raised all these new questions, which demanded the quickest possible resolution, and D. A., already over 60 years of age, was perhaps not sufficiently quick in answering to these newly-risen demands.”

Caveats aside, this episode is interesting for what it tells us about the relationship between the zemstvo assembly and its leadership. The first, most surprising development is the speed with which the opposition developed, or even that the opposition developed at all. In the December 1889 board elections immediately preceding these conflicts, Naumov had been re-elected with 55 votes in favor and only 9 against. This was perhaps his most decisive margin of victory yet; he never faced a serious electoral challenge in the course of his entire tenure as

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41 Ibid., 46.
42 Ibid., 47.
43 TsIAM, f. 184, op. 2, d. 130, l. 108.
chairman. Yet, over the course of little more than a year, his reputation declined to the point that he faced an ostensible vote of confidence to determine whether he would serve out his term.44

Strange, too, is the apparent disorganization of the opposition to Naumov. The rival cohort had a substantial group of delegates who were dissatisfied with Naumov’s leadership, yet they were unable to come up with a candidate of their own. It speaks volumes that their first choice was a man who had great respect for the chairman. When Shipov refused the nomination, Naumov’s opponents were apparently unable to find another willing candidate to run for the post. This can perhaps be taken as a sign that the demands of the office were more than most potential candidates were willing to bear.

Additionally, it is worth noting, the issues that actually brought it to a head seem rather small. Within the vast sweep of zemstvo programs and policies, the question of financial support (or lack thereof) for psychiatric care does not seem to be the sort of issue that should provoke a revocation of confidence in the leadership. Given the overall size of the board’s administrative responsibility, and the small cluster of topics on which the sides actually disagreed, it seems remarkable that such disagreements could provoke the near-ouster of a widely respected figure.

Taken together, these factors suggest the predominance of a tenuous and perhaps unsustainable ideal about the relationship between the zemstvo and its leadership. For decades, Naumov enjoyed a rather remarkable level of support from his fellow delegates; indeed, it was the work of men Naumov and his close associates that allowed the delegates to function as a body at all. Because of the structure of zemstvo operations, the maintenance of this model required a tremendous level of trust on both sides. In other words, Naumov and others saw the

44 In fact, such a special election was almost unheard of. Given the legal strictures associated with local elections, it is not entirely sure that such an endeavor could have survived a challenge from higher authorities. For further discussion of electoral supervision, see chapter 7.
zemstvo not as an arena for democratic debate and contention, but as a forum for the expression of the general sentiment regarding the proper governance of the countryside. Thus, when that sentiment turned against him, his instinct was to withdraw, rather than to press his case more fully.

Lastly, we have little sense of a permanent shift in the overall tenor of zemstvo relations. Despite the apparent divisiveness engendered by Naumov’s leadership and that of his acolytes, Shipov was apparently able to restore comity in very short order. In fact, he managed to convince two of Naumov’s fellow board members to remain with him on the new board. There was a slight shift in composition a year later, but he tells us that “we worked together for quite a while [ne odno trekhletie] and I have always had the most satisfying and gratifying memories of our sincere and collegial relations and our friendly work…for the entire time of our collaboration not only did we have no instances of principled differences or any kind of misunderstandings, but I also don’t even remember serious disagreements about practical work.”

Ultimately, Naumov’s ouster does not appear to have caused a fundamental shift in the basic contours of the board-assembly relationship. Future zemstvo boards were again likely to see substantial support, both in their presentations to the assembly and in their bids for re-election. It is a fitting irony that the second-to-last man to serve as zemstvo board chairman in Moscow was N.F. Rikhter, Naumov’s nemesis in the disputes from long before. In his 1909 election, Rikhter was the only candidate to receive significant support for the nomination. He cruised to victory with 57 votes for, 26 against.

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45 Shipov, Vospominaniia, 56.
46 Zhurnaly zasedanii i postanovlenii Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobraniia ocherednoi sessii 1909 goda (Moscow: Pechatnia S. P. Iakovleva, 1910), 162. The high turnout suggests that concerns about lack of attendance were perhaps overwrought. In a further twist of irony, however, 46 delegates were absent from the next day’s session. Ibid., 164.
Conclusion

The newly-elected zemstvo assemblies found themselves in a rather curious position as they began their operations in the mid-1860s. On the one hand, they had been handed a substantial list of responsibilities and the potential for an ever-expanding mandate to improve life in the countryside. On the other, they were limited in their capacity to exercise oversight by the legislative restrictions on the duration of their meetings. With one 10-to-20 day session (sometimes supplemented by an additional extraordinary session), delegates had to supervise and direct zemstvo policy for an entire year.

Given the manner in which the majority of zemstvo leaders were elected, it should not surprise us that they chose to follow a similar pattern in exercising their power. They entrusted their executive officials with a great deal of authority, and for the most part deferred to their judgment in assessing the questions that arose. In addition to the legislatively-mandated zemstvo boards, which saw a yearly flood of requests, suggestions and instructions governing their activities, the assemblies regularly made use of designated commissions to examine particular topics. These commissions varied significantly in composition and duration. Some were ostensibly permanent, serving alongside the uprava as a sort of additional executive body, whereas others lasted only a few days, assigned to a very specific task or question.

Both the zemstvo uprava and the kommissii could generally count on significant support from the assembled delegates. Over time, however, this general sense of support for the zemstvo leadership devolved into a sort of rubber-stamping process, and unanimous ratification of reports and expenses became the norm. More ominously, we see a decline in participation from the mass of zemstvo delegates. Quite a number of the delegates elected by their uezd assemblies did not even both to attend the provincial sessions; of those that did, many did not even participate.
The general course was dominated by presentations from the board and commission members, with a handful of eager gadflies adding their voices to the debate. Thus, even as the zemstvos themselves were expanding their bureaucratic apparatus, the portion of delegates actually taking an active role declined. A relatively small cadre of leaders took the vast majority of the spots on the key commissions and committees.

Some of these tendencies, undoubtedly, can be attributed to the limitations imposed on the zemstvo assemblies. A short session each year would not be enough to consider and debate in full the major issues that arose over the course of the year; this conundrum only became more pronounced, as zemstvos took on (or were assigned) increasing duties in the administration of the countryside. Likewise, we should recognize that service on zemstvo commissions and committees could be quite labor-intensive, and did not even bring the financial remuneration that board membership did. One can sympathize to a certain extent with those delegates who ultimately decided to perform their office at the minimum level of adequacy.

These characterizations should not be taken to mean that the zemstvo was a moribund organization; clearly, this is far from the case. Rather, we must be extremely circumspect in considering the zemstvo as an organ that actually reflected the priorities of the local public. As this chapter and the previous have shown, there were numerous barriers between the constituents on one hand and the implementation of desired policies on the other. Several rounds of elections separated voters from the principal decision-makers; one more round separated them from the leaders of the provincial apparatus. Structural constraints and general apathy only exacerbated the situation; as a consequence, those who did take initiative could generally feel confident that they would not face significant opposition in their efforts. These initiatives could take any number of directions, but it is clear that the policies of the zemstvo were not the work of the
many, but of the few. At the same time, however, this particular model of leadership involved a rather fanciful conception of the links between the leadership and the assembly. The delegates vested a great deal of trust and authority in the board members and other leading executives, believing them capable of satisfying a fairly ephemeral general consensus about zemstvo action. When that implicit consensus was challenged, they were unable to find an alternative model for action.
Chapter 3: Peering Over Their Shoulder? Provincial Governors and Local Oversight

The prior two chapters highlighted particular consistencies in the exercise of leadership within the zemstvos and city dumas of Moscow and Penza. Our evidence suggests that the leaders worked largely independent of supervision from the delegates at large, and could expect ratification of their day-to-day decisions with a rather low level of opposition or debate. However, there was one other source of authority that had the potential to serve as a restraint on the freedom of action of the local government elites. The tsarist bureaucracy, in the person of the provincial government and his administration, could exercise its prerogatives to oversee the operation of local affairs. The aim of this chapter is to examine the degree to which the governors made use of these prerogatives, and the ends to which they directed their endeavors.

The narrative of conflict between the two loci of power has long been a staple of discussions of this era. Numerous commenters have sought to understand the tenuous process by which an autocratic government could endow subject organs with authority, responsibility, and nominal independence, yet maintain its supposedly unlimited authority over the entirety of the Russian state. The original depiction was one of an opening in the wake of the Great Reforms, followed by a sharp reversal during the reign of Alexander III. Larissa Zakharova, for instance, examines in detail the institutional processes that culminated in the “Zemstvo Counter-Reform” of 1890.1 Later historians have softened that view, emphasizing the more nuanced character of the center-local relationship. Thomas Pearson, for instance, emphasizes the administrative obstacles facing the tsarist state during the first decades of zemstvo activity that led to the need

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1 Larissa Zakharova, Zemskaiia kontrreforma 1890 goda (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Moskovskogo Universiteta, 1968).
for the revised statute. In the same way, Thomas Fallows traces the course of petitions to the central authorities to suggest that “the conventional idea of a virtuous zemstvo pursued by an evil bureaucracy is a distorted impression of a complicated reality.”

In his presentation, zemstvo activists and state bureaucrats worked in relative comity until the last few years before the Revolution of 1905. Only in this latter period did the heavy-handed approach of Interior Minister V. K. Pleve and his subordinates manage to convince the majority of zemstsy that they could not achieve their aims through legally sanctioned means.

These studies, though each impressive in their own right, concentrate primarily on the policies emanating from the center, and as such can only describe one aspect of national-local relations. Certainly, there is much to be said for an understanding of the legal milieu under which bureaucrats and delegates labored, so as to understand the larger context of their efforts. Yet, to focus exclusively on these matters is to ignore the bulk of the zemstvos’ actual operations. Even as calls for reform grew more strident and conflicts and the national level grew more intense, officeholders in the provinces (whether associated with the central government or local organizations) had to continue with the administration of their appointed territories.

In a recent article, Natasha Assa tried to break this paradigm through her examination of a substantial collection of zemstvo petitions to the Governing Senate. She found, somewhat surprisingly, that the zemstvos fared about as well in their efforts as did petitioners from the ministries and other organs within the tsarist government. Ultimately, however, she concludes that “the Senate's progressive practice in zemstvo cases was guided less by a liberal doctrine of a pravovoe gosudarstvo and civil society as by its centuries' old tradition of nadzor, i.e.,

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supervision over the central and provincial government of the empire..." Even Assa’s study, however, is a few steps removed from the actual operation of the zemstvos and dumas in the Russian provinces. During the period which Assa studies, the Senate only heard pleas that had passed through an earlier process of adjudication, and of these they only heard a select portion. Thus, although the data in question provide sufficient evidence for the author’s claims about conceptions of the state-local relationship, they do not provide an accurate picture of the actual substantive disputes between central and local officials.

This chapter will attempt to address that question through a survey of an often-overlooked entity in the continual tug-of-war between the interests of the central government and the local interests. The Provincial Committee on City Affairs (Gubernskoe po Gorodskim Delam Prisutstvie, hereafter GGDP) was formed in each province at the direction of the 1870 city reform. It served as the initial body for adjudication of disputes between the city authorities and the central government, the city and other official entities, or the city and private individuals. In 1890, a parallel committee (the Gubernskoe po Zemskim Delam Prisutstvie) was established to handle similar cases pertaining to the zemstvo. The GZDP was quite short-lived, for in 1892 the two organs were combined into one, the re-christened the Gubernskoe po Zemskim i Gorodskim Delam Prisutstvie (GZGDP). In addition to the expanded sphere of authority, the new committee boasted a revised membership and a modified set of responsibilities, but on the whole its operations continued much as they had during the prior era.

It is in this succession of entities that we can see the major contours of disputes between local organizations and the entities with whom they interacted. We see the issues which caused the most consistent conflict, the parties that were most likely to raise objections, and the areas on

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4 Natasha Assa, “How Arbitrary Was Tsarist Administrative Justice? The Case of the Zemstvos Petitions to the Imperial Ruling Senate, 1866-1916.” *Law and History Review* vol. 24, no. 1 (Spring, 2006),
which all parties could find common ground. Not surprisingly, the picture is a good deal more
complicated than that presented to us by the activists a century ago. They are correct that the
local organs faced significant opposition from governors and other tsarist officials, much of it
needless and counterproductive. However, the accumulated records also show reluctance on the
part of these officials to push too far. The more significant the matter under discussion, the less
likely was their intervention and opposition. Moreover, these decisions were not made in the
face of strident opposition from local officials. In the vast majority of cases, when the GGDP
and GZGDP ruled against local bodies, the local delegates themselves ratified the decisions.
While central and local leaders did face off over larger political issues, it is clear that these
disputes did not prevent them from collaborating on vital issues of policy and administration.

Before commencing discussion, some explanation of the source base is necessary. In
both Moscow and Penza, the records for these two committees (GGDP and GZGDP) are
extensive, covering numerous years during the period of operation. As such, a complete study
was unfeasible, and the assembled conclusions are instead based on a representative sample from
each province. For Penza, the years studied are 1871, 1875, 1894, and 1897, totaling 147 cases.
For Moscow province, the years covered are 1875, 1881, 1886, 1892-94, and 1897,
encompassing some 623 cases. Although further study would of course increase our
understanding of these committees, it seems reasonable to assume that the data gathered here are
sufficient to claim to be representative of their procedures, tendencies, and areas of interest.

**Competing Models**
As prior studies have shown, the Great Reforms were often more considered in the overall design than in the precise execution. The general parameters of reform were often articulated in a certain way, but the actual proposal under consideration could turn out to be quite different. An extra vote on a special commission or a timely amendment from one of the designates could significantly alter the scope and direction of key reform proposals.5

Thus, it is no surprise that the exact relationship between the central government and the newly-chartered local authorities was one of those areas where vagueness prevailed over explicit sentiments. The original zemstvo law evinces a consistent unease about the precise delineation of the zemstvo-center relationship. In establishing a role for the zemstvo in the countryside, the authors of the legislation tried to walk a fine line between, on the one hand, giving the zemstvos too little power to be effective, and on the other, compromising the prerogatives of the existing power structures. The result in the final legislation is a marked juxtaposition of strident assertions about zemstvo powers with strict injunctions about how those powers are to be used.

In its early sections, the law articulates a strict demarcation of the spheres of responsibility between the zemstvos and the governor, presumably to protect the independence of the former and the traditional prerogatives of the latter. Immediately after enumerating the responsibilities of the new bodies, the legislation declares that “the sphere of activity of the zemstvo authorities is to be limited to the boundaries of the gubernia or uezd related to each of these authorities.”6 Their duties are to be limited as well: “The zemstvo authorities, in their resolutions and orders, may not go outside of the sphere of activities appointed for them; in this

5 Examples of this phenomena include the Commission on Provincial and District Institutions (1861-62), which contributed to the development of the zemstvos, and the formation of the Secret Committee to design the plan for the abolition of serfdom. For the former, see S. Frederick Starr, Decentralization and Self-Government in Russia, 1830-1870 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 241-254. For the latter, see W. Bruce Lincoln, The Great Reforms: Autocracy, Bureaucracy, and the Politics of Change in Imperial Russia. (DeKalb, Northern Illinois University Press, 1990), 67-69.
6 PSZRI, no. 40457, sec 3.
manner they will not interfere in matters belonging to the sphere of activities of government, soslovie, and public powers and authorities.”

At the same time, the legislation takes pains to emphasize the powers and prerogatives of the zemstvo. “The zemstvo authorities are charged with the discussion, decision, and execution of all legal measures necessary [author’s italics] for the progress of matters (khod dela) entrusted to the jurisdiction of the aforementioned authorities.” Likewise, the “Zemstvo authorities, within the sphere of matters entrusted to them, are to act independently. The law delineates the situations and the procedure, in which their activities and instructions are subject to the approval and monitoring of the general governing powers.”

In other sections, however, the legislation undercuts much of this spirit of independence. It assigns the provincial governor broad powers of supervision. An early section of the law declared, with little ambiguity, that “the head of the province [i.e. the governor] has the right to halt execution of any sort of decree by the zemstvo authorities that is contrary to laws, or to the general benefit of the state.” And, if the zemstvos did not do enough, the governor was again directed to step in: “If the zemstvo authorities do not bring to enactment those duties that the law recognizes as obligatory for the zemstvos, then the head of the province, when his reminders are unsuccessful, should step up, with the permission of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), to direct execution of those duties on the zemstvo’s account.” Thus, despite the zemstvo independence asserted in the earlier sections, the governors were enjoined with responsibilities for both affirmative and negative actions to ensure proper functioning.

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7 *PSZRI*, no. 40457, sec. 7.
8 Ibid., sec. 4.
9 Ibid., sec. 6.
10 Ibid., sec. 9. Note that the Minister of Internal Affairs could also halt the implementation of zemstvo decrees for the same specified reasons as the governors.
11 Ibid., sec. 10.
The legislation left detailed instructions about the procedure necessary to secure approval from the central government. All zemstvo decrees were to be submitted to the governor “without delay,” and a certain subset of these was to be passed on to MVD for approval. In the absence of word to the contrary from the governor over the course of those seven days, the decree was to be considered valid and put into effect. However, in the event of objections, the governor was to present a detailed explanation of his objections within seven days of receipt. The assembly could, in turn, re-authorize the decree and include an explanation of its reasoning, whereupon the governor was to decide whether the clarification was sufficient. Once again, he had seven days to act; if he believed that the legislation was still outside of appropriate grounds, he was to again halt its implementation and submit the matter to the State Senate for adjudication, with an additional copy to the Minister of Internal Affairs. In those cases where the Minister was the primary decision-maker, a similar process would take place, with the Senate still acting as the final locus of appeals.

While the process itself was described in detail, the legislation never expanded on the criteria by which the governor or the central authorities were to evaluate zemstvo decrees. Certainly, one could envision any number of hypothetical decrees that would be clearly outside of the stipulated sphere of activity, or directly contradictory to existing law. But how is one to evaluate “the general benefit of the state”? With this additional codicil, the law seemed to authorize all sorts of potential intervention, on the flimsiest of grounds.

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12 Ibid., sec. 90, 92. The list of topics appropriate for gubernatorial intervention included, among others, implementation of zemstvo expenditures, division of zemstvo roads between the province and the districts, and the establishment of “exhibitions of local production.” Issues that required approval from the Ministry of Interior included high-principal loans, collection of tolls on zemstvo roads, and the opening of trade fairs for a duration of greater than fourteen days. 13 Ibid., sec. 94-96.
The overhaul of city government, ushered into law a short six years later, took a substantially different approach. In place of the prior use of the MVD as the primary locus of dispute resolution, the new law created an additional authority at the local level. The legislation mandated the establishment of a Provincial Committee on City Affairs.14

In its composition, the GGDP drew from a variety of ministries and local organizations. The governor was designated as the chairman, and the other members included the vice-governor, the manager of the treasury chamber (upravliaiushchii kazennoiu palatoiu), the procurator of the regional court, the chairman of the Congress of Justices (mirovoi s'ezd), the chairman of the provincial zemstvo board and the mayor of the capital city of the province. In addition, disputes between the city and outside authorities called for the admittance of another member: either the head of the disputing body or, in cases of financial calculations, the manager of the control chamber (upravliaiushchii kontrol'noiu palatoiu). These additional representatives were to be admitted “with the right of voice,” presumably meaning the right to vote on the final decision of the GGDP.15 Interestingly, the reform law made no mention of the order of business—the procedures for discussing the issues under consideration, the method of voting, and procedures for breaking ties and related matters.

If we are to view the politics of this era in a strictly bifurcated light, the deck was clearly stacked against the local organizations. Of the seven permanent members of the GGDP, only two were representatives from bodies of local government. And, of these two, the zemstvo chairman, with none of his own organization’s prerogatives at stake, would have had little incentive to act as a strong advocate for the cities’ interests.

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14 Although “prisutstvie” is ordinarily translated as “office,” in this instance I have chosen to translate it as “committee,” as the latter seems a more apt characterization of these bodies’ composition and function.  
15 PSZRI, no. 48498, sec. 11
On the issues of spheres of authority, however, the GGDP was given clear instructions and guidance—much more so than in the zemstvo legislation six years before. Subsequent sections detailed the specific circumstances in which the GGDP was to take action and adjudicate. These included the following:

1. To rule on a motion by the governor that the duma or other authorities were not fulfilling a legally necessary need of the city, and allowing the governor to take direct oversight for a particular program or duty; (sec 12)
2. To hear petitions from those dissatisfied with the established voting lists (sec 29)
3. To hear petitions on potential irregularities in the conduct of elections (sec. 45)
4. To hear petitions from the mayor, contending that certain Duma resolutions are contrary to existing law (sec. 80)
5. To consider petitions about potential irregularities in duma voting (sec. 77)
6. To hear petitions on illegal activities of the duma board or the mayor (sec. 150). N. B. Citizens deprived of their rights could bring a lawsuit "on a general basis." (sec. 148)
7. To hear petitions from zemstvo and estate officials regarding disputes with the city authorities, or from the governor himself on similar matters (sec. 151)
8. To consider cases of wrongdoing by duma officials. (In this situation, alone among the above sections, the legislation authorizes the duma an explicit right of appeal to the State Senate).
9. To consider cases of disagreement between the local administration and the police. (sec. 105 and 106)¹⁶

These issue areas are quite broad, indicating that the GGDP was to have authority to rule on a wide range of local government activity. Indeed, the wording essentially opens all areas of municipal activity to the committee’s oversight. However, one should note that the regulations are always grounded in principles of existing law. The needs of the city mentioned in section 12 are “legally necessary;” protests against Duma decrees must argue from their illegality, rather than their ill-advisedness; and challenges to local elections would be grounded in statutory requirements.

Thus, the regulations mark a significant departure from the prior system implemented only six years prior. The government’s supervision of zemstvos was wide-ranging and subject only to the governor himself; for the cities, supervision was mediated through a committee and, at least in principle, segmented into particular areas of responsibility. These areas of responsibility were broadly drawn, but were at least ostensibly limited—they were explicitly

¹⁶ PSZRI, no. 48498.
grounded in legal authority rather than general statements of “any action contrary to the best interests of the populace” as was mentioned in the zemstvo legislation.

It is difficult to gauge whether this change in approach after only six years was indicative of dissatisfaction with the results of the zemstvo approach, bureaucratic whim, or some other cause. Whatever the reason, however, the result was the same. The tsarist government committed itself to two very different systems for supervision of the new institutions. As the zemstvos and the reformed city dumas charted their new courses, these bifurcated approaches formed the central nexus of the government’s interactions with the new bodies for the next two decades.

**Two Systems**

As the GGDP swung into operation in Penza, its activities began slowly, but quickly increased in both number and extent. The GGDP heard only seventeen cases in 1871 (its first full year of operation), and every one of those cases arose from a dispute in the capital city. A short four years later, there were fifty-four cases spread over twelve different dumas, and smaller towns such as Saransk and Troitsk were drawing every bit as much attention as the capital. In Moscow, the development was more haphazard—80 cases in 1875, then to 48 in 1881, before a rebound to 82 cases in 1886—but the distribution pattern was similar. Certain towns might draw more attention in a given year, but all the areas under the prisutstvie’s purview saw at least some measure of contestation and nullification during the years surveyed.

It stands to reason that we would see an early focus on the capital cities, followed by an increase in attention to the district capitals and other townships. Many of the smaller district towns had limited city government functions before the introduction of the city reform, and it
stands to reason that it would take a few years for them to establish a sufficient enough presence to attract opposition from petitioners or provincial authorities. Less intuitive, however, is how predominant this trend would become. During the latter period of the GGDP operation, the capital cities made up a much lower proportion of cases than their size would indicate. In Penza, town dumas such as Kerensk, Troitsk, and Insar were overturned as often as were decrees from the capital, despite greater level of activity of the latter.\(^\text{17}\) In Moscow, the disparity was even greater. For instance, of those 80 cases adjudicated by the Moscow committee in 1875, only five arose from organizations in the city of Moscow itself, while district capitals such as Podol’sk and Volokolamsk nearly doubled this total.\(^\text{18}\)

The most likely explanation for this phenomenon is that the presence of the capital city mayor as a regular member of the committee had some influence on the interactions between the committee and the capital duma. Presumably, the mayor’s voice during deliberations would carry more weight in defending the Duma from criticism than would appeals from less familiar officeholders. Moreover, a member of the GGDP would have a greater understanding of the limits of city action, and could consequently be more capable of anticipating and defusing potential conflicts arising from his city’s activities. However, as the committee’s minutes do not record the arguments of individual members, we must keep this conclusion at the level of hypothesis.

In subject matter, the committees adjudicated matters related to a wide range of activities. There was seemingly no aspect of city government or administration that could long escape attention. A Chembar Duma plan to rent out a plot of city land met a veto because the measure would require a re-working of the official city plan, and such amendments could only occur upon

\(^{17}\) GAPO, f. 361, op. 1, d. 28.
\(^{18}\) TsIAM, f. 1642, op. 1, d. 11.
the governor’s approval.¹⁹ An 1875 decision saw the Mozhaisk Duma sanctioned for its failure to include 650 rubles for the Police Authority in its planned expenditures.²⁰ The same year saw the GGDP overturn city regulations on, among many other topics, street cleaning, limitations on establishments serving alcohol, the excise tax on inns, numerous fire code decrees, and a reduction in the fine for cutting down city-owned forests.²¹ Later cases saw even more obscure objections, like an 1886 protest from the governor against a Podol’sk declaration allowing homeowners and businesses to put hitching posts in front of their buildings.²²

Although sometimes the GGDP objected because the proposed measures exceeded the Duma’s authority, quite often the measures were voted down for more mundane reasons. For instance, the Penza committee overruled an 1875 Krasnoslobodsk decision on land allocation because of an insufficient quorum (the decision was made when only fourteen of the thirty-six delegates were in attendance, rather than the necessary one-half).²³ Under the same justification, it overruled a planned sale of Penza city land in 1871.²⁴ And in 1875 the prisutstvie used it to overturn a planned sale in Nizhniy Lomov, where the Duma had approved the sale of a single plot of land as divided tracts. Because the Duma had not authorized each individual new tract, the plan was rendered invalid.²⁵

Nor did the GGDP confine its oversight to planned programs and expenditures—the internal operations of the various city organs came under scrutiny as well. In one case, the Bogorodsk Duma to carry out a required official audit of its finances for the years 1864-1871,

¹⁹ GAPO f. 361, d. 28, l. 47-48.
²⁰ TsIAM, f. 1642, op. 1, d. 5, l. 245-248.
²¹ TsIAM, f. 1642, op. 1, d. 5.
²² TsIAM, f. 1642, op 1, d 16, no. 38.
²³ GAPO, f. 361, d. 28, l. 3-4.
²⁴ GAPO, f. 361, d. 2, l. 34.
²⁵ GAPO, f. 361, d. 28, l. 7.
despite the fact that the accounts had already been approved by the Provincial Administration.  

Most tellingly in this regard, the prisutstvie was often called on to weigh in on electoral matters, ruling on questions of voter eligibility or procedural irregularities. Here, as with the prior actions, we see strict adherence to the existing law and established protocols. The Penza committee overturned an Insar election to the police board because the Duma made the decision by voice vote, rather than a secret ballot. A Podol’sk Duma election was overturned because the mayor was being investigated for a potential failure to uphold the duties of office (any officeholder under investigation or judicial action was forbidden a vote).

Likewise, we see significant attention paid to the conduct of officeholders, and potential violations of the terms of office. According to the criminal statutes, the GGDP was to serve as a sort of grand jury for city officials suspected of corruption or other crimes. The committee, after weighing the preponderance of evidence, decided whether sufficient grounds existed for a judicial action against the official in question. If yes, then they passed the case to the local court for prosecution. Under this statute, we see the 1881 indictment of the director of the Ruza Public Bank and a confederate for embezzlement (rastrata) of funds. According to the Criminal Statutes, officeholders could even be held liable for failure to fulfill the duties ascribed to their position. This, in fact, was the offense ascribed to the Podol’sk mayor mentioned above; unfortunately, the case record makes no mention of the ways in which he was deemed to be negligent.

We also see a few examples of cases where the violation was not serious enough to merit further prosecution. Specifically, the GGDP was entrusted by the various laws on military

26 TsIAM, f. 1642, op. 1, d. 5, l. 123-25.
27 GAPO, f. 361, d. 28, l. 1-2.
28 TsIAM, f. 1642, op. 1, d. 5, l. 153-157. This action may have stemmed from the committee’s frustration with the Duma’s failure to hold the election within the timespan required by law.
29 TsIAM, f. 1642, op. 1, d. 11, no. 45.
recruiting with supervision of the recruitment process, and granted the authority to level fines in cases of violation. Thus, the Penza committee issued a fine of 30 rubles against the Saransk City Board in 1875 on account of improper recruitment of a local *meshchanin.* That same year, the Moscow prisutstvie instituted similar actions against board members from the Voskresensk and Podol’sk boards, both of which also resulted in fines of 30 rubles.31

As should be clear from the examples above, the GGDPs in both provinces showed little reservations about overruling city duma decrees and legislation, or cracking down on individual officials. The Moscow prisutstvie, in its deliberations from 1875, heard a total of 74 cases for which a verdict was necessary. Of these, fifty-four (73 percent) resulted in a judgment in whole or in part against a local body or its officials.32 In Penza, the same year saw 54 cases adjudicated, resulting in 37 judgments against local bodies (68.5 percent). These ratios declined in the ensuing years (presumably, local officials became more canny about the limits of their power), but still made up a large portion of the prisutstvie’s work. The ratio in Moscow in 1881 was 23 out of 42 (54 percent), and five years later, it was 28 out of 67 (42 percent).

These results become clearer when we consider the petitioners initiating the cases. The cases were initiated (in nearly equal measure) by the provincial governors and by private entities. The governors, for the most part, are responsible for the wide variety of cases heard by the GGDP. In both Moscow and Penza, in every year studied, the governors had a very high success rate. In 1881, for instance, the governor brought eighteen separate issues to the GGDP for adjudication. Of these, sixteen resulted in an overruling of the original decree. In 1886, his

30 GAPO, f. 361, op. 1, d. 2, l. 17-18.
31 TsIAM, f. 1642, op 1, d. 5, no. 4-5. These cases could, at times, be taken to a higher level. A subsequent violation of recruiting standards was referred to the local court for judicial action (See Ibid., no. 6). I could find no clear explanation of the differing standards between the two types of cases.
32 TsIAM, f. 1642, op. 1, d. 5. The non-adjudicated cases (there were only six in 1875) concerned procedural matters such as the sending of petitions to the Senate or the committee’s own budget.
33 TsIAM, f. 1642, op 1, d. 11.
success rate was twelve overturns out of thirteen cases. 34 Clearly, when they raised an issue for GGDP deliberation, the governors could be very confident that the prisutstvie would ultimately vote in favor of their position.

Petitions from private entities (either individuals or corporate bodies) made up a substantial minority of GGDP actions, but their interests were generally narrower. The most common complaints revolved around a small cluster of issues. Particularly common are instances in which city residents (often merchants) appealed to the GGDP to enforce contracts that they had made with city authorities. For instance, a certain Nizhniy Lomov merchant named Shvarev filed a petition alleging that he had rented a particular tract of land from the city for the sale of goods at the annual market. Though the contract called for an annual payment of 4 rubles 50 kopecks each year for twelve years, in the years 1873 and 1874 he was inexplicably charged 14 rubles by city authorities, and thus resolved to press his case with the GGDP. 35 Shvarev, like many of his fellows, was left frustrated in his hopes. Cases of this nature were invariably left without action, because the City Statute of 1870 explicitly provided that private citizens had the right to file suit against city organs “in the event of the violation of their citizens’ rights), and thus the GGDP was not the appropriate body for adjudication. 36

We see regular complaints from individuals frustrated in their desire to obtain office. For instance, a Deputy Elder of the Saransk Tradesmen (Kandidat Meshchanskogo Starosta) appealed for confirmation to replace his senior upon the conclusion of the latter’s term. He provided a petition signed by 30 fellow society members, and contended that this was in keeping with a prior resolution of the Tradesmen Society. The GGDP overturned his request, ruling that proper elections, rather than mere assembly resolutions, were required for confirmation in

34 TsIAM, f. 1642, op 1, d. 16.
35 GAPO, f. 361, op. 1, d. 28, l. 32-33. For a similar case with the same resolution, see ibid., l. 112-113.
36 PSZRI, no. 48498, sec. 148.
leadership posts. A collegiate assessor from Penza by the name of Milianovskii also appealed to the GGDP for redress, arguing that his protests about recent elections to the city duma had not been accepted because of procedural irregularities (apparently the relevant officials were tending to a fire elsewhere in the city when he came to register his petition). The committee sided with Milianovskii and ruled that the refusal to accept his petition at a later date was improper, but disagreed with him that the elections themselves were invalid. He, too, was left without redress.

These petitions, and their resolutions, might suggest why we see so many petitions from private entities. The GGDP offered a low-cost means to protest local decrees, so petitioners had little disincentive to filing petitions even when they felt their chances of success were slight. Perhaps as a consequence, the private petitioners were markedly less likely to be successful in their endeavors than were the governors. With few exceptions, their appeals were usually dismissed with a brisk notation to “leave without further action.” (*ostavit’ bez posledstvii*).

Based on the patterns thus described, one may be tempted to argue that the evidence supports the more strident criticisms of the anti-government liberals. The committee was organized so as to give officials from the central government a majority voice, and representatives of local self-government gave only a patina of legitimacy and collaboration. Inevitably, the committee followed the dictates of the governor, overruling the local bodies on topics of every conceivable sort, while remaining prejudiced against grievances arriving from private individuals.

Such a view, however, does not take into account a number of important caveats, each of which complicates our understanding of center-local relationships. First, as the examples above

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37 GAPO, f. 361, op. 1, d. 28, l. 55-56.
38 GAPO, f. 361, op. 1, d. 28, l. 60-66.
suggest, the issues on which the committee chose to exercise its authority were hardly earth-shattering. For instance, it may have been frustrating and overly bureaucratic to force the Insar Duma to hold a re-vote (with secret balloting instead of a voice vote), but it would hardly have changed the fate of the initiative. Likewise, the vetoes of duma decrees because of a failure to obtain quorum were presumably mere procedural obstacles to final enactment. Since the votes were unanimous, the decisions in question would undoubtedly have been re-enacted once a quorum was reached. Even the supervision of financial matters pales in comparison to the overall budgetary picture of the city organs. In the case described above, the Mozhaisk Duma would have been required to add an additional 650 rubles to its planned outlays for the coming year, but this amount is only a small fraction of the tens and hundreds of thousands of rubles that made up the average municipal budget. There is little evidence, then, that the GGDP intended to exert a commanding influence over the course of local government operations.

Second, as indicated by the copious examples above, the prisutstviiia were invariably guided by a spirit of strict, even zealous adherence to the letter of the law. Each case was judged by reference to a specific section in existing legislation, and the final ruling generally hinged on a precise understanding of that particular codicil.

Third, we must recognize that there were exceptions to this general pattern. Although relatively uncommon, we do note instances in which the governor's objections were ultimately not seconded by the prisutstvie as a whole, or where an independent petitioner managed to find redress. In these decisions, we also see a regular willingness on the part of the prisutstvie to restrict its own authority. Likewise, there are a number of instances in which it declares particular questions beyond its sphere of jurisdiction. Clearly, the committees were motivated by more than a desire to reinforce the governors and quash the local bodies.
Unfortunately, these conclusions can only reflect the actions of the prisustvie as a whole. The GGDP records available to us provide little information about the deliberations of the committee, so we have little sense of the course of debate on a particular topic. The minutes provide detailed summations of the case and the reason for the decision, but do not indicate whether (if at all) certain members spoke up in defense of the losing side. Moreover, even the final votes were usually not recorded. From time to time we see mention of a unanimous decision or one made “by a majority against one [dissenting vote],” but even these latter examples are few and far between.

However, the reactions to the GGDP decisions suggest that there was likewise very little in the way of dissent from the subject bodies themselves. As stipulated in the authorizing statute, local bodies could appeal GGDP decisions to the Governing Senate. The GGDP served as a clearinghouse for these appeals, first determining whether the plea introduced any new considerations into the case (the answer was invariably in the negative), and then forwarding the entire case to the Senate for determination. For the most part, the local bodies chose not to exercise this right. The Penza GGDP, in fact, has no record of appeals from the two years in consideration.39 In Moscow, there are a handful of appeals, but they form only a small portion of the overall number of cases under adjudication. In 1875, we see only six requests for an appeal to the Governing Senate.40 In 1881, the figure was again six, and in fact most of these were from private or semi-private entities (among them two railroad officials and a merchant protesting taxation decisions).41 The year 1886 saw a surprise uptick in appeals (fourteen in total), but

39 GAPO, f. 361, op. 1, d 2 and f. 361, op. 1, d. 28. There is some possibility that they did not record these appeals in the minutes, but given the other similarities to Moscow, this seems rather unlikely to be the case.
40 TsIAM, f. 1642, op. 1, d. 5.
41 TsIAM, f. 1642, op. 1, d. 11.
these appeals still made up only a minority of the cases decided by the GGDP.\textsuperscript{42} And, once again, the city organs had a lower likelihood of appeals than did other bodies.

Thus, we can conclude with reasonable certainty that the GGDP's verdicts did not engender significant opposition from within the ranks of the committee. If even the affected groups were generally deferential to the decisions of the committee, it stands to reason that the committee members themselves were generally satisfied with the results. In the absence of more clear indication, circumstantial evidence points to the idea of a body that functioned in relative harmony over the course of its period of operations.

\textbf{The Merger}

For two decades, the government pursued this bifurcated approach to supervision of local self-government. Like much of the local self-government structure, the adjudication system underwent significant change during the so-called “counter-reform” period of the early 1890’s. These particular changes, however, do not easily fit within the rubric of a counter-reform. If anything, they represent further steps on the part of the government to bring the zemstvo into an organized and bureaucratic legal regime.

The central change in the relationship between the zemstvos and the governor was the decision to do away with the system of oversight that had persisted for the preceding twenty-six years. Gone was the notion of direct gubernatorial supervision; instead, the 1890 revised zemstvo statute provided for the establishment of a new body, the Provincial Committee on Zemstvo Affairs (\textit{Gubernskoe po Zemskim Delam Prisutstvie}, hereafter GZDP).

Moreover, the composition of the body was altered, giving a greater voice to the representatives of local self-government. The governor remained as the chairman of the new body.

\textsuperscript{42} TsIAM, f. 1642, op. 1, d. 16.
body, and its members included the following: the provincial Marshal of the Nobility, the Vice-Governor, the Manager of the Treasury Palace, the Procurer of the Regional Court, the chairman of the Provincial Zemstvo Board, and a member of the provincial zemstvo assembly, to be chosen by the board or the assembly itself.43 Additional voting members could be included based on the particular issue under consideration.44 The addition of the Noble Marshal (who also chaired the zemstvo assembly) and an at-large delegate meant that the composition of the body shifted notably toward the side of the local government organs. Although the zemstvo would not have a majority vote during the deliberations, it would have three permanent delegates who could speak on its behalf.

The GZDP was to function in much the same manner as the GGDP, although the law added several clarifications of issues not covered in the city reform. The committee was explicitly directed to function by majority rule, with the governor casting an extra vote in case of a tie.45 In cases where the governor disagreed with the decision of the majority, he was to temporarily halt the implementation of the decision and appeal to the Minister of Internal Affairs. The latter would then either direct the governor to allow the decision to proceed or present the matter to the Governing Senate for a permanent injunction.46

The GZDP only lasted a short while; the 1892 city reform included a codicil merging its activities with those of the GGDP. The resulting body was the Provincial Committee on Zemstvo and City Affairs (Gubernskoe po Zemskim i Gorodskim Delam Prisutstvie, hereafter GZGDP), which remained in place for the next twenty-five years. The composition was similar

43 PSZRI, 3rd. ed. no. 6927, sec. 8.
44 Ibid., sec. 9.
45 Ibid., sec. 10.
46 Ibid., sec. 11-12.
to the prior iteration, although a delegate from the capital city’s duma would take the place of the at-large zemstvo delegate in cases relating to city administration.\textsuperscript{47}

Despite the procedural modifications and the change in membership, the general scope of the prisutstvie’s actions remained the same during the new era. We certainly see increased caseloads with the addition of the zemstvo oversight (the Moscow GZGDP reached a high of 149 cases in 1894),\textsuperscript{48} but the committee’s relations with the zemstvo did not differ substantially from its relations with the other organs of local self-government. We still see numerous objections from the governor on a wide range of topics. In matters both large and small, the governors continued to have the upper hand; we see very few instances in which the prisutstvie did not echo their objections.

As before, private individuals and organizations, apparently undeterred by the continual low success rate for outside petitions, barraged the committee with a constant stream of requests for redress. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the change in election laws, questions of voter eligibility were a prime topic. Petitioners sought to have their names included on balloting lists, and challenged the validity of those elections in which they felt that ineligible voters had participated.\textsuperscript{49} As before, the overwhelming majority of these petitions were unsuccessful.

The committee’s procedural approach also survived the transition largely intact. The prisutstvie again relied on scrupulous readings of current legislation to render its judgment, often resulting in a verdict that bordered on the trivial. In one case from 1891, a widow donated funding to support the transfer of a clinic to zemstvo management, under the stipulation that it remain named after her. When the zemstvo officially took over operations, the governor objected to this latter proposition, because the existing legislation did not give zemstvos the right

\textsuperscript{47} PSZRI, 3\textsuperscript{rd}. ed., no. 8708, sec. 12.
\textsuperscript{48} TsIAM, f. 65, op. 45, d. 35.
\textsuperscript{49} For an example of the former, see GAPO, f. 11, op. 1, d. 86, l. 4. For the latter, see ibid., l. 25.
to name the institutions under their auspices.\textsuperscript{50} In another instance, the committee overruled the Volokolamsk Uezd Zemstvo’s expression of thanks to several area land captains for their assistance in various matters, because a Senate promulgation held that “societal authorities are not permitted to make official expressions of gratitude and recognition for officials in service…”\textsuperscript{51}

However, we do see significant changes in certain areas as the committee expanded its sphere of oversight. The revised city statute dictated that the GZGDP was to provide a recommendation to the MVD regarding multi-year loans taken out by the city bodies.\textsuperscript{52} A similar provision in the zemstvo statute allowed for the committee to authorize loans to the zemstvo from the state treasury. In theory, this allowed for substantial increased involvement in dictating the priorities of the local government organs. Faced with increasing demand for their services and great difficulties in collecting the taxes necessary to those ends, the zemstvos and city dumas had a tight margin for financial error.\textsuperscript{53} Appeals to the GZGDP for help were not quite a requisite for survival, but they did occur on a regular basis, and committee members could have used this leverage to exert concessions.

In practice, however, the GZGDP was quite deferential to the prerogatives of the city dumas and the zemstvos. During the period under study, the prisutstvie approved every single request of this nature presented to it by the local organizations. In one instance, the Penza district zemstvo, facing a “rather weak” collection of needed taxes, requested a loan from the state treasury of 35,680 rubles. Apparently, this was the sum total of their outstanding debts to

\textsuperscript{50} TsIAM, f. 65, op. 1, d. 15. Unfortunately, there is no record of the ultimate resolution of the case, so we have no way of knowing whether the name was ultimately changed or whether the zemstvo eventually relinquished control.
\textsuperscript{51} TsIAM, f. 65, op. 45, d.3, l. 80-82.
\textsuperscript{52} PSZRI, 3rd. ed., no. 8708, sec. 78-85.
\textsuperscript{53} See below, chapters 4 and 5.
their creditors, for which they were paying interest of 10-12 percent. In another case, the Mokshansk zemstvo applied for and received a loan of 51,000 rubles from the treasury in order to fund ongoing operations. Interestingly, this appeal was the second time the funds had been requested (a petition for the same amount a year before was rejected because the zemstvo’s debts were “insignificant.” This is the only example we have of a request for funds being wholly rejected, and even that rejection was reversed a year later. We do, however, see some conditions attached to loan approval. In one instance Penza GZGDP approved a loan for the Gorodishche zemstvo, but stipulated that it should go to “credit authorities or private individuals” to obtain the 33,000 rubles they needed for partial repayment of debts. Thus, despite a few procedural hurdles, the GZGDP invariably approved the requested funds.

As mentioned above, the GZGDP not only approved short-term loans from the treasury, but also long-term funding for particular projects. Here, too, approval was essentially a matter of course. In 1897, the Moscow GZGDP reviewed a proposal for substantial improvements in the city’s water supply system. The project had been in the works for some time under the auspices of a special committee for water supply and canals. It was to include such projects as improvement of the pipe networks, laying of additional pipes along the Sokol’nicheskii highway, and the installation of extra machinery at the Aleekseevskii pumping station. The anticipated cost of the project was 2.7 million rubles, to be paid for through a bond issue at 4.5 percent interest. The GZGDP approved the measure in its entirety, with ostensibly no further guidance or instruction.

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54 GAPO f. 11, d. 86, l. 1.  
55 GAPO f. 11, d. 86, l. 3-4.  
56 GAPO f. 11, d. 86, l. 2.  
57 TsIAM, f. 65, op. 45, d. 55, no. 7.
These episodes underscore several of the key themes to emerge from the relationship between the central government and local power. First, the GZGDP is quick to agree with the judgments of the Penza Provincial Assembly, which served as the first approving authority for the loan applications. In each of the situations described above, the Assembly ratified the funding proposals put to them. Thus, although the GZGDP was allowed a point of entry into greater supervision, it largely demurred. Rather than take on responsibility for debating the viability of particular spending projects or the overall distribution of local finances, the default approach was to approve all measures that the local bodies deemed necessary for their successful operation.

One other area where we see increased activity on the part of the GZGDP is in the consideration of potential cases of wrongdoing by local officials. These cases are notable not only for their increased frequency, but also the increased seriousness of the charges. In particular, food provision provided the occasion for particularly unseemly dealings by certain zemstvo members. A number of cases from the period immediately surrounding the great famine of 1891-2 illustrate the severity of some of the cases the GZGDP was asked to examine. In one case, the Klin District Zemstvo heard a petition from a local peasant, asking for a loan of 230 chetverts of rye seed from the provincial food bank. During the deliberations, a certain Lebedev, a member of the uezd board, attested that he believed that it was necessary to give out slightly more than 170 chetverts of grain. The Provincial Zemstvo Board, presumably acting on this recommendation, approved the purchase of seeds for loan, but also stipulated that these seeds be purchased at current market prices. As it turned out, however, the eventual purchase was made not at the market price, but at a predetermined amount which was significantly higher.
More damningly, the seller of these seeds, who made a handsome profit based on the increased rates, was none other than the wife of that same Lebedev.\textsuperscript{58}

Once the details of the purchase came out, the Klin Zemstvo Assembly found itself on the horns of a dilemma. Although the most recent zemstvo legislation had specifically prohibited board members from direct participation in the “proceedings and supplying of local administration,” there was no mention of family members. A strict reading would regard the sale was completely within legal bounds. However, it remained for the assembly to consider whether other principles had been violated, and to establish a means of preventing this sort of occurrence in the future. During the ensuing debate, the original proposal to declare the sale “improper” was softened, such that the final statement of the assembly on the matter found that although the relevant legislative section “is not directly related to the current matter. . . nevertheless [the Assembly] finds such purchases \textit{undesirable} [my italics], and should not be permitted in the future.”\textsuperscript{59}

This declaration was apparently not enough for one particular delegate in the assembly. A. A. Olenin, who had originally raised the topic for debate, issued a dissenting opinion in the zemstvo minutes, making the case that the board’s actions were not only “undesirable,” but in fact specifically contradicted the existing zemstvo legislation. When the governor got wind of these matters, he turned it over to the GZGDP for review, suggesting that the current matter required the Assembly to “adopt a more definite decision on a complete and unconditional prohibition of similar matters in the future.”\textsuperscript{60}

Ultimately, however, the GZGDP chose to ratify the actions of the Klin assembly. Neither of the two findings could be construed as “contrary to law and requiring revocation,”

\textsuperscript{58} TsIAM, f. 65, op. 45, d. 31, l. 273-275.  
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{60} TsIAM, f. 65, op. 45, d. 31, l. 273-275.
because the existing legislation gave the assemblies particular authority over the actions of their executive boards. In fact, they were specifically authorized to direct the order of affairs and give them appropriate instruction on that matter. Clearly, the actions of the assembly fell within these prerogatives. Even the governor, who had originally referred the case to the prisutstvie, ultimately signed off on the conclusion. In the end, the prisutstvie declared that they “recognized this [assembly decree] as correctly adopted and subject to be being brought into effect.” In fact, aside from the written rebuke for the board as a whole, there is no mention in the records of disciplinary action against Lebedev himself, nor is there any ruling on reversing or modifying the terms of the seed purchase.61

What stands out in this case is the remarkable level of restraint on the part of all adjudicating parties. From a more modern perspective, the combination of the elevated price and the wife’s role as supplier make a strong argument for abuse of office, and the tepid language of the Klin Zemstvo motion is a meager substitute. Yet, the GZGDP did not act to remove Lebedev from office, nor did they suggest or demand a stronger censure from the assembly. They adhered to a strict interpretation of the existing legislative regime. Even during a time when the central government has been accused of strident overreach, they were scrupulous in their regard for zemstvo prerogatives.

Other cases involved even greater sums, and a commensurate potential for damage and abuse. In October of 1891, the Penza provincial zemstvo, in conjunction with the district zemstvos, elected to send out representatives to various regions in order to purchase grain and bolster the local food supply. One of the men, a peasant on the Nizhnyi Lomov district board by the name of Sitnikov, was sent south to make his purchases. In total, he and his partner

61 Ibid.
purchased 1,468 carts of grain, totaling slightly more than 100,000 puds (3.6 million pounds). Their purchases came to a total of over one million rubles.

However, when the grain was delivered to its intended recipients (approximately 80 percent was sent to the Gorodishche zemstvo), inspectors found that a significant quantity of the grain had been adulterated with a variety of weeds. The local merchants carrying out the inspection found adulteration in 62 of the 124 samples studied. In other wagons, they found samples of low-quality grain and other problems.

The GZGDP conducted a rather thorough investigation, hearing testimony from the provincial Marshal of the Nobility and the chairman of the Provincial Zemstvo Board. Ultimately, they decided that the overall percentage of adulteration was rather small—4,258 puds out of the 100,650 that had been purchased (slightly more than four percent). This, coupled with the “particular extremity at that time with regard to bread for food supply for the population and the planting of the province’s fields, as well as the rapidity with which the grain bought on Sitnikov’s authority was delivered from the western provinces,” ultimately led the GZGDP to mandate that the judicial action be halted.62

The question of grain supply malfeasance popped up during the same period in the district of Narovchat. In June of 1891, the Narovchat Zemstvo Assembly, fearful of a bad harvest, assigned two of its members responsibility for purchasing grain for the district. Dmitrii Ogarev, the chairman of the board, was to purchase seeds for immediate sowing, and his fellow board member Nikolai Maksiutov was instructed to make purchases to increase reserves. Both occupied themselves with their respective assignments for the next few months. Ogarev died in February 1892, but his submitted receipts showed three successive purchases of rye (15, 20, and 20 wagons, respectively) from a merchant named Kuznetsov.

62 GAPO, f 11, op. 1, d. 40, l. 43.
An inventory of the holdings showed that, in fact, only 35 wagons of grain had been delivered. This discovery prompted the provincial zemstvo to sue Kuznetsov on behalf of the provincial board. Kuznetsov attested that he had only sold 35 wagons to Ogarev, not 55, and that the two 20-wagon receipts were actually for the same transaction. He claimed that Ogarev had requested the duplicated receipts because “they were necessary for the compilation of accounts.” As best could be determined, Ogarev had pocketed the money—nearly sixteen thousand rubles—which had been entrusted to him for the purchase. It was unclear whether he expected his deception to pass completely unnoticed, or whether he intended to replace the funds at a future date.

In any event, Maksiutov, as the other responsible party in the matter, was referred to the GZGDP to face charges of negligence. Once again, however, the prisutstvie chose to exercise restraint. Ogarev’s death meant that it was impossible to know for sure whether he had committed a crime or was simply been remiss in fulfilling his duties. Without definitive proof that a crime had actually occurred, there were not sufficient grounds to indict Maksiutov for his part in the matter. Consequently, due to a lack of proof of the existence of a crime (po nedokazannosti sobytiiia etogo prestupleniia), the GZGDP ordered a halt to any further judicial pursuit of the matter.

Maksiutov, along with the other accused delegates mentioned in these cases, had been entrusted with a great deal of fiscal responsibility, which at least some of them had apparently squandered. In these cases, despite the appearance of naked corruption or horrendous mismanagement, the GZGDP erred on the side of restraint. Or, rather, it adhered to the

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63 Ibid., 115.
64 By the time the GZGDP came to hear the case in 1893, Maksiutov was no longer a member of the Narovchat Zemstvo Board. The file makes no mention of the circumstances of his departure, although we might assume based on the information cited above that he would have been temporarily removed from office for the duration of the prosecution. The regular elections in 1892 saw a new candidate selected to his position. There is no record of service for several years after that, but Maksiutov shows up again as a board member for several years in the early 1900’s.
scrupulous legal precision that was the hallmark of so much of its decision-making over the years. Without corroborating evidence, of course, we cannot be certain as to the guilt or innocence of any of these parties. What is apparent, however, is that cases such as these gave the committee (and, by extension, the government officials who dominated it) a clear chance to exert authority over the zemstvos and crack down on wayward officials. By and large, they chose not to exercise this opportunity.

While the addition of the zemstvos of course gave the prisutstviia new bodies, programs, and policies to oversee, we also note a rather significant procedural change after the 1892 changeover. As mentioned above, the GGDP records make little if any mention of the debate within the committee, so we have little way of knowing whether the final decision was reached unanimously or through a mere majority. After 1892, however, we see explicit markers of dissent. Members of the prisutstvie who opposed a particular decision could pen a dissenting opinion (*osoboe mnenie*), in which they laid out their reasons for disagreeing with the majority verdict. These opinions were then appended to the official minutes of the deliberation. Interestingly, I could find no legislative reason for this shift; the relevant laws do not have any related instructions for committee members along these lines. Nevertheless, the change occurred quickly and over multiple regions: both Moscow and Penza have no record of *osobyne mneniia* before 1892, yet both begin including them within just a few years of the GZGDP reorganization.

Based on the evidence above, we should not be surprised to find that the governors were very rarely in these minorities. In fact, of the six years surveyed in Moscow and two in Penza, we find only one definite instance of a governor issuing or signing on to an *osoboe mnenie*. This was in Moscow, and pertained to a dispute over a decree regarding the exclusion of certain types
of dwelling from new fire regulations governing plastering and upholstering.\textsuperscript{65} As we have seen, the governors in both provinces only had a handful of unsuccessful appeals that could possibly merit a dissent, but the number of \textit{osobyie mneniia} they issued is even a small portion of that number. Consequently, one may surmise that in the other instances, the committee was able to convince the governor to reverse course and overrule his original objections.

More surprising, however, is the relative lack of dissenting opinions from any other members of the committee. In the years studied, we have only a mere handful of cases in which an official dissent is marked in the minutes. In Penza, the 1894 meetings produced rulings on a total of 46 cases. Three years later, the total was 30 cases. In each year, only one case produced an \textit{osoboe mnenie}. In Penza, an 1897 case about the Insar zemstvo’s responsibility for construction of prisoner holding areas brought a joint retort from longtime provincial board chairman Aleksei Beketov and Noble Marshal D. K. Gevlich, who argued that the decision extended zemstvo responsibility beyond legally-established limits.\textsuperscript{66} The other case was from 1894, when a technical decision regarding legal issues during the introduction of the revised city statute met with an (unfortunately largely illegible) dissent from two members of the committee.\textsuperscript{67}

In Moscow, the frequency of dissent is equally rare. Over the course of several hundred cases in the period after the introduction of the new statute, I find only three cases where a committee member other than the governor recorded a dissenting opinion. The first, in 1893, concerned the Lebedev seed-selling case mentioned above.\textsuperscript{68} In the same year, a case relating to

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{65} TsIAM, f. 65, op. 45, d. 35, l. 259-260.
\textsuperscript{66} GAPO, f. 11, op. 1, d. 276, l. 13-16.
\textsuperscript{67} GAPO, f. 11, op. 1, d. 86, l. 48-49.
\textsuperscript{68} TsIAM, f. 65, op. 45, d. 31, l. 276. Unfortunately, illegibility once again prevents us from knowing the specific members of the committee who authored the dissent or the precise reasons for their disagreement. The fact that the case resulted in a rejection of the governor’s original objections makes it likely that he was at least one of the dissenters.
\end{flushleft}
a residency passport for a particular petitioner to the city duma brought a response from Moscow mayor K. V. Rukovishnikov. The last, in 1897, concerned a decision by the Zvenigorod Zemstvo Assembly to require that local grain reserves be converted to capital reserves rather than physical repositories. The GZGDP, in one of the few narrow decisions (4-3) for which we have evidence, ruled that this decree exceeded the zemstvo’s legislatively mandated authority (they were to take on an oversight role, not direct matters in such detail). This brought a retort from the three outvoted members, who contended that the law both “draws zemstvo institutions into “close and direct participation” in the food-supply process and “affords them a certain independence” in their dealings in this regard.69

Nor can it be argued that local leaders generally chose to keep quiet about their reservations, and only bothered to speak up when major issues were at stake. The dissents described above were issued in cases of rather marginal importance. Yet, the officials in question still considered it worthwhile to express formally their objections to the decision of the majority. Had they disagreed with the committee on larger matters, it seems impossible that they would not have made a point of lodging their objections in those instances as well. Consequently, we must conclude that the prisutstvie enjoyed a quite remarkable level of mutual trust among its members. Even if there was contentious debate during the deliberations, in the end they were consistently able to produce a result that could win general agreement.

**Conclusion**

Many characterizations of the relationships between central authorities and local government have emphasized the high degree of conflict between the two levels of authority. However, the records for dispute resolution at the local level tell a far different story. Over the

69 TsIAM, f. 65, op. 45, d. 55, l. 272-274.
course of three different oversight regimes—direct gubernatorial supervision over the zemstvo, committee supervision over the city organs, and then unified committee supervision after 1892—the parties in question managed to resolve issues under contention with a remarkable amount of comity and agreement. Although the supervising bodies were certainly willing to exercise their authority, they were equally strict in ensuring that their decisions were solidly grounded in existing law. And, to the best of our knowledge, these decisions were regarded as fair by the parties involved. The decisions encountered little opposition from the local government representatives on the panel, and the overruled parties only rarely exercised their right to petition the Senate for redress.

Nor can the lack of oversight be explained by apathy and indifference. All evidence points to a focused engagement with local issues on the part of the governor and his chancellery. Thus, we are left with an interesting paradox when we consider the role of the governor in supervising local self-government. On the one hand, they were quick to act in cases where they perceived a breach of law, referring cases to the GGDP or its successors even when the matter in question was of little consequence. And, with remarkable consistency, the committees echoed their objections, and duly annulled a slew of local government decisions and decrees. On the other, these committees shied away from intensive oversight on more serious questions, deferring to the local organs themselves when it came time to address major decisions. The committee oversight was at the same time both invasive and weak.

The resolution of this paradox may lie in the model raised by Richard Robbins in his examinations of Russian governors during the last few decades of tsarist rule. Despite the theoretically vast powers that the governor held as the “tsar’s viceroy” in the countryside, a number of factors conspired to limit his effectiveness and curtail his ambitions. First, the sheer
volume of work required of a governor for even rudimentary provincial function made it extremely difficult to propose and develop substantial new initiatives. Second, the difficulty in staffing administrative offices (particularly those at far remove from the capital) reduced the possibilities of effective supervision. Third, the tenure of governors was often quite short, such that the new officeholder would begin his tenure with a clock already above his head. Lastly, the arrayed provincial organs (zemstvos, noble assemblies, and the like) were often quite entrenched, such that the governor had to negotiate a rather careful trail of both political and personal responsibilities to keep his head above water.\footnote{Richard Robbins, \textit{The Tsar’s Viceroyes: Russian Provincial Governors in the Last Years of the Empire} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).}

Given these restrictions, one can perhaps understand the sort of compromises that are evident in the records from the GGDP and the GZGDP. The governors looked to assert their authority over the local bodies, but realized that they lacked the capacity for a full-scale assault. Instead, they chose their battles carefully, focusing on those areas where local actions could be most clearly shown to be in conflict with existing law. These areas were often legalistic, and perhaps petty, but they were effective in garnering unanimity around the governor. At the same time, tsarist bureaucrats realized the utility of the local bodies, and deferred to their expertise in wider matters. For the same reason, the officials who made up the GGDP and GZGDP wanted to protect the local bodies from excessive outside interference, and as such were extremely wary of petitions from outside entities or individuals.

I.F. Koshko, who served a short term as governor of Penza from 1907-1910, seems to echo these sentiments in his memoir. In one passage, he ruminates on the difficulties of administering a province, and regrets the legal constraints on his ability to make a positive impact:
This close relationship, particularly if the governor is able to win affection and respect for himself, greatly eases the administration of the provinces. Take the question of zemstvo and city self-government. According to the law the governor is accorded quite a wide role. He watches out not only for the legality of self-government activities, but also for their expediency and utility for the populace. Moreover, in order to achieve such oversight the law affords him only means, let us say, of a negative character: to protest to the committee on zemstvo and city affairs, and sometimes to the ministry. That measure carries a combative character, i.e. that a known impropriety or illegality is committed, and you step up to struggle with it, so as to arrive once again at the prior position, rather than to form something new…

Later, Koshko warns of the potential dangers of abuse of authority by governors:

If a governor thinks up (вздумает) to protest all sorts of decree as contrary to law and his interpretation thereof, independent of the significance of that disagreement, he can bring the work of these organs to a complete halt, just as an annulment of a judicial decision by whatever irrelevant grounds for annulment leads to a rejection of justice (отказ в правосудии)

Thus, the right of protest is an extreme measure, which one must resort to with foresight and caution and the ill-use of which is always dangers.

What other sort of means are there to regulate this relationship?

Only individual influence. If a governor is a smart, good-willed man, and makes use of the general respect [accorded to his office], this sphere has limitless possibilities for him.

In this passage, one clearly sees the conflict running through Koshko’s conception of his duties and his limitations. A steadfast attention to duty is clearly at the forefront of his mind, yet he is aware that single-mindedness in this regard will ultimately do more harm than good. The compromise that he ultimately finds acceptable is to tread carefully with regard to his official power, and do the most he can with his unofficial influence over his fellow local elites. Given the conclusions we have gleaned from an examination of many decades’ evidence, these sentiments would no doubt have been echoed by many of his contemporaries who found themselves in similar circumstances.

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72 Ibid., 120-121.
Part II: Programs and Priorities

Having established a model of the culture of leadership in the zemstvo, it remains to explain what those leaders did with that authority. The authorizing legislation transferred several different taxation authorities to zemstvo auspices, and enumerated a number of different programs that should receive those revenues. However, outside of a few supervisory guidelines, it did not specify estimated revenue or spending levels in any particular sphere. Zemstvo delegates and board members could choose high taxes and high spending, low taxes and low spending, or some combination of the two. They could tax all land at a flat rate, or they could devise intricate schemes to more precisely value individual tracts. They could allow the districts to spend most of the available revenues, or manage money at the provincial level. And, of course, they could spend the money on whatever programs they thought would most benefit society. In short, the zemtsy could develop a financial regime that reflected their own priorities about equitable taxation and the common good. Once again, political culture becomes an important avenue to understanding the decisions that were made.

These chapters use statistical analysis of financial records to explain the priorities that developed. Chapter 4 considers the revenue side. It examines the long-term trends in zemstvo revenue, including the overall magnitude and the contributions of particular levies to the overall revenue stream. Chapter 5 examines expenditures, and focuses particular attention on the distribution of funds among programmatic priorities. The latter portion of this chapter considers spending levels in light of various demographic considerations in an attempt to explain the factors that could have contributed to higher or lower spending.
Of particular import in this section is the question of variation in priorities between individual provinces and districts. The homogenizing tendencies of the general zemstvo historians would suggest that differences between regions is of limited significance, whereas the kraevedenie/local-specific tradition argues for the importance of regional particularities and traditions. Thus, much of our analysis will consider the extent of the diversity among differing organs, and the degree to which these differences persisted over the course of the post-reform era.

If one is to consider conventions about welfare spending in a particular area, it stands to reason that this culture may be shared by several different organs in that same area. In other words, can one see a correlation between taxation and spending between the zemstvos and dumas in the same region? To address this question, both chapters will consider patterns in city duma spending as well, and incorporate data from both before and after the municipal reform of 1870.

Lastly, this section examines the durability of these preferences over time. Do we see the development of a sustained pattern of preferences on the part of voters and delegates, or do the trends eventually converge?

On the whole, the assembled data argues for two fundamental conclusions about the course of local self-government spending. First, the overall level of spending is not substantially affected by the conventional “inflection points” in late Imperial history: one does not note substantial shifts associated with the municipal reform of 1870, the increased opposition between regime and society due to the counter-reforms and the famine in the early 1890s, or the supposed shift to a more conservative zemstvo movement in the wake of the 1905 Revolution. While
these events clearly caused a shift in the mindset of zemstvo activists toward the tsarist regime, this shift in mindset did not lead to a substantial reconfiguration of local priorities.

Second, we do see substantial and sustained variation between particular regions in overall levels of taxation and the relative distribution of spending priorities. However, this variation is haphazard; there is a surprisingly low correlation between a region’s spending priorities at a given time and those same priorities several years later. As such, it seems inappropriate to speak of a coherent political culture of the zemstvo as a whole or of individual regions in particular. Instead, the particular culture of leadership articulated above was the predominant driver of taxation and spending. Individual initiative could have a substantial impact on zemstvo spending, but this impact dissipated once the sponsors left for other pursuits.

A Note on Sources and Assumptions

Before commencing on an analysis of the available material, some clarification is necessary regarding the statistical evidence used and the assumptions undergirding my analysis. For purposes of the zemstvo expenditures, I draw only from the statistics related to so-called regular expenses; that is, those items that were funded on a continuing basis. In doing so, I will be neglecting the programs for grain reserves and housing insurance, among other programs. These funds were by no means incidental in the course of zemstvo activities—annual collections could exceed the yearly totals of a district’s entire ordinary income.¹ However, because they are separate financial bodies concentrated on a single activity, they are less useful for drawing conclusions about the general scope of administrative priorities on the part of zemstvo leaders. Moreover, because of the irregular year-to-year payments of these sums (poor harvests would of

¹ See, for instance, the accounts of the Penza Provincial Zemstvo Board for 1878, which calculates 366,728.20 rubles in ordinary income (p. 5), 392,417.56 for insurance collections (p. 50), and 150,808.95 ¼ for grain reserves (p. 40). Otchet Penzenskoi Gubernskoi Zemskoi Upravy za 1878 god (Penza: Gubernskaia Tipografiia), 5, 50, 40.
course lead to greater expenditures across the board), we are less able to extrapolate from one year to the zemstvo’s financial situation as a whole.

Additionally, some explanatory note is undoubtedly necessary to clarify the specific figures I use for my analysis. Generally speaking, during the annual assembly, the zemstvo boards (both provincial and district) presented estimates (smety) of spending and revenue for the coming year. After modification and approval by the assembly, these estimates served as the overall spending guidelines for the year. However, for various reasons, the expenditures could differ from the amount estimated. The boards later provided a specific accounting of the funds actually expended. These precise accounts could be included as part of the following year’s estimates, or as a separate document (called an otchet or simply dokhody i raskhody). These accounts were more accurate in terms of the actual amount expended, but were by definition provisional. Additional expenditures on a given project often took place after the publication of the revised accounts. City organs generally followed a similar pattern, though the pre-reform and post-reform eras show some variation in accounting methodologies.

Given the paucity of available materials, I have chosen to draw on both the annual estimates and the more precise accounts. Perhaps controversially, I have elected not to draw distinctions between them over the course of my analysis. I admit that this is methodologically problematic, but it also provides more comprehensive data than would a decision to focus exclusively on one data set over the other. Moreover, the annual estimates are generally within a few percentage points of the final figures, without substantial bias in either the positive or

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2 This difficulty is further complicated by the fact that the zemstva maintained varying accounting systems among the various provinces, and sometimes overhauled their systems entirely (requiring consent and participation from the district zemstvos). For instance, under the system used in Moscow in the late 1880’s and early 1890’s, funds were assigned to a particular year’s account almost irrespective of the actual year during which they were collected. The accounts for 1885, for instance, show both collections and expenditures assigned to fiscal years 1884, 1885, and 1886. As such, one would need several consecutive years of data in order to develop a complete spending picture for even a single year. _Otchet Moskovskoi Gubernskoi Zemskoi Upravy s 5-iiu k nemu prilozenilami za 1885 god_ (Moscow: Tipografiia V. F. Rikhter, 1886).
negative direction. Given that these chapters are intended to serve as a large-scale presentation of the evolution of financial patterns, this compromise seems a reasonable concession in the interests of comprehensiveness.

Many of the analyses consider taxation and spending on a per-resident basis, and as such population statistics provide another statistical challenge. We have a paucity of up-to-date information on the populations of the urban and rural areas in each province, and even those surveys that we do have were undoubtedly conducted with varying methodologies. As such, any claims to precision must be taken with a grain of salt.

However, some effort must be made to account for population change in the period between surveys, and for the varying rates of change among particular cities, districts, and provinces. Again, a compromise approach seems to offer the most reasonable solution. Our population statistics for Penza, they are the 1897 census, the 1889 pamiatnaia knizhka, which includes population statistics from 1887, and the 1864 list of settled areas, prepared by the Statistics Department of the Ministry of Interior. In Moscow, only the 1897 census and list of settled areas had comprehensive data for the entire province; the latter statistics covered from the year 1859.

Utilizing these data points, I developed a very basic model of population growth or decline for the period under study. In situations where population data was available within five years of my financial data, I assumed population changes would be nominal and used the extant

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figures as if they were current. In situations where the difference was greater, I made linear projections based on the two nearest data points. Population growth is of course not a linear phenomenon, but in the absence of more data points I was unable to construct a more precise model. To prevent redundancy, I have not re-listed the population sources for each chart in this section; instead, the footnotes note the sources used to gather the financial data for each chart.

Lastly, it goes without saying that any discussion of financial matters over time requires some consideration for the changing value of the currency involved. Historical inflation is seemingly immune to precise calibration, but an acknowledgement of the major trends should give us a sense of the general scale of inflation over the period in question. I drew wage and price statistics from Boris Mironov’s “Wages and Prices in Imperial Russia, 1703–1913,” which calculates a general price index in ten-year increments between 1861 and 1913. His figures show a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of between -0.002 percent (1881-1891) and 1.69 percent (1911-1913). The CAGR for the entire era is 0.80 percent. Given the speculative nature of many of their statistics for the period under question, and the difficulty of establishing a particular standard for local government expenditures (i.e. the relative prices of labor and materials), it seems reasonable to accept their overall top-line indicators as our standard of inflation. As such, aggregate annual inflation in the range of one percent seems like a reasonable metric to use.

Unfortunately, other statistical studies suggest that this figure may be off the mark. Paul Gregory’s Russian National Income includes a much more complex table of prices and expenditures that generally shows a higher rate of price inflation than does Mironov. For instance, Gregory’s index for retail sales increases from 2,052,000,000 rubles (in current-year

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5 Boris N. Mironov, “Wages and Prices in Imperial Russia, 1703-1913,” *Russian Review*, vol. 69 issue 1 (January 1910), 47-72.
prices) to 7,141,000,000 over the period 1885-1913, a CAGR of 4.55 percent. Thus, it is quite
difficult to ascertain a rate of “true” inflation with any degree of certainty. Nevertheless,
Gregory’s metric for local government expenditures increases from 114,000,000 to 643,000,000
over the same period, a CAGR of 6.37 percent. By most accounts, then, we can conclude that
local government expenditures did outstrip inflation by a significant factor for the majority of the
zemstvo era.

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7 Ibid.
Chapter 4: Local Self-Government and Revenue Collection

Few prerogatives are more central to government function than the ability to extract resources through taxation and other means. In Russia, as elsewhere, changes in taxation have served as indicators of larger social changes and trends. Thus Peter the Great put his stamp on affairs through the imposition of the soul tax. Russian nobles were distinguished, in part, by their immunity from personal taxation. For centuries, peasant solidarity was driven by the collective tax obligation, while peasants’ sad state post-emancipation was a result of the onerous redemption payments, a tax in all but name.

It is hardly surprising, then, that taxation has been a fruitful topic for historians almost from the beginning. Any historian who considers government action in depth will have to wrestle with questions of the design and implementation of revenue collection schemes. However, in keeping with the largely centralized imagine of the Russian Empire, the overwhelming majority of these studies have devoted the majority of their attention to taxation from the perspective of the center, focusing on the choices made (or avoided) by bureaucrats acting on behalf of the state, and by taxpayers acting in accord with or defiance of those wishes. Clearly, such a focus is important. As a centralized (i.e. non-federal) entity, taxation authority in the Russian Empire derived wholly from the central government. Whereas in many countries of Western Europe local areas had revenue prerogatives independent of the central government, in Russia the central authority was the sole locus of power.

But, to focus on the central bureaucracy with such exclusivity is to neglect the role played by the localities in formulating and implementing tax policy. Even before the reform measures of 1864 and 1870, local organizations of self-government held some leeway to affect the shape
of revenue collection within their area of authority. During later years, as the zemstvos came into their own, this leeway varied greatly, to the point that the leadership of organs of local self-government had great power to shape revenue collection to best suit their goals for local government activity. In this chapter, I try to broaden our understanding of how leading members of the local organs made use of that authority, both before and after the zemstvo reform.

Numerous scholars have considered the taxation issue, but most have done so from the perspective of the central government. Scholars of Russia’s economic development have looked to the government budget (and its arrears) as one in a series of indicators about the country’s economic health, level of economic development, and the demands of its leadership. Alexander Gerschenkron, for example, made a seminal argument about Russian “backwardness” 1 In these works, taxation is treated alongside tariffs and trade, spending practices, foreign loans, and others as one of a number of policy avenues (in fact, not always a particularly important one) through which the government sought to achieve its ends in the economic sphere.

More narrow studies have examined taxation as more of an administrative problem; namely, how could the state structure the taxation scheme to maximize revenue while still providing adequate growth? In these narratives, tax collection is an uphill battle, with government bureaucrats constantly struggling against poor information, corruption, and intransigence.2

Scholars have also considered the issue from the other side of the coin—the burden on taxpayers. Here, we see a narrative of active and passive resistance to onerous taxation. Payers sought to mitigate their tax burden through legal and extralegal means. These narratives more

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often than not focus on the peasants as the most impoverished and tax-sensitive group, but we also see discussions of tax resistance on the part of the nobility and city-dwellers as well.³

More recently, a number of scholars have turned their attention away from the actual substance of taxation in an effort to consider the mentalité behind it—taxation as a reflection and expression of larger ideas at work in society. Yanni Kotsonis, in two recent articles, examined the evolving tax system in the early decades of the twentieth century. He argues that the imposition of the income tax marked a new chapter in the civic relationship between Russians and their state.⁴ David Darrow examined the evolution of land assessment in the late nineteenth century, in particular the dispute between advocates of a single land tax assessment and zemstvo activists who favored intensive household surveys. He contends that the debate over this issue clarified two distinct viewpoints about the use of and necessity for land taxation.⁵

In the course of this investigation, I focus on three principle topics related to taxation. First, and most obvious, is the aggregate level of revenue extraction. How much did the local institutions manage to extract in revenue? Did their collections grow in order to meet the demands of inflation and an increasing population? Do we see localized preferences in this regard; i.e. did certain areas consistently prefer lower taxation levels and commensurate lower levels of spending?

Second, we must examine how the tax burden was distributed among the population. The various articles of legislation authorized taxes and fees on different estates, income groups, professions, and property owners. By raising and lowering the rates on the items and persons

⁴ Yanni Kotsonis, “Face to Face: The State, the Individual, and the Citizen in Russian Taxation, 1863-1917,” Slavic Review, vol. 63, no. 2 (Summer, 2004), 221-246.
subject to assessment, local elites could significantly shift the taxation burden onto certain
groups. Do we see a consistent preference for one source of revenue over another? How can we
explain this disparity?

Third, we must look at the success of the localities in collecting the taxes they imposed. Much like the central government, the local organs would have been faced with corruption and
intransigence hampering their efforts. At other times, sheer overwhelming poverty would have
made it simply impossible to collect all the taxes on the books. After first determining the extent
and duration of the tax arrears, we will consider the responses of local officials to the problem.
How did they adapt future plans to account for the realities of tax collection?

Along with these three principal questions is the ever-present issue of consistency
between regions. Because of the significant differences in population, distribution, industry,
economy, and other factors, Moscow’s potential tax base would have been far different from that
in Penza. Despite these differences, can we see common principles or a common model at work
in taxation policy? Or do the differences far outweigh the similarities?

In brief, our assessment of the available evidence suggests a consistent pattern of growth
in revenues for the city dumas and zemstvos of both provinces. Indeed, the city dumas were able
to demonstrate consistent increases both before and after the municipal reform of 1870,
suggesting that revenue collection *per se* was not a major motivator of the change in policy.
These increases remained consistent throughout almost the entirety of the post-reform era, and
remained significant even when accounting for population increase and the effects of inflation.

Despite this general consistency across the board, we see remarkable variation among
cities and districts when we consider the overall level of revenue collected (on a per-resident
basis) and the sources of those particular revenues. Moreover, in examining the evolution of
these trends over time, we see dramatic shifts in the contributions of particular taxes and fees to the overall revenue picture. Given that the localities were able to increase their collections despite these changes, this evidence suggests a certain flexibility on the part of these bodies in achieving their aims, but also raises questions about their capacity to maintain a consistent taxation regime.

**Taxation Before the Great Reforms**

Local self-government in the period before the zemstvo reform had its basis in two pieces of legislation passed during the reign of Catherine II. The Statute on the Nobility, issued after a long period of wrangling in 1785, established the parameters of activity for the noble officeholders. The first section of the law confirmed the rights and privileges of the nobility as a whole, while the second section concerned the operations of their corporate institutions. The nobles were given explicit direction to establish the noble assembly (*Deputatskoe Sobranie*), and to hold elections for Marshal and other offices every three years. Subsequent sections laid out the working relationship with the provisional governors, detailed certain day-to-day operations, and made explicit certain rights of the assembly as a corporate institution.

However, of thirty-five sections dealing with the establishment of noble organizations, only one treated the question of financial operations. Chapter 54 stipulated that “The Assembly of the Nobility of each province is permitted to establish a special treasury with its own voluntary contributions, and to use this treasury by common consent.” In dictating that assembly collections be made solely on a voluntary basis, Catherine apparently did not envision an expansive role for the body in managing the affairs of the countryside.

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6 David Griffiths and George E. Munro (eds. and trans.), *Catherine II’s Chaters of 1785 to the Nobility and the Towns* (Bakersfield: Charles Schlacks, 1993), Charter to the Nobility, sec. 54.
The Statute on the Towns, in many ways, served as a mirror to the Statute on the
Nobility. Just as the earlier legislation make explicit the privileges and responsibilities of nobles,
so did the new legislation do so for urban residents. And, just as in the legislation for the
nobility, the charter elucidated the privileges, requirements, and organization of institutions of
self-government. Like the noble assembly, the “urban corporation” (gorodskoe obshchestvo) was
to elect its officers on a three-year basis, along with officials for a variety of courts and subject
institutions. Many of the subsequent sections, detailing the working of the corporation and its
privileges, are almost word-for-word reproductions of their counterparts in the prior legislation.
Among these repetitions was the above stipulation on special treasuries, granted to the urban
corporation with exactly the same language used in the statute on the nobility.\(^7\)

Significantly, the Statute on the Towns supplemented this privilege with a number of
codicils authorizing financial collections above and beyond those afforded to the Noble
Assembly. Reinforcing a previous decree, the towns were granted “two kopecks from each ruble
of customs duty revenue collected from imported goods and one kopeck from each ruble of
revenue from exported goods.”\(^8\) Likewise, in those towns where alcohol sales were reserved for
the sovereign’s treasury, one percent of the profits would go to the cities.\(^9\) The towns were also
allotted their own sources of revenue, independent of action by the central government: they
received fines from merchants and townsmen, property from residents in escheat, and all revenue
from areas in the outskirts “suitable for establishing mills or ferries or fisheries.”\(^10\) The
concluding articles of the revenue section circumscribed the appropriate areas for expenditure

\(^7\) Ibid., Charter to the Towns, sec. 42.
\(^8\) Ibid., Charter to the Towns, sec. 146.
\(^9\) Ibid., Charter to the Towns, sec. 147.
\(^10\) Ibid., Charter to the Towns, sec. 148-150.
and required the city societies to present their accounts to the Governor and the Fiscal Chamber.\textsuperscript{11}

The contrast between the two concurrent laws is significant, not only for the additional revenue it provided for city operations, but for the precedent that it set regarding the governance of the two organizations. In the ensuing decades, this slight disparity would evolve into a broad chasm. On the nobles’ side, the precepts of the Charter were sufficient for only a minimal level of operation. The Penza assembly, for the year 1840, recorded total income of only 3197.97 rubles.\textsuperscript{12} In Moscow, the average receipts over the period 1829-31 were slightly less than ten thousand rubles.\textsuperscript{13} In 1852, more than twenty years later, the collections had actually decreased, to slightly more than eight thousand rubles.\textsuperscript{14}

However, the authorization to collect voluntary contributions was often used on an ad hoc basis, generally for special projects outside of the normal day-to-day operations of the organization. These contributions were often quite large, allowing for major projects in the spheres of public works and social welfare. For example, in 1834, the Moscow assembly began a fundraising campaign towards “charitable goals” (Russian phrase) in honor of the coming of age of the tsarevich Alexander Nikolaevich (the future Alexander II). In the first year, the nobility of the province donated 100,400 rubles, and in the ensuing three years contributions averaged more than 10,000 rubles per annum.\textsuperscript{15} These sums absolutely dwarfed the funds that the Noble Assemblies had at their disposal for ordinary operations. But, their irregular

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., Charter to the Towns, sec. 154-55. For a further discussion of the rules regarding city expenditure, see the following chapter.
\textsuperscript{12} GAPO, f. 196, d. 837, l. 84.
\textsuperscript{13} TsIAM, f. 4, op. 1, d. 247, l. 8-9.
\textsuperscript{14} TsIAM, f. 4, op. 1, d. 2454, l. 1-2.
\textsuperscript{15} GAPO, f. 108, op. 1, d. 355, l. 5.
implementation and the ad hoc nature of their existence means that they served as a poor substitute for a regular program of tax levies.

The city dumas, in contrast, used the parameters of the Charter on the Towns to develop a more involved system of tax collection, one that became increasingly expansive as the years went on. The authorization of these new revenue sources and the continued profitability of the existing ones allowed the city dumas to continually expand their financial auspices over the first half of the nineteenth century. The Penza city duma, in its 1840 listing of receipts and expenditures, enumerated 16,528.52 rubles in silver and 57,849.82 in assignats. Its arrears amounted to 10,670.37 in silver and 37,346.295 in assignats.\textsuperscript{16} Our next data set comes from sixteen years later, after the accounts-keepers had simplified matters by tracking all transactions in rubles, without regard to the type of currency involved. The 1856 accounts show a total income of 19,500 rubles from all sources.\textsuperscript{17} Without a greater understanding of the differing valuations afforded to coin and promissory notes, we cannot assess whether this new figure represents as great a decline as it might seem.

If it was a decline, however, the trend was quickly reversed. In contrast to the flatline revenues of the noble assemblies, the dumas were able to consistently expand their collections in the first half of the nineteenth century. Income for the Penza city duma grew to almost 27,000 rubles in 1860 and 36,000 a decade later.\textsuperscript{18} Over the period from 1856-1870 (the only one for which we can be sure of a consistent valuation of the receipts), the income of the Penza Duma grew at a rate of approximately four percent per year.

The Moscow Duma, not surprisingly, took in funds on a much larger scale. Our record of tax receipts does not go as far back as do our records for Penza, but in the later years some

\textsuperscript{16} GAPO, f. 108, op. 1, d. d. 355.
\textsuperscript{17} GAPO, f. 108, op. 1, d. d. 539.
\textsuperscript{18} GAPO, f. 108, op. 1, d. d. 574, 642.
comparison is possible. In 1854, the Moscow Duma took in more than 1.5 million rubles in taxes.\footnote{TsIAM, f. 4, op. 4, d. 1133.} Of course, we should not be surprised at the aggregate difference, but the per-resident statistics are quite stark as well. Based on the population figures from five years later, Moscow Duma income in 1854 was approximately 3.81 rubles per resident. In Penza, the figures were substantially lower—approximately 68 kopecks per resident in 1856, and 1.26 rubles per resident on the cusp of reform in 1870.

Also notable is the significant contrast between the two in the contributions of various revenue items. The chart below demonstrates the evolution of these trends over the course of the period in question:

![Revenue Distribution, Penza City Duma, 1856-1870](image)

Although we do see some variation from year to year, the overall trends are consistent. Revenue from city property was by far the most significant revenue source, ranging from 50 to 65 percent of annual receipts. The indirect taxes and taxes on real estate and industrialists together made up almost the entire rest of the sum, each contributing between roughly ten and twenty percent, depending on the year. These ratios remained relatively consistent in the years

\footnote{GAPO, f. 108, op. 1, d. 539; GAPO, f. 108, d. 574; GAPO, f. 109, op.1, d. 1.}
leading up to the 1870 reform of city government, although we do note a discernible increase in the contribution from the industrialist tax and a nominal decrease in the amount drawn from real estate taxes.

Moscow drew from many of the same revenue sources, but its proportions were rather different. City holdings contributed only a small portion of overall revenues (less than five percent), and income from factories contributed more than 28 percent of the total revenues for 1854. This much is unsurprising, given the relative economic profiles of the two cities. More surprising, however, is the extent to which Moscow drew on the taxes associated with entry into the city resident book. In 1854, this drew in more than 600,000 rubles, significantly exceeding all other income sources and single-handedly making up more than 43 percent of all city revenue.

As we move forward into the post-reform era, we must take note of the fact that the reform of municipal government occurred in multiple stages. St. Petersburg saw an overhaul of city government as early as 1846, and Moscow followed suit in 1862.21 As such, it is unsurprising that Moscow shows a rather dramatic shift between 1854 and 1863, evidenced by the following chart:22

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22 TsIAM, f. 4, op. 4, d. 1133; Otchet Moskovskago Gorodskago Golova Shcherbatova o deiatel'nosti Moskovskoi Gorodskoi Dumy za shestletie s 1863 po 1869 godu (Moscow: Universitetskaia Tipografia, 1869), 3.
In the 1854 records, the most important revenue sources are taxes on industry and payments for notation in the city’s estate book. For the latter year, the notation payments are ostensibly nonexistent, and taxes on real estate grow to fill the void almost perfectly. Taxes on industry actually decline slightly as a portion of overall revenue, while taxes on inns and related establishments grow to make up more than 20 percent of all revenue.

After the initial reform, however, the revenue sources appear to maintain a relatively consistent pattern in the short term:23

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23 Ibid.
City property formed only a minor portion of the revenue stream, holding steady at approximately five percent per year. For the Moscow Duma, the major revenue sources were the real estate tax, the tax on inns, and the tax on industrialists. We also see significant, though smaller, contributions from indirect taxation and the omnibus “assistance and chance” funds. This consistency is somewhat surprising, given the unpredictable nature of city funds as a whole. In 1865, for instance, we see a sharp increase in total revenues, with a total of 1.95 million rubles collected (up from 1.73 million the year before). This swell was short-lived, as income fell to 1.76 million in 1866. Nevertheless, the spike barely registers on the chart, showing that the increase came from several different revenue sources peaking in the same year.

Perhaps more surprising, however, is the fact that the shift in revenue sources brought about by the 1862 overhaul of the Moscow Duma did not lead to a particularly significant increase in the total amount collected. In 1863, total collections for Moscow had risen to just over 1.7 million rubles, and another 100,000 were added by 1867. Despite the magnitude of the collections, and the availability of new revenue sources, Moscow shows a slower rate of growth.
than does Penza. The average annual rate of growth for the Moscow Duma during the years under study was 1.5 percent, while Penza maintained a growth rate of four percent during an analogous period, without the benefit of a revised city statute to enhance its growth.

**Taxation After the City Reform**

The 1870 reform of city government explicitly authorized the reformed city\(^{24}\) According to Pisarkova’s data collection, city revenue rose from approximately 1.7 million tubles in 1863 to over 70 million in 1916, the last year for which data is presented. By itself, this growth is remarkable, averaging out to an annual rate of increase of 7.25 percent. However, even more remarkable is that the rate of growth increased substantially over the period in question. For the years 1863-1873, expenditures rose an average of 4.7 percent per year. The rate of increase dropped to just 1.2 percent from 1887-1892 before rebounding in the first decades of the twentieth century. From 1904 to 1916, annual duma collections increased by more than ten percent per year.

Of course, the growth in the population of the city of Moscow does temper these estimates to a certain degree. Nevertheless, even accounting for estimates in population growth, the duma expenditures remain impressive. Using a logarithmic function, I modeled population growth based on available statistics. If we take this model as feasible, the growth is less dramatic, but still noteworthy. In 1863, duma taxation averaged 4.5 rubles per city resident. Over the course of the next decade, growth was moderate, reaction 5.3 rubles/resident in 1873 and 10.2 in 1887, marking average annual increases of 4.7 percent during the first period and 7.9 percent during the second. The next five years saw a slight decline in revenue per resident (-1.7 percent, presumably greater in real terms), before rebounding again at the close of the decade.

\(^{24}\) *PSZRI*, no. 48498, sec. 128.
By 1916, city revenues averaged 38.7 rubles per resident, marking an average annual increase of 7.65 percent over a 1901 baseline.

In Penza, the increase was not quite as steep, but showed impressive gains nevertheless. In 1870, duma income was 63,256 rubles; by 1887, it was 164,257, computing to an average annual rate growth rate of 5.77 percent.

Though our data are not sufficient from the post-reform era to make sufficient conclusions about the course of taxation in Penza, Pisarkova’s information permits an exploration of the trends in Moscow. The chart below presents her data on the particular income sources for the city duma over the period 1863-1916.25

![Income Sources, Moscow City Duma](chart)

Clearly, the most start trend is the dramatic increase in the important of city enterprises (gorodskie predpriiatii) in the overall duma funding picture. Nonexistent for the first decade, they rapidly grew to making up the lion’s share of the city budget, in fact exceeding half of all receipts by the last few years of duma operation. We might also note the modest increase in assistance funds, which eventually came to make up more than ten percent of all collections.

Conversely, taxes on trade and industries and city real estate, the two most significant revenue items in the immediate post-reform period, underwent a precipitous decline. In 1863, they combined to account for more than eighty percent of all city income; by 1916, that figure had dropped to a mere 23.4 percent.

**The Development of Zemstvo Taxation**

The zemstvo reform marked the first time that local delegates (in the countryside) had control over their own taxation, but the taxes themselves were decidedly not new. With a few exceptions, the taxation regime that passed into zemstvo hands had already been developed and implemented by the authorities of the central government. Inevitably, this process devolved into questions about the proper relationship between different types of taxation and the localities in which they were levied. Administrators sought to somehow distinguish between the portion of taxes that were to be allocated for national and local needs.\(^{26}\) This, in fact, was one of the main impetuses for the zemstvo reform—an attempt to afford the localities more authority over those tax issues that were to be considered specifically local.

Thus, when the question of local self-government came up for discussion, the question was not *which* taxes to authorize, but *how*. The zemstvo reform itself, in fact, drew much of its revenue foundation from the precepts of this legislation. As Frederick Starr discusses in *Decentralization and Self-Government in Russia*, the central problem was that many of the tax collections categorized as “local” were not actually spent in the localities themselves. Even the funds that were spent were governed largely by directives from the capitals. Local initiative was needed to ensure that the taxes were collected and spent in the most beneficial way possible. Not

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surprisingly, there was a protracted ministerial debate about the proper amount of taxation authority to grant the new organizations, but in the end the advocates of decentralization won the day.\textsuperscript{27}

The final version of the legislation specified the exact taxes that would be brought under the zemstvo auspices. The first, and most important for revenue purposes, was a tax on land. The second was a tax on real estate in the cities and uezds. Residences, factories, and industrial places were taxes based on a constant rate per ruble of assessed value. Lastly, the zemstvos were allocated a portion of the revenues from the sale of trade patents and certificates.

Additionally, the legislation also transitioned to the zemstvos authority over the programs on food insurance (\textit{prodovol’stvennyi kapital’}). It was intended to be a self-sustaining program, with the cost of the stores to be covered entirely by contributed premiums.\textsuperscript{28} The only major new initiatives on the revenue front were a pair of systems (one mandatory for residents, one optional) for mutual fire insurance. The basic contours were similar to those of the food storage program—a self-funded program, with financial records maintained separately from the main zemstvo accounts.

In both new and old financial measures, the government gave the zemstvo maximum leeway in revenue collection. In the fourteen general tasks assigned to the zemstvo authorities, taxation is mentioned three times. First, the zemstvos were charged with “supervision of holdings, capital sums, and monetary collections of the zemstvo.”\textsuperscript{29} In a subsequent paragraph, they were given limited responsibility for state taxes, specifically the “Apportionment of those state monetary collections among the guberniia and uezdy is assigned to the zemstvo authorities,

\textsuperscript{27} Starr, \textit{Decentralization}.
\textsuperscript{28} The accounts were kept separate from one another, but from time to time we see small transfer payments between them.
\textsuperscript{29} \textit{PSZRI}, no. 40457, sec. 1, subsec. 1.
to be carried out on the basis of published statutes or particular instructions affirmed by higher authorities.”30 Lastly, and most germane to their primary aims, the zemstvos were charged with the “designation, apportionment, collection, and expenditure, on the basis of the statute on local taxes, for the satisfaction of local requirements of the guberniia or uezd.”31

Creating a Taxation Scheme

The development of a working scheme of taxation was more easily envisioned than accomplished. Indeed, much of the business of the early zemstvo meetings was concerned with the orderly transfer of accounts from the central government offices to the zemstvos’ own auspices. As one might expect in the absence of clearly-defined regulations, taxation procedures were near the top of the agenda when the district and provincial zemstvos began to meet in mid-1865. The taxation regime, like other areas of operation, showed significant variation between provinces, and even between districts within a single province.

Land taxes were to make up the lion’s share of zemstvo revenue items for much of its existence, and as such one of the first orders of business in both provinces was to devise an accurate and equitable means of land taxation. In Penza, the board members drew on the presumably accurate statistical information developed in conjunction with the emancipation of the serfs. The board divided the responsibility among the districts in direct proportion to the estimated value of all land in the province. For their initial figures, they used the assessments of land value from the recent peasant emancipation. The 1861 valuation was revised in 1873,

30 Ibid., subsec. X.
31 Ibid., subsec. XI.
which actually brought more regimentation to the process (only three different average costs, rather than six).\textsuperscript{32}

In Moscow, the process moved along similar lines, although certain differences from the Penza approach are instructive when considering later changes. There was a general agreement that the provincial taxes should be “levied at a known and constant percentage of the profitability of the item under taxation.”\textsuperscript{33} Thus, they divided the districts into three separate categories (based on average size of holdings) and established three separate levels of land quality. They then computed an average cost of a desiatin of land in each district/quality combination, ranging from 17.89 rubles (lowest-quality land in six of the twelve districts) to 53.33 rubles (highest-quality land, applicable to all districts). Land was taxed at a flat five percent of assessed value, leaving tax rates ranging from 89 kopecks to 2 rubles 67 kopecks per desiatin. These valuations were generally approved by the various district boards, but a few of them chose to modify the valuations. Moscow district, in fact, decided on a much more complex system, involving five separate categorizations based on distance from the capital and four separate levels of land quality, leading to 20 possible permutations of expected value and tax level.\textsuperscript{34}

Given this decision, it should not surprise us too much that the zemtsy considered their new system to be less than ideal. Even as they accepted this state of affairs as the best method for the present, the Moscow board was well aware of its inherent contradictions. The district officials would invariably develop differing methods of land assessment—some methods would err on the side of overvaluing the land, others would err on the negative side of the ledger. As

\textsuperscript{32} Evgrafov,\textit{ Dvadtsatipiatiletniaia}, 378-79.
\textsuperscript{33} Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemskoe Sobranie, \textit{Obzor deistvii Moskovskago zemstvo v pervoe trekhletie ego sushchestvovaniia} (Moscow: Tip. Shiuman i Glushkova, 1868), 3.
long as the same methods were used throughout, a landowner could be confident that his tax burden was more or less equal to that of his neighbor. However, a fixed portion of the taxes in each uezd would go to support the work of the provincial zemstvo apparatus. As such, the districts where assessment methods tended to overstate land value would pay a disproportionate share of the tax burden within the province.\(^{35}\)

This dissatisfaction ultimately led to significant changes in 1881, as the assembly elected to pursue a more the Moscow zemstvo’s approach to taxation. After deciding that a full cadastral survey was unrealistic (the estimated cost was 500,000 rubles), the board elected to develop an alternative evaluation scheme. This new scheme lowered rates to 4.5 percent, but drew on recent sales data to establish a more detailed picture of land value. Moreover, land was now divided into six different categories based on location, and three different categories based on quality. The presence of a flood plain was now more highly valued, leading to a greater differentiation between the values of different categories of land. As a consequence, estimated land prices now ranged from a low of 22 rubles (with a 99 kopeck tax rate) to a high of 533 rubles (with 24 rubles in annual taxes). In turn, this led to dramatic shifts in tax rates for particular districts. Moscow’s average assessment dropped from 3 rubles 87 kopecks per desiatin to 2.97, while Bronnity increased from 1.60 rubles per desiatin to 2.30. Across the province, average per-desiatin taxes actually dropped, from 1 ruble 57 kopecks under the old regime to 1 ruble 46 under the new.\(^{36}\)

Note, then, the contrast between the two provinces. In Penza, there is an assumption that the productivity of land within a given district is relatively constant; consequently, the only task of the provincial zemstvo is to establish a standard land value for individual districts, and allow

\(^{35}\) Ibid.
\(^{36}\) Ibid., 38.
the uezd zemstvos to iron out the details. In Moscow, on the other hand, the provincial organizations (both assembly and board) looked to take on a much greater role in supervising district taxation.

This contrast is an ideal indicator of one of the key issues in taxation during this period. Dueling schools of thought engaged in contentious debate about the level of detail needed for equitable and fruitful land taxation schemes. David Darrow has examined the debate over land assessment between adherents of a universalistic approach to taxation and those who favored a particularistic approach. The latter group (named, appropriately, the Moscow school) favored the use of intensive household surveys to determine the economic value of a particular tract of land. In their view, a more general approach based on geography, soil features, and other factors could not adequately assess a parcel’s precise productive capacity and establish a truly equitable tax rate.37

Penza, on the other hand, avoided much of this contention by ostensibly ignoring the question of land value entirely. There, zemstvo leaders instituted a land tax based simply on area. Each uezd set an annual rate of land taxation, and specified the division of that amount that was to be set aside “for district needs” and “for provincial needs.” Certain uezdy apparently flirted with a multitiered system. Tax tables from the 1880’s show that in five of the ten districts, land could theoretically be assigned to two or three different classifications. In point of fact, however, these systems were multitiered in name only; analysis of expected taxation reveals that an overwhelming majority of the land was in the first tier.38 For all intents and purposes, the taxation regime in Penza was a flat rate per desiatin irrespective of land quality.

37 Darrow, “The Politics of Numbers.”
38 Penzenskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo, Smety i raskladki denezhnykh zemskikh povinnostei na gubernskiia i uezdnyia potrebnosti v Penzenskoi gubernii v 1875 godu (Penza, 1775); Penzenskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo, Smety i raskladki denezhnykh zemskikh povinnostei na gubernskiia i uezdnyia potrebnosti v Penzenskoi gubernii na 1883 god (Penza,
Nor was this dichotomy the only major contrast in revenue collection between the two provinces. The Moscow zemstvo maintained a relatively consistent approach to taxation over the course of its entire existence—even decades later, the official schedules record a tax rate of one percent of assessed value for provincial needs and one-and-a-half percent for district needs. Moreover, there was no variation from district to district—all paid at the same rate. Even as the mechanisms for assessment of land value grew more and more sophisticated, the underlying ratios remained consistent.

The system that developed in Penza, on the other hand, showed significant variation among the taxation rates in the various districts. Rates per desiatin varied substantially; in Nizhnyi Lomov, they were routinely above thirty kopecks per desiatin, whereas in Gorodishche they were generally less than ten. It is possible that these variations were intended to serve as a sort of rudimentary valuation of land. In the absence a Moscow-level apparatus to conduct surveys and valuations of individual plots, the varying rates could serve as recognition that, for instance, land in Penza district was more valuable than land in Gorodishche.

However, this interpretation is complicated by a number of factors. Most significantly, the assessments varied greatly from year to year. The chart below shows the taxation rates in selected districts over the period 1883-1891.39

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39 Ibid.
As we see, although the overall positions remained generally constant, change was more common than consistency. And, while sometimes these changes were minor (with increases as low as .05 kopecks per desiatin), in other years we see substantial shifts. Between 1887 and 1888, for instance, the per-desiatin rate in Insar dropped from 18.875 kopecks per desiatin to 11.4—a reduction of almost forty percent. After a year or two at this level, it rocketed back up again, reaching 19.75 in 1891.

And, while the Moscow districts maintained a steady rate from year to year, officials in the Penza uezdy constantly tinkered with tax rates, to the degree that a consistent rate from year to year was a relative rarity. Quite often, these adjustments were extremely slight. For example, over the three-year period from 1887 to 1889, land taxes in Nizhnyi Lomov were assessed at 28.25, 27.1, and 27.25 kopecks per desiatin, respectively. But, other localities showed a much greater proclivity for experimentation: Insar dropped it land tax rate from 18.875 to 11.8 over the same period, before reversing direction and reaching a rate of 19.75 by 1891.40

40 Ibid.
Given the frequency and the magnitude of these changes, it seems rather unlikely that the various district zemstvos were using intensive surveying techniques in order to establish appropriate tax rates. It is more reasonable to conclude that these rates were a function of zemstvo need rather than landowner means. In other words, zemstvo officials would develop their annual budget, and then set a tax rate that would allow them to meet it.41

However, the Penza zemstvos did allow for redistribution through a change in the portion of funds set aside “for provincial needs.” In Moscow, of course, the district’s contribution was ostensibly set in stone—it was always a precise one percent of the land’ Of that value, a certain percentage was set aside for “provincial zemstvo needs.” In Penza, however, the proportion of overall collections remitted to the provincial zemstvo varied significantly from district to district. It appears that these requirements served as a form of redistribution—poorer areas may have had high local taxes, but these taxes would stay in the locality where they were collected, with only a small portion remitted to the general fund.

**Financial Receipts**

Despite the many complications associated with zemstvo taxation, their financial statistics indicate that the leadership was able to quickly implement a reasonably fruitful taxation regime. In the early years of zemstvo activity, total revenue collection grew rapidly. In Moscow, the first four years of operation saw an average annual rate of growth of 25 percent. In 1870, it took in over 300,000 rubles in revenue—still a paltry sum compared to the duma’s 1.7

41 It is also worth noting that there seems to be little year-to-year fluctuation in the total quantities of land subject to taxation. This seems to support the notion that the Penza system was developed in part due to the difficulties with regular assessments of land. It is highly unlikely that the actual amount of land under cultivation would have remained constant during this period; it is much more plausible that there were insufficient resources to conduct a subsequent survey for land assessment.
million—but nevertheless an increase of more than two and a half times the original income from 1866.\textsuperscript{42} Latter years saw continued growth, but at a more reduced rate.

Penza saw similar increases in the early going. The data from Penza, however, show a rather significant drop that is not in evidence in Moscow. The overall collections for the year 1879 amounted to approximately 320,000 rubles, but a short four years later the amount dropped to a little less than 200,000.\textsuperscript{43} From this point, growth was more consistent, and it reached approximately 580,000 in 1903.\textsuperscript{44}

With some variation, the district zemstvos followed a similar pattern. The chart below shows the average annual growth rate in Penza over the period from 1867-1910.

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\textsuperscript{43} Penzenskaia Gubernskaia Zemskai Uprava, Otchet Penzenskoi Gubernskoi Zemskoi Upravy za 1879 god (Penza: Gubernskaia Tipografia, 1880).

\textsuperscript{44} Penzenskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo, Smety i raskladki denezhnykh zemskikh povinnostei na gubernskiia i uezdnyia potrebnosti v Penzenskoi gubernii v 1875 godu (Penza, 1775); Penzenskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo, Smety i raskladki denezhnykh zemskikh povinnostei na gubernskiia i uezdnyia potrebnosti v Penzenskoi gubernii na 1883 god (Penza, 1883); Penzenskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo, Smety i raskladki denezhnykh zemskikh povinnostei na gubernskiia i uezdnyia potrebnosti v Penzenskoi gubernii na 1891 god (Penza, 1891); Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1903god (Petrograd: N. Ia. Stoikovoi, 1908); Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1906god (Petrograd: N. Ia. Stoikovoi, 1909); Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1910 god (Petrograd: N. Ia. Stoikovoi, 1912).
Despite the individual fluctuations, we see a general pattern common to most district zemstvos: high rates of growth in the early years of zemstvo operation; near-stasis or even decline in the late 1880’s and early 1890’s, followed by a period of renewed growth in the early twentieth century.

Despite these similarities, we see rather significant variation in the actual sources of revenue. When we compare districts within a particular province or between provinces, it becomes clear that they drew on vastly different funding models to support their operations. Consider the following two charts, showing revenue sources for the district zemstvos at two points, both relatively early in the period of zemstvo operations.\(^{45}\)

\(^{45}\) Zhurnal Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobraniiia dekabr’ 1875 goda, 436-445; Smety i raskladki ...na 1883 god. Unfortunately, the lack of year-by-year data requires us to compare two data sets that are in fact several years apart.
Moscow shows a striking amount of variation from one district to the next. Income from land taxation ranges from a low of approximately twenty percent (in Moscow and Bogorod) to a high
of more than 85 percent (in Volokolamsk). Taxes on real estate and other collections show similar swings, ranging from predominance in one district to near-insignificance in another. Only the revenue from trade certificates shows some measure of constancy, ranging between five and ten percent of all revenue in each district under consideration. Penza shows more stability, largely due to the greater role played by land taxes, but even here we see significant variations in the relative contributions of particular revenue items.

Nor are these tendencies confined to the earliest years of zemstvo operations. Consider the charts below, which indicate the distribution from 1906, when comprehensive statistical tracking allows for more direct comparison between the two.\(^{46}\)

\(^{46}\) **Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1906god.**
The next four charts show the income sources for the provincial and district zemstvos in the first decade of the twentieth century.\footnote{Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1903god (Petrograd: N. Ia. Stoikovoi, 1908); Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1906god (Petrograd: N. Ia. Stoikovoi, 1909); Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1910 god (Petrograd: N. Ia. Stoikovoi, 1912).}
Several conclusions can be drawn from these charts. If we examine the first two graphs, we see that the dramatic variation evident in the prior charts has been reduced, but not entirely eliminated. In both Moscow and Penza, taxes on real estate now make up a majority of revenue in all districts under study, and we see more consistency from district to district in the relative contributions of the other revenue sources.48

The subsequent graphs give some sense of the consistency of these distributions over the course of three surveys in the first decade of the twentieth century. Moscow shows remarkable consistency from year to year in the revenue sources for its provincial organ. The district bodies show a slight decline in the significance of real estate taxes relative to other sources (and a commensurate increase in assistance funds), but the general picture is one of stability in revenue

48 It should be noted that the compilers from the Tax Department used different statistical categorizations than did the zemstvos themselves. Land taxes are now lumped in with all real estate taxes, though the evidence is clear that they...
from year to year.\textsuperscript{49} In fact, a 1913 survey of all zemstvo funding sources revealed a general
trend across Russia of a slight reduction in the importance of real estate taxes and a noticeable
increase in assistance funds.\textsuperscript{50} Thus, the Moscow zemstvos are commensurate with the data for
Russia as a whole.

The Penza districts, like those in Moscow, show a gradual evolution over the course of
the three-year survey, though it is interesting to note that the increasing significance of land taxes
runs counter to the national trend. The provincial zemstvo, however, shows a remarkable
amount of year-to-year volatility. Income from trade certificates is nonexistent in 1903, spikes in
1906, and by 1910 is once again non-existent. Similarly, income from offsets (zachety) becomes
insignificant by 1910, leading to an increased role for assistance funds.

Two explanations for this phenomenon seem possible. First, one might speculate that
accounting changes, rather than actual variations in revenues, are responsible for this volatility.
Alternatively, one notes that this trend is consistent with the evidence introduced earlier about
the volatility in revenue receipts in the late 1870’s. Subject to further research, we might
hypothesize that there were innate factors in Penza itself that led to such volatility, and prevented
the leadership from making accommodations when such shortfalls became evident.

\textbf{Conclusion}

In sum, we may now articulate a number of conclusions about the evolution of local
government taxation and revenue collection during the greater nineteenth century. The city

\textsuperscript{49} According to Frank Wcislo, the system of treasury aid was instituted in 1903, and expanded by the MVD shortly
\textsuperscript{50} If we consider only the 34 original zemstvo provinces, the data show that income from real estate made up 64.7
percent of total revenues, down from 70.2 percent in 1900, while assistance funds and returned expenditures
combined increased from 10.7 to 24.1 over the same period. See \textit{Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 40 gubernii po smetam
na 1913god} (Petrograd: N. Ia. Stoikovoi, 1915), XXI.
dumas, both before and after the 1870 reform of municipal administration, demonstrated a consistent ability to expand their revenue base. Even when population growth and inflation are taken into account, the per-resident spending in Moscow and Penza grew consistently, sometimes robustly, and, save for a brief period in the early 1890’s, readily exceeded inflation and population growth.

This development marks a stark contrast to the noble assemblies, which in many other ways were initially designed as a direct counterpart to the city dumas. Their ordinary collections and expenditures were not particularly strong, and as such their potential to develop as a regular administrative organ was significantly curtailed. Instead, their financial activities were grouped around special projects, with often impressive results. Nevertheless, the ad hoc and irregular nature of these endeavors limits their utility as a point of comparison to the more comprehensive bodies of local self-government.

In their development after the reform of 1864, the zemstvos showed a broad similarity to the growth patterns of the city dumas. Their early years of operation showed remarkable growth in revenue collection, before settling in to a more modest pattern in the ensuing years. Like the dumas, their one period of stagnation centered around the early 1890’s, and was followed by the most impressive period of growth yet in the first decades of the twentieth century. Also like the dumas, their expansion was in part due to economic growth, but also derived from the authorization of additional areas for taxation and collection. In short, both bodies showed some flexibility and evolution in their ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

Despite these surface similarities, one is struck by the differences between the various organizations in the two provinces under study, and indeed between similar organizations within a particular province. As in many other areas, the authorizing legislation was fairly general in
establishing parameters for revenue collection, and the localities thus had some flexibility in determining the exact form and magnitude of their taxation regimes.

These differences stretched over three major areas. First, we see differences in the overall levels of collection, considered on a per-resident basis. Although our evidence for the city dumas is rather limited, certain towns within Penza province show per-resident collections that are twice as high as those in other areas. Similarly, in the early years of zemstvo operation, high-tax districts were drawing more than two times the low-tax areas. Secondly, we see significant differences between localities in the amount of revenue they took from particular streams. Some of this, of course, would have been due to the varying economic conditions in comparable areas, yet the sheer starkness of the difference suggests that there were greater differences at play. Further research in this area could illuminate more precisely the impact of both factors on taxation particulars.

Third, we see rather stark differences between provinces in the way that particular taxes were administered. The zemstvos in both provinces made ample use of land taxes to support their operations, but designed rather different schemes for reaching that end. These schemes reflected both ideological divides in the appropriateness of certain types of tax regimes and institutional organization, but also appear to have some grounding in pragmatic responses to the demands of these particular areas.

Land taxes, in particular, proved to be a major area of concern for the zemstvos, and the inability to collect them consistently proved to be a major hindrance to zemstvo operations. Land taxes, in particular, proved a major difficulty, with both the amount of arrears and the year-to-year unpredictability of these arrears contributing to a rather unsteady financial evolution. In fact, Thomas Pearson has postulated that these arrears were a strong contributor to the institution
of the land captain legislation in 1889. He argues that the tax arrears, combined with peasant unrest and a (often deserved) suspicion of elected officials, served as an indicator to the government that it needed further action to “establish order and efficiency in the peasant village…”51 One might also plausibly argue that these difficulties contributed to the need for diversification of zemstvo revenue sources; in the latter period of zemstvo operations, assistance funds from the central government allowed real estate taxes to make up a less overwhelming (though still predominant) portion of zemstvo collections.

Additionally, we would do well to consider the impact of this increased revenue collection on the mindset of the residents of these areas. The variation in tax sources might have changed the precise individuals most affected, but it seems quite clear that in real terms the average city and rural resident both saw substantial increases in their real tax burden during the post-reform period.

This may provide some context for the jurisdictional disputes we will cover in the following chapters. Both debates escalated over the course of the 1890s, during the period of more limited revenue growth for dumas and zemstvos alike, which may have come as something of a surprise compared to the more expansive experience of previous years. One could envision a scenario in which the history of increasing taxes and the specter of curtailed budgets in the future lent a particularly contentious edge to the relationship between various organs. So long as tax burdens remained low, jurisdictional disputes between city and zemstvo, or between province and district, could remain relatively non-controversial, since fewer funds were at stake. However, an increased tax burden would presumably have brought increased scrutiny of the exact uses to which those funds were put. And, as we will see shortly, they brought with them an

increased determination to defend the financial interests of the delegates’ particular areas, and insure against encroachment by other bodies and interests.
Chapter 5: Local Government Spending Distribution

Introduction

This chapter will attempt to provide a basic outline of the spending policies for the dumas and zemstvos of Moscow and Penza over the course of the pre-Revolutionary era. Even taking into account the limited scope of this study, this could be an exhaustive task. Between just our two test provinces, we must consider financial data from two provincial zemstvos and twenty-three district zemstvos, each over a period of fifty years. The inclusion of duma expenditures nearly doubles the potential quantity of data for analysis.

As a consequence, this chapter is not intended as an exhaustive study of the issue; indeed, given the reams of data available and the number of different organizations even in our two test provinces, such a study would require far more space than this chapter allows. Rather, my aim is to draw a brief statistical picture of the spending patterns of the zemstvos and the city dumas, and give some sense of how they evolved over time. At certain points during my analysis, I will have to make illustrative points from particular years or particular regions in which the data are especially rich. Consequently, of course, this means certain periods and certain organizations will be more heavily represented in the current analysis. Although I make some speculative conclusions about the overall course of spending and the linkages among certain trends, I believe a more robust data set will allow us to confirm these hypotheses with a greater degree of certitude.

In the first section, I examine the legislative authority and spending patterns for city dumas in the pre-reform era. Because of the limitations of the evidence available, I concentrate on the capital cities of Moscow and Penza exclusively. I consider overall levels of expenditures,
and their relative significance on a per-resident basis. I also examine the evolution over time, to consider the overall growth in city expenditures. I then consider the major areas for city expenditure, and how these priorities evolved over time. How much variation do we see in spending patterns from one year to the next? How much variation is there between Moscow and Penza?

In the second section, I will consider the same questions for the dumas in the era after the city reform legislation of 1870. Here, our evidence for Moscow and Penza is still the most robust, but there is some material available for the other city dumas in Penza province. Unfortunately, this data does not specify spending areas, but the overall totals do afford us a chance to assess the degree of variation among neighboring cities.

In the third section, I will examine zemstvo spending in Moscow and Penza over the course of approximately fifty years of zemstvo operation. The major points of inquiry will be similar to those listed for the city dumas. To the degree possible, I will draw comparisons between the relative priorities of the dumas and zemstvos, though of course we must be mindful of the differences between the two in taxation capacity, spheres of responsibility, and budgeting methods. Additionally, we are fortunate to have robust data at the district level as well as the provincial. This will afford us the opportunity to examine the degree of variation among district zemstvos, and whether these differences remained consistent over the course of the zemstvo era.

In the fourth section, I will consider various factors that could contribute to particular spending patterns and priorities. Because this is an overview, I will consider basic factors such as population, population density and distribution, as well as economic factors such as industrial development or land productivity. Where the data is robust, we can also compare city and zemstvo data, to see if there is any correlation between levels of government involvement in
particular areas. Lastly, we will examine these data over time, to see if particular tendencies had substantial staying power. Did certain areas demonstrate elevated levels of commitment over the long term?

In the last section, I will compare the identified zemstvo spending patterns to the other provinces in the empire. Beginning in the 1880s, but only sporadically until the turn of the century, the Ministry of Interior published comprehensive tables of zemstvo expenditures in various areas. Using the data from these tables, we may discern whether the patterns we have illuminated in the various zemstvos mark them as outliers (positive or negative) or squarely within the general zemstvo trends.

**City Expenditures Before the Reform**

As discussed above, municipal administration before the 1870 reform legislation was technically governed by the Statute on the Towns from 1785. However, this was in some instances updated and superseded by subsequent legislation, such that one historian has claimed that the network of governing statutes was both “intricate and vague.”¹ Despite this confusion, in the decades leading up to the reform, expenditures, like revenues, grew at a healthy rate. In Moscow, total city expenditures rose from 1.1 million rubles in 1847 to 2.1 million in 1865—an average annual increase of 3.7 percent.² In Penza, we see an average rise of 3.83 percent over a

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¹ Valeriia Nardova, “Municipal Self-Government After the 1870 Reform,” in Bushnell, Zakharova, Eklof (eds.), Russia’s Great Reforms, 181. The city account books dutifully noted the precise authorization for their expenditures, whether in statute or prior administrative decision. See, for instance, GAPO, f. 108, op. 1, d. 574.
² Denezhnye Oboroty Stolichnago Goroda Moskvy v 1847 godu (n.p.), Denezhnye Oboroty Stolichnago Goroda Moskvy v 1865 godu, Tipografiia Vysochayshe utverzhdennago Kommissionera Maskovskikh Blagotvoritel'naho I Khudozhestvennago Obshchestv, I Chuksina, 1865, 4-35. Note that 1865 was apparently something of an outlier in terms of tax receipts and may have in turn affected spending levels, but nevertheless it is worth noting that expenditures exceeded revenues by 200,000 rubles during that year.
comparable period (1856-1867). Mironov’s index puts price growth over that period at approximately one percent per year, meaning that both dumas expanded in real terms by roughly 2.5-3.0 percent per year in the last decades of the pre-reform era.

Although the growth rate was similar for both entities, the level of spending was considerably different. Population records at this point are too unsure to develop a reliable growth model over such a short period of time. If we assume a relatively constant population in the city of Moscow from 1847 to 1865 (this is not entirely likely, but not completely off the mark, either), then spending per city resident was approximately 3.0 rubles in 1847, and just shy of 6 rubles in 1865 (the growth rate, of course, would be the same as for the expenditures as a whole). Penza was well short of that mark. Even after a significant boost in spending during the latter part of the decade, per-resident spending in 1867 was approximate 2.2 rubles.

The major categories of spending for the two entities were generally analogous, which allows for a comparison of the spending priorities of the two dumas. For purposes of this discussion, we will concern ourselves with the so-called “ongoing” expenditures, which in most instances made up the lion’s share of city spending. The seven principal categories of spending were as follows:

1. Maintenance of Places and People of City Administration (Soderzhanie mest i lits gorodovago upravleniia): this category included numerous items of city responsibility, such as the offices of the duma itself, the judicial offices (such as the city magistrate and orphan courts), the police, fire brigade, city doctor, and related functions.
2. Maintenance of City Buildings and Institutions: this category generally included rental costs for city offices that did not have space in city owned buildings, as well as heating and lighting for those installations.
3. Outdoor Installations: this included repairs and maintenance of bridges and crossings, as well as the market stalls and commercial areas under city authority.

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3 GAPO, f. 108, op. 1, d. 539; GAPO, f. 109, op. 1, d. 1. It should be noted that prior materials for Penza are available, but comparison is rather difficult because of a different method of recording data. The accounts for 1830 and 1840 include receipts and expenditures in both silver and assignats, with no method for conversion between the two. Additionally, the revenue categories shifted at some point between 1840 and 1856, such that the below discussion of particular spending areas would be increasingly complicated.
4. Military Support: Required funds for the quartering of officers and “other military expenditures.”
5. Maintenance of Scholastic and Charitable Institutions
6. Debt Payments
7. Petty Expenses

Moscow’s account-books also included an eighth category—“assistance to outside offices, but were unfortunately vague on the specifics of this expenditure.

The charts below show the proportional spending distribution for the continuing expenses of the two dumas over the period in question.⁴

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⁴ TsIAM, f. 4, op. 4, d. 1133; Moskovkaia Gorodskaiia Rasporiaditel’naia Duma, Schet deistvitel’nykh denezhnukh oborotov stolichnago goroda Moskvy (Moscow, 1847); Moskovkaia Gorodskaiia Rasporiaditel’naia Duma, Schet deistvitel’nykh denezhnukh oborotov stolichnago goroda Moskvy (Moscow, 1850); Moskovkaia Gorodskaiia Rasporiaditel’naia Duma, Schet deistvitel’nykh denezhnukh oborotov stolichnago goroda Moskvy (Moscow, 1855); Moskovkaia Gorodskaiia Rasporiaditel’naia Duma, Schet deistvitel’nykh denezhnukh oborotov stolichnago goroda Moskvy (Moscow, 1860) Otchet Moskovskago Gorodskago Golova Shcherbatova o deiatel’nosti Moskovskoi Gorodskoi Dumy za shestletie s 1863 po 1869 godu (Moscow: Universitetskaia Tipografiia, 1869), 3; GAPO, f. 108, op. 1, d. 539; GAPO, f. 108, d. 574; GAPO, f. 109, op.1, d. 1.
Several trends are evident from these graphs. Both generally spend slightly less than half of their budget on city services, with healthy chunks carved out for city holdings, outdoor services, and (on occasion) military support. In Penza, the funding shifts are much more dramatic. We see sporadic spikes in debt payments and military support, both of which were temporary.\(^5\) There is a substantial expansion in the portion of city revenue devoted to city holdings, which then recedes slightly.

In addition to the “ongoing” expenses that made up the bulk of the city budget, city dumas also met with various unanticipated annual expenditures, which where recorded as a separate line-item. Every year included some measure of “unexpected expenses,” and these could dramatically affect the budget. The sheer scale of the expense could very dramatically from year to year. In Moscow, for instance, these made up less than three percent of the budget in 1847 and 6.5 percent in 1850. In 1855, however, these expenses jumped to an unprecedented 1.37 million rubles, making up over half the expenditures for that year. The variation in Penza

\(^5\) The records for 1885 show that spending on military matters made up less than four percent of the city budget.
was not quite so great, but still significant; one-time expenditures ranged from a low of just over ten percent of all funds (1856) to a high of 28.5 percent (1867). In the latter year, these extraordinary expenditures included such varied items as “the construction of the Peter and Paul private house” bridge maintenance, and barracks repair for one company of the Guards battalion.6

Ultimately, we are left with several basic conclusions about city finances during the pre-reform period. Despite the supposed “moribund” nature of municipal administration during this time, both Moscow and Penza were able to show consistent expenditure growth that exceeded the rate of inflation. The rate of change, however, was somewhat haphazard, as unforeseen “one-time” expenses could demand substantial portions of annual revenue. The ongoing expenses showed more consistency, but Penza in particular saw spikes due to debt payments and the need for expanded military support. In both provincial capitals, basic city services formed the bulk of the expenditure, though the overall proportion was higher in Penza. As a consequence, Moscow was able to devote a significantly higher proportion of its overall revenues to educational and charitable expenditures (at times reaching more than ten percent of the budget). Moscow’s overall expenditures, in fact, were able to significantly outstrip those of Penza even when population is taken into account; per-resident spending was more than double that of its more rural counterpart.

City Expenditures After the Reform

The reforms of city government (1862 in Moscow, 1870 in Penza) confirmed the responsibilities of the city dumas in particular areas of responsibility, but did not establish

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6 GAPO, f. 109, op.1, d. 1., l. 72-73.
significant new areas for expenditure.\(^7\) Thus, in contrast to the changeover in taxation regime, spending after the reforms is marked by a gradual evolution in priorities, rather than a dramatic shift between the pre- and post-reform approaches. Thus after a period of limited spending growth in the immediate aftermath of the reform, total expenditures began to grow at an increasing rate. In Moscow, spending grew at an average rate of 5.7 percent. from 1873 to 1897\(^8\) In the ensuing two decades, the rate nearly doubled. By 1916, duma spending was at 7.5 million rubles per year—an average annual increase of 10.7 percent.\(^9\)

Even taking into account the significant population growth over this time period, the increases are still quite significant. Spending per resident increased by a factor of nearly ten from 1863-1916 (from 4.3 rubles per person to 41.4), while prices grew by a factor of two or less.\(^10\) By any metric, duma spending on city residents increased massively during the post-reform period.

Our records for Penza are not as comprehensive, but they do reveal significant growth as well. In fact, their rate of growth may have exceeded that of Moscow. In 1885, the duma spent just under 200,000 rubles—an annual increase of nearly eight percent from the prior figures.\(^11\) This puts per-resident spending at approximately 4.4. rubles, meaning that the figure nearly doubled in the span of two decades.

Before turning to a consideration of the destination for these funds, we should note that the system of accounting and categorization was changed significantly during the post-reform

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\(^7\) The 1870 law details the areas of responsibility in language quite similar to that used in the zemstvo legislation six years before. See PSZRI, no. 48498, sec. 2.

\(^8\) Pisar’kova, Gorodskie reformy, 339.

\(^9\) Ibid.

\(^10\) Population figures are based on the 1864 figures for the early part of this period, and the 1897 census for the latter.

\(^11\) GAPO, f. 109, op. 1, d. 228. However, the pamiatnaia knizhka two years later shows expenditures of only 164,000 rubles. The 1885 figure may be an outlier (one-time and extraordinary expenses are close to 50,000 rubles), but even the 1887 figure reveals an impressive growth rate of 5.8 percent.
period, which makes a comparison of pre- and post-reform spending somewhat challenging. For instance, Penza began to divide its ongoing (now called “direct”) expenses into twelve categories, rather than the prior seven. Moscow, on the other hand, began to account for spending using 23 separate categories. For instance, expenditures on law and order were now divided among the following: Support for Outdoor police (447,032 rubles), Gendarme division (82,241 rubles) Medical-Police Administration (5,815 rubles), Communal Courts (126,200 rubles), Moscow City Detention House (24,856 rubles), and Prison Bodies (39,083 rubles).\(^\text{12}\)

Liubov’ Pisar’kova has written extensively about the funding priorities of the Moscow Duma during the post-reform era, and as such it would be superfluous to duplicate her extraordinary work. Her statistical summation of the priorities is presented in the following chart.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^{12}\) Schet Deistvitelnykh Denezhnykh Oborotov Stolichnago Goroda Moskvy za 1870 god (Moskva: Pechatnia S. P Iakovleva, 1872), 3.

\(^{13}\) Pisar’kova, Gorodskie Reformy, 339.
Clearly, her categorizations are different from those used by the Duma in 1863; it is unclear whether they she devised them or worked retroactively from a later system developed by the duma itself. Nevertheless, if we take her statistics at face value, we see continual evolution in priorities over the course of her period of study. The most significant developments, as we see, are the dramatic increase in maintenance of city enterprises. This was accomplished largely through the diminution of “obligatory expenses,” which actually dropped in real terms even as duma spending was growing by leaps and bounds. Social services also benefited; the combination of health care, education, and public assistance moved from a scant eight percent of the budget in 1863 to more than thirty percent by the turn of the century (before falling again to 25 percent in 1916).

Our data for Penza are not as robust, but we do have data from 1885 to compare to the pre-reform era and to Moscow’s development. The major spending categories for that year are as follows:\textsuperscript{14}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount (rubles)</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: City Administration (Buildings and Personnel)</td>
<td>24459</td>
<td>15.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Pensions</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>0.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Assistance to the State Treasury</td>
<td>4352</td>
<td>2.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Police and Fire</td>
<td>32158</td>
<td>21.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Heating and Lighting for Jails</td>
<td>1666</td>
<td>1.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: Medical Department</td>
<td>5743</td>
<td>3.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7: School and Charity</td>
<td>34192</td>
<td>22.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8: Maintenance of City Holdings</td>
<td>8418</td>
<td>5.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9: Outdoor Relief</td>
<td>24440</td>
<td>15.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10: Debts</td>
<td>5908</td>
<td>3.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11: Living Quarters for Military Officers</td>
<td>5501</td>
<td>3.59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12: Other</td>
<td>4312</td>
<td>2.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Estimates</td>
<td>1738</td>
<td>1.14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{14} GAPO, f. 109, op. 1, d. 228.
The most significant change is in the educational section, which now takes up more than 20 percent of the total (up from barely three percent only fifteen years before). The categories that previously made up the general city services (City administration, police and fire, and outdoor services) make up approximately 59 percent of direct expenses, down from nearly seventy percent in 1870. The medical section is now considered separately (perhaps a sign of its future growth), but still small relative to other programs.

Although we are not able to trace the evolution of Penza’s spending in greater depth, we are able to make some comparisons to the other towns in the province. As the largest city by far, Penza of course had the highest overall expenditure. Its total outlay was more than 164,000 rubles; the next-highest town was 35,000 in Saransk. However, when we consider the populations of the various areas, a rather surprising picture emerges:  

As we see, spending per resident could vary widely from city to city. It ranged from a low of 0.8 rubles/resident in Kerensk to a high of just over 4.5 rubles/resident in Insar. Perhaps

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15 *Pamiatnaia knizhka Penzenskoj gubernii na 1889 god* (Penza, 1888), 40.
some portion of that disparity is explained by higher prices for goods and services in one
particular area, but the difference is clearly too great for that. Clearly, in certain areas there was
a greater commitment to action on the part of municipal leaders. In a subsequent section, we will
consider possible explanations for these changes.

Zemstvo Spending

Zemstvo spending in the post-reform era grew at an even faster rate than did the
expenditures in the cities. Spending by the Moscow provincial zemstvo more than doubled over
the course of the seven years from 1867 to 1874, an increase of nearly thirteen percent. The
ensuing decades brought still more growth, but at a significantly lower rate. The period from
1874 to 1885 saw average annual growth of 3.8 percent, and the next five years saw that figure
drop to 2.8 percent. The ensuing decades saw renewed vitalization; the 1890-1903 rate of
increase was over 8 percent, and growth remained above four percent thereafter.

Penza’s spending growth followed the same general pattern, but the initial growth was
not as rapid as that in Moscow. From 1867 to 1875, the provincial zemstvo saw an average
annual increase of approximately 7.5 percent—a healthy figure, but well short of Moscow’s rate

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16 Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemskoe Sobranie, Zhurnaly Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobraniiia 1866
 goda (Moscow: Universitetskaia Tipografiia (Katkov i Ko., 1866), prilozheniia, p. 1; Moskovskoe Gubernskoe
Zemskoe Sobranie, Otchet o gubernskikh summakh zemstva Moskovskoi gubernii (Moscow, 1875). The increase
from 1866 to 1867 was an astronomical 113 percent, but that increase is apparently due to new projects still getting
off the ground. The 1867 budget seems to be the first that demonstrates a more developed zemstvo balance of
spending. See Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemskoe Sobranie, Otchet Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago
Sobraniiia 1867 goda, 5.

17 Moskovskaia Gubernskaia Zemskaia Uprava, Otchet Moskovskoi Gubernskoi Zemskoi Upravy s 5-iu k nemu
prilozheniiami za 1885 god (Moscow: Tipografiia V. F. Rikhter, 1886); Moskovskaia Gubernskaia Zemskaia
Uprava, Otchet Moskovskoi Gubernskoi Zemskoi Upravy s 5-iu k nemu prilozheniiami za 1890 god (Moscow:
Tipografiia V. F. Rikhter, 1891); Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1903god (Petrograd: N.
Ia. Stoikovoi, 1908); Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1906god (Petrograd: N. Ia.
Stoikovoi, 1909); Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1910 god (Petrograd: N. Ia. Stoikovoi,
1912).
over the same period. Moreover, the spending plateau occurred earlier in Penza; in the early 1890s, when Moscow was still showing reasonable rates of growth, Penza’s rate of increase had slowed to an anemic 0.8 percent. The rebound, when it occurred, was even stronger than Moscow’s. From 1903 to 1910, the budget grew at an annual rate of 7.5 percent.

Despite these similarities, there are significant differences in the distribution of this spending among the various zemstvo organs. In Moscow, the provincial zemstvo took an increasingly active financial role, such that its share of the spending increased significantly as the decades passed. In 1867, provincial spending made up more than one-quarter of the zemstvo total, and by 1876 the figure was at nearly forty percent. The provincial role reached a high of 45 percent in 1903, before dropping a few percentage points in the ensuing years.

In Penza, in contrast, the provincial spending figure was initially higher than that of Moscow, but moved in the other direction. In 1867, provincial expenditures made up just over 30 percent of zemstvo totals, but this figure quickly dropped. The proportion hovered at a remarkably consistent 22-23 percent over the course of the next several decades. Around the turn of the century, however, this trend reversed itself, and provincial expenditures shot up dramatically. By 1903, they made up a full forty percent of the zemstvo total, and remained near that level for the rest of the period under study.

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18 Penzenskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo, Smety i Raskladki ... v Penzenskoi gubernii v 1875 godu.
19 Between 1887 and 1891, provincial spending rose from 207,000 rubles to 214,000, while total zemstvo expenditures rose from 903,000 rubles to 936,000 rubles. See Penzenskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo, Smety i raskladki ... v Penzenskoi gubernii na 1887 god and Smety i raskladki ... v Penzenskoi gubernii na 1891 god.
20 Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1903god (Petrograd: N. Ia. Stoikovoi, 1908); Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1906god (Petrograd: N. Ia. Stoikovoi, 1909); Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1910 god (Petrograd: N. Ia. Stoikovoi, 1912).
21 MGZS, Zhurnaly MGZS 1866, prilozheniiia, p. 1; MGZS, Zhurnaly Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobraniiia dekabr’ 1875 goda; Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1903god.
22 Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1903god. The 1913 statistics puts Moscow’s provincial expenditures as 39.9 percent of the zemstvo total. See Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 40 gubernii po smetam na 1913god (Petrograd: N. Ia. Stoikovoi, 1915).
Once again, we must also take population figures into account. Based on the figures available and the methods discussed above, overall expenditures for Penza were approximately 0.23 rubles per resident in 1867. This figure quickly rose to approximately 0.60 rubles in 1875, and it remained at around this level for several decades. The spending increases in the early twentieth century brought the rate to 0.98 rubles by 1903, and this total increased to 1.63 by 1910. In Moscow, the calculation is more circumspect, due to higher rates of population growth, weaker statistics, and the significant urban population (because of the role of the duma, urban residents would have had less need for zemstvo services). However, we can at least be confident that the rates were significantly higher. Based on the nearest population statistics, we estimate the spending per resident in Moscow province to be 0.47 rubles in 1867, more than double the rate in Penza. At the tail end of our study, the gap had barely narrowed. In 1910, the Moscow zemstvos were spending nearly three rubles per provincial resident, or nearly ninety percent more than their Penza counterparts.23

The population distribution actually makes the difference between the two zemstvos even greater. If we assume (as did many contemporaries) that the zemstvo primarily existed to serve the rural population, we may consider per-resident spending in that light. In 1910, the Moscow zemstvos spent approximately 5.28 rubles per rural resident, whereas Penza spent 1.9.24

23 If we assume (as did many contemporaries) that the zemstvo primarily existed to serve the rural population, then the difference between the two zemstvos even greater.
24 A comparison between the 1887 figures and the 1897 census shows a negative rate growth in the rural population, perhaps in part due to the 1891-92 famine. This trend would most likely have reversed during the 1897-1910 period, which would thus give us a larger rural population and an even smaller per-resident quotient.
Much like the city dumas, however, the district zemstvos showed significant variation in their overall levels of spending. The charts below show the per-person figures for district zemstvos in select years over the course of the zemstvo era:25

Moscow

25 MGZS, Zhurnaly MGZS 1866, prilozheniia, p. 1; MGZS, Zhurnaly Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobrania dekabr’ 1875 goda; Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1903 god; Pamiatnaia knizhka Penzenskoi gubernii na 1889 god. (Penza, Gubernskaia Tipografiia, 1888);
Penza
It is interesting to note that both provinces demonstrate consistent variation over the entire course of the period in question. We will leave Moscow district aside, given the anomalous size of the urban population and the complications of accounting for the urban-rural divide. Even with this consideration, however, the other districts of Moscow province show significant differences in their per-resident spending—the top districts spend at nearly double the rate of their other counterparts. In Penza, the divide is even greater. Nizhnyi Lomov’s 1867 tally of 0.23 rubles per resident is nearly triple the rate in Penza district, with the other districts spread between these two extremes.

One might surmise that such dramatic differences are the product of the vagaries of the early zemstvo era, but we see that these differences in fact persist through the ensuing decades. Both provinces show a slight convergence in the second year of study, before diverging once again in the 1903 data. In each case, we see the high-spending districts more than double the rate of their lower-spending counterparts.

SPECIFIC PRIORITIES

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Clearly, the wide disparities in district zemstvo spending merit further investigation.

The authorizing legislation divided spending into two main categories—obligatory and non-obligatory. The percentage expenditure on so-called “required” line items declined significantly over the course of the zemstvo era. In 1877, the median percentage among all district zemstvos was between 40 and 50 percent; in 1901, it was between 10 and 15.\textsuperscript{26} Consequently, of course, the non-obligatory expenses (including such areas as health care and education) saw an extremely rapid rise, fueled both by overall revenue growth and the declining need for obligatory expenditures. Clearly, zemtsy took advantage of the leeway offered them, and decided to focus their efforts on areas outside of the minimum standards required by the government.

Within these broader categories, however, specific categories were problematic. For instance, veterinary services were sometimes considered as part of a larger “doctor section,” but in the later years of operation, there was a separate line-item for the “veterinary section.” Thus, we must be cautious when making comparisons between districts and provinces in a particular year, or when examining the evolution of particular spending practices over a longer period of time.\textsuperscript{27}

Nevertheless, the available data do make it possible for us to draw some broad conclusions about the relative areas of priority for particular district and provincial zemstvo organs. Certain programmatic areas received greater attention, and consumed an ever-increasing share of the funds available. In particular, health care and education became areas of particular

\textsuperscript{26} Veselovskii, \textit{Istoriia zemstva za sorok let}, vol. 1, 248.
\textsuperscript{27} We do see a convergence in the standard categorizations used, so that more precise comparisons are possible for the latter years of zemstvo operations (see below). By the time that national statistics were collected to allow for cross-zemstvo comparison, the following spending categories were used: 1) Participation in the expenditures of the governmental authorities, 2) Support of the zemstvo administration, 3) Establishment and Maintenance of Prisons, 4) Roads, 5) Public Education, 6) Social Care, 7) Medicine, 8) Veterinary Services, 9) Economic Collaboration, 10) Payment of debts, 11) Other.
import. The charts below shows the evolution of the amounts spent on each of these items in Moscow and Penza, expressed as a proportion of overall expenditures.²⁸

Moscow

²⁸ MGZS, Zhurnal MGZS 1866, prilozheniia, p. 1 and MGZS, Zhurnal Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobraniiia dekabr’ 1875 goda. Note that in 1867 Ruza and Vereia did not yet report specific categories for their expenditures. Smety i raskladki ... v Penzenskoi gubernii na 1887 god; Smety i raskladki denezhnykh zemskikh povinnosti na gubernskie i uezdnye potrebnosti v Penzenskoi gubernii na 1896 (Penza, 1896); Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1903god.
In both provinces, we see a gradual convergence of priorities, but at different rates and with different final results. In the early years, unsurprisingly, the districts vary greatly in their funding priorities. Ruza and Verei, for instance, did not record any spending in these two areas in 1867, a full two years after they began operations. Even among those that did show expenditures in both categories, the variation is quite dramatic. Even in 1876, districts such as Kolomna and Serpukhov devote nearly 50 percent of their budgets to those two priorities, whereas in four other areas the ratio is less than 25 percent. By the turn of the century, there is greater convergence still, and we can see a rough equivalence among the uezdy in the priority they give to these two areas of focus.

Penza, on the other hand, showed a general resistance to this trend. Though our data come from later years, the disparity is still quite evident. In 1887, health care and education spending ranged from 40 percent of the district zemstvo budget (Gorodishche) to 65 percent (Nizhnyi-Lomov), and similar variations are evident in 1896 as well. As with Moscow, the turn of the century brought a greater convergence of zemstvo priorities between the various districts.
Causes

Our general survey of city and zemstvo spending has revealed two principal conclusions. Both the city dumas and the zemstvos, for both Penza and Moscow, recorded consistent growth in expenditure for the period under study. Even accounting for inflation and population increase, we can reasonably conclude that the actual spending on administrative services was higher at the close of the zemstvo era than it was at the beginning.

Within that general framework, however, we see substantial variation among the individual towns and districts in their spending choices. In both provinces, we see wide variation in the overall level of spending (expressed on a per-resident basis), and we also see wide variation in the destination for that spending. What, then, contributed to spending patterns in a particular city or district? Though the data are far from complete, a few sample years will allow for some tentative conclusions on this issue. The following section will consider four possible factors that might be correlated with higher levels of zemstvo spending:

Population

For instance, let us consider the role of total population. It is reasonable to speculate, for instance, that a larger city would have a larger overall tax base (on a per-resident basis), and would thus be able to afford a greater level of services.

The data, however, reveal that this is not the case. If we chart all provincial cities, there is essentially no correlation between city size and spending.29

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29 Pamiatnaia knizhka Penzenskoi gubernii na 1889 god. (Penza, Gubernskaia Tipografiia, 1888).
Even if we remove the obvious outliers (Penza by virtue of its overwhelming size, and the three non-district capitals), the correlation is very weak. There is essentially no conclusive evidence that a city’s total population had a measurable impact on its total level of expenditure.

Remarkably, the strongest correlation is evident when we consider the population of the district as a whole. In stark contrast to the prior charts, here the correlation both positive and reasonably strong (r-squared= 0.6034).³⁰

³⁰ Ibid.
It is difficult to account for this phenomenon. Within Penza, there is little correlation between the population of a district capital and the population of the surrounding uezd. Insar was one of the most populous districts, but had one of the smaller capital cities, while Nizhnyi Lomov could boast a city of almost three times its size with a slightly smaller district population. And yet, a sizable district population would invariably lead to a high level of services from the district capital. Further data from other years and other provinces would allow us to determine whether this correlation repeats itself, or if other factors can explain the relationship.

The zemstvos show similar statistics. As best we can tell, district size and population distribution had at best a moderate impact on spending. The chart below shows the relationship between district size and spending per resident in Moscow in 1876:31

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31 MGZS, Zhurnaly Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobraniiia dekabr’ 1875 goda.
The three outlier dots are Moscow, Bogorod, and Serpukhov, each of which spent significantly more per resident than do the other districts. Even if we leave those out of our analysis, there appears to be only a slight correlation between the two factors. Areas with a larger rural population tend to spend slightly less on those residents, though the differences are not substantial.

In Penza, we see a generally similar picture.\(^{32}\)

\(^{32}\) Penzenskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo, *Smety i raskladki ... v Penzenskoi gubernii na 1883 god.*
Here, again, the trend is generally inverse, with one or two outliers (in this case, Nizhnyi Lomov had the highest per-resident expenditure of all the districts, despite being one of the more populous areas.

It seems reasonable to believe that this pattern would replicate itself in other areas. Economies of scale would seem to dictate that, all other considerations being equal, a large population could be more easily served with fewer resources per person than could a smaller jurisdiction. However, the correlation in both cases is relatively weak; it seems likely that other factors might have a greater impact on spending patterns.

City Spending

Additionally, we might consider whether there is any correlation among the spending patterns of civic organizations within a province. One might envision a situation in which a
district or province developed a particular zeal for active local government, and that this zeal would be reflected in a strong correlation between duma spending and zemstvo spending in a particular area. Such a scenario seems especially plausible given the conclusions laid out in earlier chapters, in which we saw partial overlap between zemstvo and city duma institutions (admittedly, more common in Moscow than in Penza). Our data on this question is less comprehensive, but it does allow us to hazard an estimate. The graph below charts the relationship between city duma spending and zemstvo spending, both on a per-resident basis. Zemstvo spending is considered relative to both the entire district population (pink) and the population outside the cities (blue), whereas duma expenditures are expressed in terms of city residents.\(^{33}\)

![Graph showing relationship between city duma spending and zemstvo spending.](image)

Though this data of course considers only one year, and may be contradicted by further evidence, the conclusions here are quite clear. There was essentially no relationship, positive or negative, between the various dumas in the district capitals on the one hand and the district zemstvos on the other.

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\(^{33}\) Smety i raskladki ...v Penzenskoj gubernii na 1887 god.
Total Zemstvo Spending

Thus, neither basic demographic factors nor a sense of local initiative can be seen as a significant contributor to zemstvo spending. More narrowly, one might suggest that the zemstvos themselves could serve as correlates. In other words, we could hypothesize that certain zemstvo institutions developed a commitment to increased spending in particular areas. Under this hypothesis, these areas would demonstrate consistently high levels of spending relative to the other districts in their province.

Surprisingly, the data reveal nothing of the sort. Most localities themselves showed very little long-term consistency in spending patterns. For instance, the chart below shows the correlation in spending per resident for the Penza districts between 1875 and 1883, and the Moscow districts between 1867 and 1876:34

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34 Penzenskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo, Smety i Raskladki ... v Penzenskoi gubernii v 1875 godu; Penzenskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo, Smety i raskladki ... v Penzenskoi gubernii na 1883 god; MGZS, Zhurnaly MGZS 1866, prilozhenia, p. 1; and MGZS, Zhurnal Moskovskogo Gubernskogo Zemskogo Sobraniia dekabr’ 1875 goda.
As we see, both provinces demonstrate a slight positive correlation, with substantial variation. In other words, a high-spending district in one year did have a greater likelihood of being a high-spending province a decade or so later, but this was by no means certain.

With a few more years of evolution, however, the correlation breaks down much more. Below, we see the correlations for Penza over the period 1875-1891.³⁵

³⁵ Penzenskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo, Smety i Raskladki ...v Penzenskoi gubernii v 1875 godu and Penzenskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo, Smety i raskladki... v Penzenskoi gubernii na 1891 god.
The correlation is essentially nonexistent. Even in the later years, after district spending had moved into more regular order, we see little in the way of a correlation. The charts below show the same criteria for Moscow and Penza during selected years in the first part of the twentieth century.\(^36\)

\(^{36}\) Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1903 god and Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1910 god.
Even over a short seven years, the correlations are barely recognizable. Several districts are among the most generous in one year and among the most parsimonious later on. Nor can we contend that this randomness is caused by miniscule differences in spending rates; note that in most of the years in question, the per-resident rate varied within a province by a factor of two or more.

This evidence is particularly striking given our understanding of zemstvo leadership. In the chapters above, we elaborated a model in which individual zemstvo leaders were endowed with significant independence and limited oversight. As a consequence, it would seem likely that certain leaders would develop a strong commitment to activism, and that this emphasis would be reflected in the data about their funding levels. It may be that this is so; however, it is quite clear that these commitments did not sustain themselves over the long term. In short order, increased spending would as often as not be followed by a reversion to the norm.

We see similar results when we consider the impact of total spending on social services spending within a particular year. For instance, one might reasonably assume that the more lavishly-spending organizations would spend a higher proportion of those resources on non-obligatory spending in general and health care and education in particular. Given that the latter areas were among the most active areas for intervention and thus the most volatile, we might be able to isolate particular areas that increased their spending in order to devote more resources to these vital services. But, our evidence for even this conclusion is tentative at best. Below, we see these factors charted out for two representative years in the middle period of zemstvo
Spending per Resident vs. Non-Obligatory Expenses, Penza Districts, 1883

HC+Ed Spending vs. per-resident spending, Moscow, 1876

37 Penzenskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo, Smety i raskladki ... v Penzenskoi gubernii na 1883 god and MGZS, Zhurnaly Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobrania dekabr’ 1875 goda.
Penza shows a general positive correlation between the two factors, whereas Moscow shows essentially none at all. Higher-spending zemstvos in Moscow were no more likely to devote additional resources to optional programs than were lower-spending ones.

**Prior Spending on Social Services**

Total zemstvo spending does not show great consistency from year to year; does the same assertion apply to particular areas of interest? Again, one might postulate a situation in which an individual zemstvo leader developed a particular focus on health care, education, agronomy, or other areas, and that this particular commitment would sustain itself over time.

Once again, however, we are unable to find such correlations in the data, Interestingly, however, there appears to be little correlation between attention paid to one set of social services and another. The chart below shows the relative portion of district zemstvo budgets spent on health care and education in the year 1876:38

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38 MGZS, Zhurnaly Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobraniiia dekabr' 1875 goda.
The two variables are ostensibly independent of one another. Serpukhov, for instance, spent over one-third of its budget on health care, yet was below the median in terms of health care spending.

In Penza, we see much the same.\textsuperscript{39}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chart.png}
\caption{Health Care vs. Education Spending, Penza Province, 1887}
\end{figure}

These results become even more compelling when we consider spending on particular programmatic priorities. The charts below demonstrate the same intervals, but chart health care and education spending as a portion of the overall budget.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{39} Penzenskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo, \textit{Smety i raskladki ...v Penzenskoi gubernii na 1887 god.}
\textsuperscript{40} Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1903 god and Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1910 god.
The correlations do exist, but they are rather slight given the intervals in question.
And, here we see the same data over the long term:\footnote{MGZS, Zhurnaly Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobranii dekabr’ 1875 goda; Penzenskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo, Smety i raskladki … v Penzenskoii gubernii na 1883 god; Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1910 god.}
In short, there is surprisingly little correlation between the relative weights of social programs in the budget in one year and their relative weight only a short time later. And, at least by this metric, there is essentially no indication of long-term commitments to particular programs on the part of one district or another. While we see remarkable variation in the spending priorities of each district, there is a remarkable lack of consistency in their overall approach to zemstvo administration. Over the course of a short period of time, an organization’s commitment could diminish rapidly.

The Broader Context

At the end of the nineteenth century, the statistics section of the Department of Direct Taxes (Departament Okladnykh Sborov) began publishing regular summaries of zemstvo taxation and expenditures across the empire. These summaries organized the data into a set number of consistent categories, in contrast to the wide variety that we see in prior approaches to zemstvo financial accounting. These studies provide extremely detailed information about the financial affairs within the Moscow and Penza zemstvos. Moreover, the statisticians developed a number of cross-zemstvo analyses, allowing us to examine our two case study provinces relative to the other provincial organs during a consistent period of time.

Across Russia, several trends are evident for this period. First, the general increase in zemstvo collections and expenditures continued unabated. Collections totaled just over 66 million rubles for all zemstvos in 1895. This number increased to 88 million rubles by 1900, to
99 million three years later, and 123 million in 1907. The last few years of pre-war operations saw a dramatic increase, with annual raises of twelve percent or more. In 1913, the last full year of non-war operations, zemstvo collections in the 34 original zemstvo provinces totaled 249 million rubles, more than double their total of just six years before.\textsuperscript{42}

The reasons for this increase are a mix of factors. The major source of zemstvo income, taxation of property, remained steady as an overall portion. For every year surveyed, it made up between 70 and 75 percent of all collections received.\textsuperscript{43} Land taxes made up the lion’s share of real estate taxes, though we see a slight decline in their relative importance over this period.\textsuperscript{44} Average taxation per desiatin grew from 16.7 kopecks in 1895 to 49.3 in 1913. In five province, the rate was a ruble or more.\textsuperscript{45} Taxes on factories and business establishments increased as a share of overall revenue, while those on residences in cities and districts held within a range of approximately two percentage points.\textsuperscript{46}

We see major increases in assistance funds and “vozvrat raskhodov,” which grew from just over 1 million rubles in 1895 to more than 60 million in 1913. Over that time the contribution of this line-item to zemstvo accounts increased from 1.5 percent to 24.1 percent. Treasury assistance alone reached 40 million rubles in 1913, an increase of ten million from just one year previous.\textsuperscript{47}

Most other sources of revenue held relatively stagnant, thus reducing their overall budgetary significance. We see a commensurate drop in numerous smaller revenue categories

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 40 gubernii po smetam na 1913god} (Petrograd: N. Ia. Stoikovoi, 1915), XVII. The zemstvo was instituted in the western provinces in 1911. For consistency of comparison, all statistics cited will consider only the original 34 provinces where the zemstvo was instituted.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., XXI.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., XXV.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., XXVII.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., XXIV-XXXV.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., XXXVIII.
(offsets, collections from trade certificates, and “assorted” taxes and receipts, each of which only increased slightly in aggregate terms (or even decreased) over the same time period.\textsuperscript{48}

The expenditure side, of course, shows similar growth, moving from 65.8 million in 1895 to just shy of 250 million in 1913.\textsuperscript{49} The basic assessment of zemstvo spending broke expenditures down into fourteen categories (as opposed to eight for revenue), so it is somewhat more difficult to determine consistent patterns. The most prominent development, however, is the continued increase in spending on education. In 1895, zemstvo education spending totaled 9.3 million rubles, or 14.2 percent of overall spending. By 1913, the figures were 77 million and 31 percent, respectively.\textsuperscript{50} Spending on health care, the other major programmatic element in the zemstvo budget, was much more measured. The 1895 figure made up 26.9 percent of the overall budget. This portion rose as high as 30.4 percent in 1903 before falling to 25.1 percent. Combined with education, it made up just under two-thirds of all zemstvo spending in 1913.\textsuperscript{51}

Other areas of zemstvo expenditure also saw significant change. The proportional rise in education spending was nearly matched by a commensurate decrease in “participation in the expenditures of government bodies,” which rapidly dropped from 18.8 percent of the budget to the mid-single digits. Debt payments dropped as well, falling from 12 percent to eight over the same period. Veterinary services increased sixfold (although they still made up a minuscule portion of the overall budget), and most other revenue areas remained relatively consistent over this period.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., XXI.  
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., XLVI.  
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., XLIX. It is difficult to reconcile this dramatic increase in funding (in both nominal and percentage terms) with Ben Eklof’s discussion of a “decline” in zemstvo schooling over a similar period. See Eklof, \textit{Russian Peasant Schools}.  
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., XLIX.  
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., XLIX.
The report’s authors also noted a change in the relationship between province and district expenditures over the period in question. In 1895, provincial zemstvo spending made up 27 percent of all zemstvo spending, with the district organs collectively making up the other 73 percent. This number increased significantly in the years shortly thereafter, reaching 35 percent in 1900. The provincial portion reached a high of 36.3 percent in 1906, before falling again in the following years. By 1913, the figure for the original 34 zemstvo provinces was back down to 28 percent. The province-by-province statistics on this measure could vary significantly. During the year 1913, for instance, provincial zemstvo expenditures ranged from a high of 39.9 percent in Moscow to a low of 15.6 percent in Vologda.

So, too, do we see significant variation in other basic metrics of zemstvo activity that we have considered above. Per-resident spending could vary dramatically: The four lowest-spending zemstvos spent between 1.5 and 2 rubles per resident, and the four highest spent above four rubles per resident. Similar differences persist in spending on particular areas of priority. Education spending ranged from .285 rubles per resident in Volynia to 1.46 rubles in Poltava. Health care spending showed similar variation, ranging from a low of .331 rubles per resident (Volynia again) to a high of 1.42 (Olonets).

**Conclusion**

The general trends in local government spending have been analyzed by numerous scholars before now, and our particular observations about Moscow and Penza will do little to dispel the received wisdom. Both the cities and the zemstvos of our two test provinces

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53 Ibid., LXIX
54 Ibid., LXVIII-LXX.
55 Ibid., XLVIII. Olonets was the highest at 5.18 rubles/resident, and the lowest was Orlov at 1.73.
56 Ibid., LII.
demonstrate a growth in the rate of spending that consistently exceeds the rate of inflation. Even when combined with the growing populations in the cities and districts under study, we see an increase in real per-person spending over the course of the Great Reform Era. The actual rate of growth varied considerably, but the lean years did not reverse the trends established in the years of high growth. Thus, in the last years of their operations, the city dumas and zemstvos were spending dramatically more per person in real terms than they had been in prior decades.

For any of a number of reasons, the Moscow organs were able to provide an overall higher level of services to their residents than were the comparable institutions in Penza. Certainly, we might consider the possibility that Moscow consistently had higher prices for both labor and goods, and as a consequence the actual difference quantity of services provided might not be quite so large. Further research, indeed, might allow for a more sophisticated calibration of these differences. However, given the magnitude of the separation between the two, it is doubtless that the services provided in Moscow were indeed greater.

As of yet, none of these conclusions would be surprising to historians versed in these topics. However, the more intensive analysis of spending correlations reveals significant variations between the individual cities and districts within the particular provinces under study. These showed substantial variation, both in terms of per-resident spending and expenditures on particular subject areas. Though there is a slight diminution in this variance in the latter periods of zemstvo and duma operations, even the most recent data shows remarkable patterns of divergence in these areas.

More surprising, however, is the degree to which these variations cannot be accounted for through analyses of basic demographic trends. One might speculate that particular patterns of population density and distribution might drive patterns of spending, but our analysis revealed
the exact opposite. Variations among the dumas and zemstvos in a particular province are apparently not related to such considerations as total population, rural population, or city size.\(^{57}\)

Equally inexplicable is the lack of consistency among the bodies themselves. Various zemstvos and dumas did not seem particularly committed to the patterns they had established, either in terms of overall spending or in terms of a focus on specific policy areas. We see some correlations over the short term, but the medium- and long-term trends show little correlation, such that their priorities in a given year seem almost entirely random.

I began this research with the hypothesis that we would see evidence of continuity in local affairs among the districts of our particular provinces. If nothing else, the powerful role of the governing boards in the duma and especially the zemstvo would allow for determined individuals to exert a strong influence and shape local policy according to their preferences. And, we might surmise, these emphases could remain as institutional priorities for years to come, even as the original instigators left city and zemstvo service for other pursuits. As we have seen, however, this is most decidedly not the case. Any influence on the part of district leaders was short-lived, as policy emphases invariably evaporated within a few years.\(^{58}\) This, it seems, is perhaps the most telling conclusion of our examination of spending priorities, and seems to conform to the evidence assembled in chapters 1 and 2. Even if particular individuals were able to shape the policies of their organizations to a particular model or ideal, this model did not serve as a long-term framework for action. It remains for future research to provide a more comprehensive accounting of the factors that shaped spending priorities.

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\(^{57}\) Steven Nafziger has argued that there is a statistically significant correlation between zemstvo spending. See Nafziger, “Did Ivan’s Vote Matter?” His study considers all of the zemstvos for the Russian empire, but only those years for which omnibus statistical information is available. It remains to be seen if these correlations would remain statistically significant when examining more comprehensive data at the local level.

\(^{58}\) It is possible that this evaporation is related to the generally short tenures of local leaders (see above, chapter 1). Although the source base for this project is not sufficient to establish this conclusion with any certainty, it remains an exciting prospect for additional study.
Part III: Relationships

The zemstvo legislation did not supplant the previously-existing estate and municipal organizations in the Russian province; rather, it sought to integrate the new organs the existing arrangements. Moreover, the zemstvos themselves were divided, with the district and provincial organs enmeshed in a network of prerogatives and responsibilities that were not always clearly delineated. So, an urban resident would simultaneously vote, pay taxes and receive services through the governing bodies of his town, district, and province. Given the complexity of these overlapping jurisdictions, it was inevitable that negotiation and contestation would result. These discussions forced open a fundamental question of political culture: How does one define the political community?

There seems to have been little dispute about the fact that organs of local self-government existed to serve the public good, and would thus collect taxes and fees to that end. But, taxes paid to one organ could of course not be paid to any other organ, and as these bodies expanded their operations, their leaders began to debate more vociferously about the proper sphere for each. In essence, they were attempting to mark the limits of a political community, either to make claims on the community as a whole or to reject claims from those perceived to be outside it.

The two chapters in this section examine the two most fundamental relationships in the local government milieu. Chapter 6 examines the evolving relationship between the zemstvos and the city dumas over the course of the first several decades of zemstvo operations. The two organs often conflicted with each other about jurisdictional issues, but both looked to the provincial zemstvo as an arbiter and possible source of funding. This, in turn, eventually created
subsequent conflict. Moscow in particular saw sharp debate, as those from the city itself resisted the increasing financial demands from the more rural parts of the province.

In Chapter 7, the same issues arose in relation to spending prerogatives within the zemstvo itself. This chapter focuses on a particular episode in the Moscow zemstvo, in which disputes over the dispensation of provincial funds led to a large-scale review and debate of the proper relationship between the provincial and district zemstvos.

We note a number of commonalities between the two cases. In each, unsurprisingly, the delegates made their arguments in self-serving ways. Representatives from the city of Moscow itself sought to define their political community in a narrow fashion, to minimize their obligations to “outsiders.” Their basic argument was taken up by the delegates from the more well-off districts, as they sought to limit the overall level of redistribution to poorer areas and to increase the level of control over the funds allocated. Other districts and their advocates attempted to paint a broader picture of the political unit, and in so doing continue the increasing level of activism by the provincial zemstvo as a whole.

It is not exactly surprising that such conflicts existed; indeed, they are inevitable in any multi-tiered political entity. More surprising, however, is the fact that the zemstsy seemed so ill-equipped to face the inevitable conflict, even after decades of discussion of local affairs. They were unable to resolve these fundamental questions in their early years of operations, so that when the issues arose in later years they had no concrete grounding to articulate them. Instead, they turned to idealistic articulations of the city-zemstvo and province-district relationships, and grew particularly sharp and aggressive in defending these conceptions during the inevitable debates.

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These expressions argue for a particularly idealized conception of politics on the part of
the local officials. For them, the political arena was not the forum to adjudicate and resolve
competing claims from differing members of the polity; rather, it was a means to achieve an
essentially mythic social goal. The oft-cited, never-clarified “zemstvo task” or “zemstvo idea”
was the predominant lodestar for local activists, but the very vagueness of this term allowed it to
be deployed with abandon. A political culture that focused on comity and a common mission
may well end up avoiding the political arena as a ground for contestation, and would be poor
preparation for national action when the October Manifesto provided their long-sought-for goal.
Chapter 6: The “Fourteenth District”? Zemstvos, City Dumas, and the Common Mission

Separated by only six years, the zemstvo and city reforms of 1864 and 1870 were often considered in tandem by contemporary commentators and later historians. Just as Catherine’s Charter to the Towns followed closely on the heels of her Charter to the Nobility, so too might we think of these pieces of Great Reform legislation as two parts of a whole, or two paths to a common end. In the idealized view, the zemstvo and the duma would exercise joint administration over the province—dumas in the cities, and the zemstvo in the countryside.

But, this view of matters presents difficulties of its own. As we have seen time and time again, the commissions responsible for drafting the legislation were not always consistent in their overriding principles. Historians have sought to articulate the basic ideologies that undergirded the Great Reform Era as a whole, but the individual components were developed separately. As we will see, there were only passing efforts to integrate the various components and ensure seamless administration between the urban and rural elements of Russia. As a consequence, there is little sense of a grand plan for the two central organs of local self-government, a grand vision on the part of policymakers for what they hoped the zemstvo and duma would be.

Moreover, as with other pieces of legislation, the authorizing statutes for the zemstvos and the reorganized city dumas were not particularly rigid in the parameters they established. This dynamic is noteworthy in the case of local self-government during the Great Reforms, because of the stark contrast to the prior era. While the reform of city government was intended as a revitalization of a prior institution, the zemstvo was *sui generis*. This last point is particularly significant. Most tellingly, there is very little in the way of direction for the interaction of these two organizations with each other, nor with the *soslovie* organizations which continued into the post-reform era.
As with so many issues during this period, the new local self-government organs were given vague legislative guidelines, but had to work through them in practice. It was largely left to them to articulate and implement a functional mode of interaction that would allow consistent decision making on issues of local interest. Evolving principles of taxation, jurisdiction, and mutual support shifted the power balances considerably. Ultimately, though delegates and leaders on both sides adhered to the idealized notion of a seamless, conflict-free governing arrangement between the city and the countryside, they differed greatly in the practical significance of this arrangement for the inhabitants of the provinces.

**Unclear Models**

The 1864 zemstvo legislation came at an awkward time in the evolution of local government. Cities and towns in the empire was still running in accordance with the earlier statutes on city administration, but it was clear that this state of affairs was not to last. As a consequence, the authors of the legislation had to demarcate the zemstvo’s sphere of authority from that of the duma, aware all the while that the city organization was soon to undergo significant change.

Perhaps as a consequence, the statute is not always clear in articulating a precise model for interaction between the new organization and the longstanding city bodies. This is not to say that there was no attempt to engage with this issue. From the text of the legislation, it seems clear that the statute’s authors envisioned at least some sort of connection between the two organs. One of the early sections of the law drew an explicit parallel between the two:

“In St. Petersburg and in Moscow, and also in Odessa, where the new city regulation has already been formed [obrazovano], the running of local affairs relating to those cities is vested in the city
dumas; whereupon the general duma makes use of the rights and carries the obligations of the 
uezd zemstvo assembly, and the executive [rasporiaditel’naia] duma—of the zemstvo board.”\(^1\) But, the latter portions of the law do little to expand on this linkage and develop a substantive 
model for interactions between the two authorities. A subsequent section established the 
parameters for joint meetings between the dumas and the district assemblies. Either chairman 
(or both together) could petition the governor for permission to hold such a session, though the 
codicil did not specify what criteria the governor should use in evaluating such a petition. The 
city mayor would serve as chairman, but all decisions required majority support from both the 
duma delegates and the zemstvo delegates there present. In the event that such an accord could 
not be reached, the matter would go to the provincial zemstvo assembly for adjudication.\(^2\) 

Aside from a brief mention of the duma delegates to the provincial zemstvo, however, 
these two sections are the only places where the duma is mentioned in the zemstvo legislation. 
The “Rules on the Manner of Introduction to Activity of the Law on Zemstvo Authorities,” 
issued in May of 1864, provides some additional clarification for certain areas of operations, but 
still did not go into substantial detail about the relationships between the two. In a section on the 
financial valuation of factories on city land, the rules stipulate that the city duma’s validation of 
the value can be accepted for tax purposes.\(^3\) Also, if there were cities with a large number of 
residents and taxable property, the city duma could establish committees from each sector of the 
city to develop taxation lists for the uezd zemstvos. The legislation does not specify the exact 
size of the city that would require such committees, but should they be formed, they were 
required to provide their reporting to the district within one month of their inauguration.\(^4\) 

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\(^1\) *PSZRI*, no. 40457, sec. 15.  
\(^2\) Ibid., sec. 45.  
\(^3\) Pravila o privedenii v deistvii położenia o gubernskich i uezdnych zemskich uchrezhdeniakh (Tipografiia 
Ministerstva Vnutrennykh Del, 1864), sec. 12.  
\(^4\) Ibid., sec. 14. The only other mentions are to extend very narrow zemstvo rules to the city dumas. See notes to 
sec. 71 and 110.
In sum, the legislation envisioned at least some need for consultation or collaboration between the duma and the zemstvo, but its guidance on the form that collaboration would take was essentially nonexistent. Charitably, one could perhaps suggest that they anticipated the upcoming city reform bill a few years later, and would take advantage of the opportunity to truly establish a new order for local administration.

The later city legislation, however, is almost equally silent on issues of interaction. Clearly, the issue was on the minds of the legislators: the State Council dictum [mnenie] which opens the legislation calls on the Ministry of Interior, among other duties, to “go in to the State Council with adequate representation…after the most careful consideration, on the best establishment of relations of the cities, including the capitals, to the zemstvo authorities.”

The text of this legislation makes these linkages explicit. The opening sections list the responsibilities for the new dumas, and in doing so made explicit reference to the zemstvo law. In addition to several other duties, the list of duma responsibilities includes:

The establishment, on the city’s account, of charitable establishments and hospitals and their maintenance, on the bases indicated for zemstvo authorities related to the same sort of institutions under their jurisdiction (as stated in the Legislation on Zemstvo Authorities, section 2, point IV); participation, on the same basis, in care for public education (Legislation on Zemstvo Authorities, section 2, point VII), and likewise the establishment of theaters, libraries, and other establishments of a similar type.

Again, however, as in the original zemstvo legislation, we see little beyond that to extend the connection between the two organs. The only explicit direction for collaboration comes in a brief section a few paragraphs later:

Government establishments and zemstvo and estate authorities are obliged to offer collaboration in fulfilling the legal demands of the city’s public administration, which has the same obligation in regard to these establishments and authorities. In the event of a failure on one side or another to fulfill the legal

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5 It should be noted that the other societal and estate organizations are even less prominent.
6 Gorodovoe polozhenie 6 iiunya 1870 g., dopolnennoi prilozeniem soderzhannia statek Sv. Zak., na kotoryia sdelannia sylki, vyshedshimi po 1-e ianvaria 1871 goda novymi uzakoniami i raziasneniami Ministerstva Vnutremnykh Del (Petersburg: Bazukov, 1871), 5.
7 PSZRI, no, 48498, sec. 2.
demands, the dissatisfied party is to appeal to the governor, who, in consultation with the relevant facts, will proceed according to articles 8 and 151 (the sections on petitioning).8

The city legislation, then, followed in the footsteps of other legislative initiatives we have discussed previously. It was very specific on particular points, while leaving other areas open to broad interpretation by ministerial officials or local bodies. Clearly, the relationship between the city and the countryside was one of the latter.

The implementation efforts on the part of the government seem to echo this tendency. The Ministry of Interior did respond to the mandate from the Senate on developing “the best possible relationship” between the two centers of power, but its follow-through was rather limited. A circular from the Ministry of Interior detailed the Ministry’s consideration of the issues involved and its sense of the most appropriate response:

“Recognizing, therefore, that it was necessary, for a more detailed and satisfactory clarification for both sides of the current matter, to establish…particular commissions of an equal number of delegates from the subject duma and the local zemstvo—the ministry related this to the governors of all of the provinces, in which the zemstvo authorities had been introduced…

After that, several zemstvo authorities and provincial authorities communicated to the Ministry of Interior about the necessity…to give out precise and detailed rules on the valuation of the designated holdings in the cities, with the participation of delegates from the subject cities and zemstvo.

Having proposed, as was said, to form committees in the localities for the adjudication of the general question of the best establishment of relations between the cities and the zemstvo, the ministry also decided, upon the opening of these committees, to forward the requests introduced above for their examination …”9

In essence, the Ministry punted. It passed the issue to the localities, and assumed that they would work out the specific principles of interaction. Though it was perhaps a shirking of the assigned duties, this approach was not necessarily an adverse move. Certainly, it was advisable to solicit the opinions of the organizations that would actually be implementing this legislation, and the stipulations do spell out the particular questions that needed to be addressed.

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8 Ibid., sec. 6.
9 Gorodovoe polozhenie…, 255-57.
However, there is some evidence that the follow-through from the localities was less than stellar. Beyond this follow-up report, it is difficult to ascertain the fate of the proposal in a particular province, which itself is perhaps a sign that the issue was not of paramount importance.

Where the historical record does contain some mention, there is little evidence that this was a priority for many on the local level. In Penza, for instance, this matter took several years to come to resolution. The 1873 minutes from the Penza District Zemstvo contain a brief discussion of this issue. The assembly reviewed the text of the law and the Ministry’s subsequent circular, and noted that pursuant to the governor’s instructions they had elected three delegates to serve on the commission. However, their actions went unnoticed, as the commission began work with delegates from the city duma and representatives from the provincial zemstvo assembly. Clearly, the district delegates were upset at the perceived slight. Their concluding statement on the matter takes aim at the city duma for its failure to recognize the legally-appointed delegates: “The assembly resolved to communicate again to the Penza City Board about the election of the aforementioned persons and to instruct them, in collaboration with the representatives from the city, to compile considerations and a conclusion regarding the existing rules of the above-mentioned valuation, which should be delivered to the governor of the province.”

Clearly, the commission was not getting off to a good start. The district assembly apparently could not get its delegates recognized for a committee of mutual interest—hardly a suggestion of good relations with its urban counterpart. Also, note that the only task mentioned in the resolution is the question of resolving the principles for assessing real estate—there is no mention of the aspiration to “establish the best possible relations” between the two bodies.

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10 Zasedaniia Penzenskago Uezdnago Zemskago Sobraniiia v sentiabre mesiatse 1873 god (Penza: Gubernskaia Tipografiia,1873), 30-32.
One might also note the opposition on the part of the assembly to the representation from the provincial zemstvo. In point of fact, they were correct. Though the original circular from the ministry of interior referred to relations between the “city dumas and the zemstvo” (significantly, referring to the entire zemstvo apparatus as a singular entity), the provincial governor had been more precise in his instructions and specifically required the inclusion of the district zemstvos. Clearly, the district delegates did not have confidence that the provincial representatives to the committee would be capable of representing district priorities. It was hardly an auspicious beginning to a productive relationship.

Articulating the Ideal

While Penza appears to have gotten off to a rocky start in developing the city-zemstvo relationship, affairs in Moscow began on a more positive note. From the very first, the delegates of the Moscow Duma were well aware of the connections that bound them to the dumas of their province, and often drew on the city example in formulating zemstvo procedures and priorities. A number of proposals from the early meetings indicate that many of the delegates had a sense of a true combined mission for the two organizations.

In the very first meeting of the Provincial Assembly, the delegates quickly drew on the duma examples in formulating their priorities on a wide range of issues. Financial management, of course, was one of the foremost priorities for the zemstvo delegates to resolve, and the city proved a ready model for any number of zemstvo policies. For instance, F. F. Rezanov proposed that the zemstvo funds be held not in the treasury, but in the state bank, so that they would receive the benefits of the interest on their holdings. Other delegates agreed that such an arrangement would be beneficial, but was premature at this point. D. A. Naumov, for
instance, pointed out that in view of the “uncertainty” surrounding the current state of zemstvo funds and the possible need for unanticipated future expenditures, it would be prudent to table the measure until after a reorganization of the treasury department. Reflecting on the comparison to the city treasury, A. A. Shcherbatov noted that the duma had “its own financial organization; it has commissars of the city treasury…that collect taxes.” The zemstvo, as of yet, had no such apparatus, and it would therefore be preferable to clarify the state of affairs before proceeding. Two other delegates, while also supporting Rezanov’s proposal, noted that “prisustvennyia mesta” were not allowed to maintain continuing deposits, so such a plan would require the permission of higher authorities to proceed. In the end, the chairman proposed that the matter be passed to the board, with instructions that they were to pursue the matter through petitions to higher authorities if they considered such action to be “necessary and possible.” The chairman’s proposal met with unanimous approval from the assembly.11

The Duma also served as a model for organizational structure even on narrow points of purpose. At one point, N. E. Kalashnikov, a delegate from Bogorodsk, proposed that the zemstvo undertake measures to arrest the “illegal sale of counterfeit tea,” which he characterized as a menace taking place “not only in the villages and district seats, but also in the very capital itself…” This tea was “decidedly unclean” and “a great danger to the health of the population.” One delegate suggested that this question was outside of the zemstvo prerogatives, but A. K. Krestovnikov, a delegate from the city duma, explained that a special commission had been formed within the Rasporiaditel’naia Duma on this exact question, and that this committee could provide the zemstvo with all the necessary information needed. Krestovnikov’s clarification was apparently all that the delegates needed; immediately after he spoke, the assembly voted to pass

11 Zhurnaly MGZS Okt 1865, 244-45.
the matter to the Commission on Local Needs and Benefits. In other words, the citation to duma precedent was enough to convince the delegates of the correct course of action.

In a similar vein, later in the meeting, the Commission on Local Needs and Benefits presented a report with considerations and recommendations for the reform of police institutions, which occasioned a debate as to whether the conclusions were to be considered mandatory for the uprava, or merely advisory. N. M. Smirnov brought up the duma structure as a point of comparison. In his view, the board was related to the Assembly “…exactly as the Executive Duma is to the General [Duma]; it is only an executive organ. The instructions, which it gives, can be of two types: either they pass suggestions that have not been worked out in detail by the Assembly—then it [the board] works it out at its own discretion; or they are given the sort of proposals which are subject to detailed examination and approval in the Assembly.”

Even in later years, after zemstvo procedures had been largely established, the duma still popped up from time to time as a model to emulate. In 1872, for example, Naumov suggested that the provincial zemstvo petition for the right to issue mandatory regulations for the populace. As he pointed out, the new city statute had afforded the duma this prerogative, and he saw no reason that the same privilege should not be extended to the zemstvo. This equation of the two bodies even extended to mundane procedural questions. During the 1890-91 session, the assembly considered the question of whether to pay for printing of the session minutes for the coming year. I. I. Shakhovskoi spoke out strongly in favor of the proposal. As a Duma delegate, he could attest to the importance of this approach. “There [in the Duma] they print 4-5 separate books in a year, which are always read with interest by the delegates, and various committees

12 Ibid., 226-7.
13 Ibid., 307-08.
14 Zhurnaly Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobranita dekabr’ 1872 goda (Moscow: Tipografia V. V. Islen’eva i Ko., 1873), 123-24.
make reference to them. There is no foundation whatsoever to speak against the practices of the Duma. The Provincial Assembly, in its general essence, is no different from the Duma. Let someone prove, that there is a need there for stenographic minutes, and here there is not.”

These references to city practices grew less frequent as the years went by; hardly surprising, given that the zemstvo was developing its own particular manner of operations. Yet, the persistence of the comparison for several decades attests to the significance of these ideas in the minds of the local activists.

While the early meetings established the clear sense of an analogous relationship between the two poles of authority, they also demonstrate that delegates were aware of the limitations of this comparison. In considering Smirnov’s suggestion that the board-assembly relationship in the zemstvo should mirror that of that duma, D. D. Golokhvastov took to the floor to argue for a quite different interpretation. In his view, the length of the assembly session made for a completely different relationship to the executive board. The Executive Duma, “exists under the General Duma, which sits for the entire year, and is actually a strictly executive organ; the [zemstvo] board, existing under the assembly, which sits only twenty days per year…has the role of the special committees within the General Duma, that is it works out in detail that which cannot be done by the Assembly because of the short time allotted for the meeting or for other purposes.” To argue that the uprava should just follow the dictates of the assembly would turn it into “simply an editing commission,” and, according to Golokhvastov, would be “completely inappropriate.” Golokhvastov’s arguments were apparently sufficient—an unspecified majority of the delegates voted to make the resolutions non-binding for the board.

15 Zhurnal Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobraniiia ocherednoi sessii dekabr 1890 g. i ianvar’ 1891 g. ekstrennoi sessii 2 aprelia 1891 g. (Moscow: Tipografii D. I. Inozemtseva, 1891), 470.
16 Zhurnal MGZS Okt 1865, 308.
So, too, did the duma delegates recognize their anomalous position within the larger body of zemstvo assembly delegates. Toward the close of the 1868 session, M. P. Pogodin took the floor to address the assembly. Speaking explicitly “as a delegate from the duma and a city resident,” he expressed his lack of certitude about the actions that had been undertaken thus far.

“From all the reports that have been presented…we, the city residents, are not able to gather for ourselves the clear situation of the condition of the province, and specifically, we don’t see: does the peasant live better or worse than before? Are more taxes taken from him, or fewer? What does he use a surplus for, and how does he compensate for a shortfall? What influence have the new circumstances had on his household? Has he gotten fatter or skinnier? What causes his tax arrears?…Only after receiving full answers to all these essential questions can we, the city delegates, give our conscious voice going forward about the income and outgo of zemstvo sums, the increasing or decreasing of means, and point out new needs.”

Pogodin’s ultimate proposal was rather mild. He merely requested a greater volume of statistical information from the provincial board, to which Naumov responded with a qualified affirmation. Yet, the repetition of his status as a city resident attests to a sense of difference from the provincial delegates, who, he implied, would be more capable of answering his concerns and charting a clear path for the zemstvo.

The dumas of Moscow province were to serve not only as a model for zemstvo action, but also as a partner on issues of mutual interest. One of the first tasks the zemstvo undertook was to develop a taxation scheme for the factories and industries under its control. The commission set up for this purpose was unable to come to final conclusion on the best means for doing so, and the zemstvo ultimately resolved to turn to the Duma for help. Acting on a proposal from delegate N. A. Khmelev, the assembly instructed the board to compile information from the Moscow Administrative Duma on “the number, value, and profitability of the factories, factories, and trade establishments (including various types of drinking establishments, tading through

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17 Zhurnaly Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobraniia ocherednoi sessii dekabr 1868 goda (Moscow: Universitetskia Tipografiia), 484-485.
18 Ibid., 476. One might compare this request to James Scott’s emphasis on the desire for “legibility” on the part of modernizing bureaucrats. See James Scott, Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
certificates or trade patents) and of real estate in general in the city of Moscow; also on the number of certificates of the first and second guilds [and] certificates for petty trade and retail trade.”

To even begin work on its assigned duties, the Moscow zemstvo would need substantial assistance from its brother organization.

The zemstvo also undertook to collaborate with the duma on jurisdictional issues, though their efforts in this regard were perhaps less successful. In the 1865 session, the provincial zemstvo heard a report from the Moscow district zemstvo board, which was attempting to clarify whether particular parcels of land were considered part of the city proper or of the district. The resulting decision, of course, would determine which jurisdiction would have taxation authority over these holdings. At the suggestion of the chairman, the assembly recommended that it be passed to a joint session of the city duma and the district zemstvo. The motion was approved, and the assembly moved on to other business. But this was apparently not resolved even a decade later, for in the 1879 meeting, we see a protracted debate about the determination as to whether two particular areas were under city or district authority.

The early visions of collaboration were so vivid that some envisioned a completely new arrangement for the countryside. During the regular session for the year 1867 (actually held in January 1868), N. M. Smirnov delivered a proposal to eliminate the position of mirovoy

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19 Zhurnaly MGZS Okt 1865, 253-54.
20 Ibid., 126-127.
21 S. M. Tret’iakov, the city mayor, spoke first, and gave a brief summation of a recent meeting between the duma and the district assembly. They had reached agreement on all points except the status two particular territories: one near the freight area of the rail line, and another around the Bogorodskoe selenie. The city leaders had no express desire that these areas be assigned to one jurisdiction or the other, but the ober-politsmeister had expressed a preference that they remain within the bounds of the city, because these localities were “quite well filled with working people,” and as such “there could not be discussion about excluding them from police oversight.” In deference to his wishes, Tret’iakov suggested that it was necessary to include these areas in the bounds of the city. After a brief discussion, in which the delegates considered such factors as the social class of the residents and their hypothetical desires (if a survey could have been conducted), they proceeded to a vote. By a margin of 32 to 6, they voted to keep Bogorodskoe within the bounds of the uezd, rather than join it with the city. But, on the other issue, Tret’iakov was successful. His proposed dividing line, which would leave the village of Andronovka to the zemstvo, was accepted by a unanimous margin. See Zhurnaly MGZS 1879, 205-08.
posrednik and, more to the point, to combine the small city dumas with their respective uezd boards. As he articulated his argument, “both the city dumas and the district boards occupy themselves with one and the same object—the administrative part; with this combining there would remain in the accounts 1800 rubles, which are currently used for the support of the city dumas, but could be used to greater effect for other needs of the district.” As he saw it, the separation of the two powers was an unnecessary duplication of function, and in truth the province was in need of a unified administrative structure. Moreover, the central government had already given its implicit blessing to the proposal. In the recently-passed judicial reform, they had combined the city authorities with the local courts. In Smirnov’s view, this precedent clearly laid out the path forward for local administration; the Moscow assembly would not be departing from protocol by following it.

The discussion of Smirnov’s proposal was rather brief, so it is difficult to discern how the delegates as a whole responded to his rather audacious proposal. Iu. F. Samarin, the famous philosopher now serving as a Moscow delegate, declared that the proposal would mean “the abolition of judicial individuality” by doing away with cities’ particular status. Continuing, he argued that it would in fact mean “the abolition of private property,” for the lands under city authority would now pass to zemstvo oversight. Count A. S. Uvarov defended Smirnov, emphasizing the limited nature of the proposal, but was ultimately unsuccessful. After a brief discussion, the motion was defeated by a margin of 25 to 9. Of course, Smirnov’s suggestion was overcome by events only a short time later, as the revised city statute put to rest any notion of a combined local administrative structure. Once again, the reaction from the assembled

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22 Zhurnaly Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobraniiia ianvar’ 1868 goda (Moscow: Universitetskaia Tipografiia, 1868), 400.
23 Ibid., 401-402.
delegates provides further evidence that delegates were not always in agreement about the propriety of the duma model for zemstvo activities.

The early meetings also contain the first discussions of projects where the zemstvo and duma ostensibly shared responsibility. Here, too, we see the zeal for cooperation tempered by the realities of shared authority. Nowhere is this more evident than in the question of zemstvo assistance for city schools.

The question first arose because the Minister of Education had asked the Moscow Duma to support the construction of a fifth gimnaziia in the city of Moscow, to the tune of an estimated 27,000-30,000 rubles. The appeal cited the “ever-increasing” quantity of students wishing to acquire education, and the fact that many of them of necessity were turned away. In May 1864, the Duma essentially dodged the question, pointing out that they were already supporting education to a great degree. Since the question concerned the “not exclusively Moscow, but the entire province,” they suggested that it would be best passed to the zemstvo, and expressed a willingness to collaborate in the funding to the degree possible. N. N. Shchepkin, a duma delegate to the zemstvo, would later affirm that the city intended to provide fully one-half of the support.24

The zemstvo took up the issue in its very first meeting, and referred the matter to the newly-formed Commission on the Benefits and Needs of the Populace. The committee reported back a few days later with an extensive list of recommendations and requirements that should be followed, were the zemstvo to offer its help. These stipulations covered such matters as the curriculum—it was to be “entirely classical”—but also dictated that the zemstvo was to have direct oversight, and that the school would carry the name “Provincial Zemstvo Gimnaziia.”

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25 Ibid., 382.
commission also drew up a provisional cost estimate, which anticipated approximately 22,000 rubles per year in net operating costs and a one-time expenditure of 8,000 rubles to commence operations. Aside from a finding that the plan was “possible,” the commission did not make an explicit recommendation to the assembly about the plan. N. M. Smirnov, a member of the committee, clarified this conclusion by stating that the matter was to be passed to the zemstvo board, which would submit “the full project” to the assembly once it found sufficient funds for its implementation.

As a result, the ensuing discussion of the commission’s proposal was somewhat foreshortened, but there are some early indications about the developing conception of the zemstvo’s relationship to city administration. Prince N. P. Mescherskii argued that the city “is known to compose a part of the zemstvo,” and as such merited some level of support. In a similar vein, Count Bobrinskii argued that the zemstvo was responsible for the education of students in both the city and the districts, and as such could not properly refuse to contribute part of the funding. He then posited the need for joint oversight on the part of the zemstvo and the duma. He suggested that “justice demands” that both institutions have influence over the proceedings, and that “Separation in this mutually important matter would be harmful.” Much of the discussion, however, consists of optimistic projections on the part of the delegates about the sort of independence of action they would receive in their oversight of the school. Unsurprisingly, the commission’s report was ratified in full by a unanimous vote. The unspoken assumption, it seems, was that collaboration with the city was a foregone conclusion, and there were no major considerations that needed to be worked out.

26 Ibid., 380-81.
27 Ibid., 382.
28 Ibid., 384.
29 Ibid., 383-4.
30 Ibid., 389.
Contention

Future events would show how misguided this thinking was. Though the particular issue was eventually settled, the more general principles of zemstvo participation in city education were not. Over the course of the ensuing years, the question of support for city education would regularly come up for discussion and debate. The continual wrangling dealt not only with particular policies, but returned time and again to the larger principles of the city-countryside relationship. In so doing, it laid bare the extent of the gulf in understanding among the delegates not only on the narrow questions of school support, but on the entire premises undergirding the local government experiment.

An extended episode from the 1873 zemstvo meeting shows us many of the contours of the dispute. The Moscow assembly received a petition from the Sergiev-Posad Duma, requesting support from provincial zemstvo funds for the aim of establishing a progimnaziia or a real’noe uchilishche. Most of the arguments were unconventional; the petition pointed out that the city’s population was sufficient to justify a school, and that there were already many hopeful students who would be ready to enroll. Moreover, the city’s location on the Moscow rail line would allow “lively communication with scholarly individuals and institutions in Moscow,” and the religious students already studying within the city would provide a wealth of low-cost tutors. These characteristics, they argued, outstripped what even most provincial capitals could offer.31

The problem, of course, was financing. The city was not blessed with the same quantity of “revenue areas” (forests, meadows, gardens, and fishing areas) as were its counterparts; the vast majority of its funding came from taxes on trade. Thus, the duma declared that it could only

31 Zhurnaly Moskovskago Gubernskago Zemskago Sobranija dekabr’ 1873 goda (Moscow: Universitetskaia Tipografiia, 1874), 226-7.
afford to expend between 1,500 and 2,000 rubles for the proposed project. The Dmitrov zemstvo, they believed, would provide a comparable amount, but this still left a substantial gap in funding needs—a gap that they were now turning to the provincial zemstvo to fill.32

However, in making the argument that funding was merited, the Sergiev Duma became rather pointed in its reasoning. The substance of their appeal came in the fourth point: “Having received almost nothing from the Dmitrov or provincial zemstvo, with the exception of the support for the local court (mirovoi sud”), which notwithstanding handles issues not only from Sergiev-Posad, but also has a location in the district—Sergiev-Posad brings up to 8,000 rubles per year into the zemstvo coffers. Therefore, it has primary right even over the district seat to funds from the zemstvo for the support of educational institutions.”33 The implicit suggestion is that taxation is a contribution to the general good, but one that entitles the payers to recompense in return.

The concluding paragraphs of the petition repeat many of the prior assertions, and then turn even more provocative in detailing the city-zemstvo relationship and the need for remedy: “[the city] hitherto has not made use of anything from the zemstvo and merely serves as a revenue item [obrochnaia stat’ia] for it; since it is located on the edge of the district, it has few interests in common with the Dmitrov zemstvo, proved by the fact that the zemstvo itself does not care for the maintenance of communication between the posad and Dmitrov, and classified the road to the posad as a dirt one; and finally, in the event of a refusal of the requested funds for the establishment of a progimnaziia or a real’nnae uchilishche in Sergiev-Posad, the duma will

32 Ibid., 226-7.
33 Ibid., 227.
need to present to the government, that the posad is only a revenue item for the zemstvo, and that
putting it in such a position is extremely detrimental and completely incorrect.”34

This final declaration is quite extraordinary. In both tone and content, it is as
confrontational as any interaction we have seen among local government organs. The implied
threat to leave the zemstvo was, as best we can tell, unprecedented. It is not surprising, then that
the ensuing debate in the zemstvo was quite fierce, and touched on some of the most pivotal
issues in the relationship between the city and the countryside. N. P. Polivanov, himself a
Dmitrov delegate, opened the discussion with a defense of the petition. He pointed out that the
uezd zemstvo had just set aside money for a women’s progimnaziia, and to do any more at the
current time would be quite a heavy burden. Polivanov echoed the argument that this money
was somehow owed, pointing out that the city of Sergiev-Posad “brings in quite significant sums
to the zemstvo treasury,” and as such it was appropriate for the zemstvo to support it in turn.
Apparently the mayor had been lobbying Polivanov for support, for he then pointed out that the
city duma, like the district zemstvo, had already exerted itself to great extent on the educational
front: it had rented a building to house the school, made all the necessary adjustments to the
facilities, and was in negotiations with the owner to purchase the building outright.35

V. I. Andreev rose to speak in opposition to the proposal. In his view, the question that
had been raised was “strictly local.” He pointed out that the proposed assistance would violate
the precedent that had been established in other uezdy, where the local zemstvo (either by itself
or in concert with the duma) had developed plans to establish progimnaziis. He cited the example
of his own district of Bronnitsy, where the two had collaborated on a similar project.36 In a later
speech before the final vote, he expanded on this notion, arguing that even mistreatment by an

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34 Ibid., 228.
36 Ibid., 210.
uezd zemstvo was not the prerogative of the provincial apparatus. These disputes were, he repeated, “strictly local,” and the means existed to resolve such disputes at that level without resort to petition.  

Naumov took to the floor and also expressed his opposition. In contrast to Andreev, Naumov focused on the lack of clarity in the proposal—specifically, the fact that the petition left it unclear whether the duma was proposing to start a proginnaziia or a real’noe uchilishche. “As a result of this lack of clarity,” he felt it was not advisable to help “right now,” but his phrasing left open the possibility of support once the request was clarified.  

D. N. Zhukov took up the question, and argued that the distinction was not as clear as Andreev believed. Admitting that “funds for the construction of proginnaziia should come in the most part from local means,” he pointed out that this was not a hard-and-fast rule. In fact, the provincial organ had often engaged in assistance to local bodies for particular needs. That said, however, he echoed Naumov’s argument that the request was not sufficiently clear, and also pointed out that the cost of support would be in the neighborhood of 9,000 rubles (11,000 minus the 2,000 promised by the Sergiev Duma); such a great expenditure on the part of the provincial zemstvo would be “unthinkable.” Our first four speakers, then, outlined four different principled approaches to the question of zemstvo support for particular local projects: outright assistance, outright denial, assistance within legal limits, or assistance within financial limits.  

Next to speak was P. G. Sorokin, who in only a few short lines explicated the entire difficulty at the heart of the Sergiev-Posad petition, and indeed of much of city-zemstvo relations:

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37 Ibid., 220.  
38 Ibid., 210-211.  
39 Ibid., 212.
“The Sergiev Duma makes two arguments in the hopes of strengthening its appeal: first, the extreme need for a middle school for the town, which has a quite a significant population, and second, that the town serves as nothing more than a revenue stream for the zemstvo. But similar arguments can be made by each district city. For instance, Klin has up to 4,500 residents, it has great need for a progimnaziia, and although it serves as a revenue stream for the zemstvo, it does not receive any sort of funds from it. Thus, I would propose that we reject the petition from Sergiev-Posad.”

If the provincial zemstvo was to support city activities in direct proportion to their tax burden, then it was merely shifting funds around. By what principle was the provincial zemstvo to use funds from one area to support residents in another?

This question opened the floodgates, and the ensuing speeches attempted to wrestle with the larger issues at play. Immediately after Sorokin’s speech, V. A. Cherkasskii, a duma delegate, took the floor and opened by stating that “this particular question [raised by Sorokin] deserves serious attention, for it touches a very important question for the zemstvo on the relations of the city to the zemstvo.” Cherkasskii proceeded to deliver an extended oration on the significance of this particular question. “There is no doubt that Troitskii-Posad, like all cities of the province, strictly speaking, serves as a revenue item for the zemstvo; it delivers funds and derives quite little benefit from the zemstvo for itself. I submit, that it is in the interests of the zemstvo itself that this order of affairs not continue. . . [we need to] think up the sort of modus vivendi, the sort of comprehensive collaboration with the cities, so that the latter does not have a need to petition about separation from the zemstvo.” Cherkasskii, for his part, was quite willing to assign blame to the local zemstvo for the existing state of affairs: “If that fact is actually true, that Sergiev Posad points out, that it pays 8000 rubles to the Dmitrov zemstvo and

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40 Ibid., 212.
41 Ibid., 212. It is perhaps worthwhile to note that Cherkasskii was a delegate from the Moscow City Duma. As such, he would have been particularly aware of city concerns about excessive taxation transfer to the countryside.
does not receive assistance from it, and even the roads leading to it are not protected, then the posad has the full right to petition about its relationship to the Dmitrov zemstvo.”

V. P. Bezobrazov, another Dmitrov delegate, cautioned against the sort of reasoning that would require a precise accounting of benefits for each actor in the process. He argued that it was essential impossible to establish a precise measure of what goes in and what goes out. In so doing, he inadvertently foreshadowed a large-scale debate that would take place nearly two decades later:

What has been said here about the relations of the posad to Dmitrov uezd, can be said also in relation to Moscow, that the benefit brought by Moscow for the province is rather greater than the benefit rendered to Moscow by the province. And one may finally reach that point, to directly call the posad an obrochnaia stat’ia just because it numerically pays more of the receipts. But is it really possible to separate one point from its surroundings like this? One without the other is unthinkable. To say how the posad is obligated to Dmitrov Uezd, how Moscow is obligated to the province—these are impossible questions.”

Continuing, he turned his attention to the question of redistribution of wealth, which he believed to be the crux of the present argument. Whereas Bezobrazov’s discussion of relative benefits was judicious and cautious, his consideration of the larger issues was passionate and emphatic. He closed his speech by articulating a full-throated defense of the principles of redistribution:

“How can the Posad say that it appears as a revenue item for the zemstvo—in the same way each great manufacturer, every big trader in Moscow can say: ‘I pay 10,000-20,000 rubles, and what exactly do I get for that?’ It’s just like that in countries—particularly those where taxes are paid proportionally to wealth, and not proportional to poverty, where sometimes one person has to pay 100,000-150,000 rubles in taxes—a person can ask, ‘What do I receive from you in return?’ You receive everything, you receive your life, you yourself would be unthinkable without it.”

Naumov took to the floor in an attempt to narrow the debate, emphasizing that the assembly was tasked only with “the petition from the Sergiev duma, and not the question of the relation of the cities to the zemstvo.” But, his admonitions were not enough to restrain his brethren. Cherkasskii rose to speak again, and reiterated his earlier assertions:

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42 Ibid., 213.
43 Ibid., 216.
44 Ibid., 216.
“I completely agree that it’s undesirable for all cities to separate themselves from the zemstvo, but if they are not supposed to have a separate existence in the income-book of the zemstvo, they should not have a separate existence in the expenditure book. So, I have the honor of repeating my initial proposal: notwithstanding (ne vziraia) the smallness of the contribution made by Sergiev Posad itself, [that we should] offer assistance from provincial sums.”

This approach, of course, opened Cherkasskii to the charge of hypocrisy on the part of the other delegates, and two of them engaged in a “quid pro quo” of his overall argument. I. S. Solov’ev asked for a progimnaziia for the city of Bogorodsk, because they paid 20,000 rubles to the zemstvo, and only received 2000 to 2500 from it. P. I. Veliashev made the same argument for Kolomna, which had also undertaken a joint project with the district zemstvo but found itself to be short on funds. Even Naumov departed from his usual equanimity to critique Cherkasskii’s lack of rigor: “I completely share the idea, that there should be complete justice (spravedlivost’) in relation to income and expenditures. But if, as Prince Cherkasskii suggests, we designate to the benefit of the posad half of the income we receive from it, then there is no reason whatsoever to not develop this idea farther, and it will be impossible to deny the right for Bogorodsk, Serpukhov, and every district zemstvo to demand similar assistance from the provincial zemstvo.”

Despite the impassioned debate, the final resolution was rather lacking in decisiveness. As it had on so many other issues, the assembly passed the matter to the board. It was Cherkasskii who found the middle ground. Since the assembly did not have sufficient evidence to justify an explicit offer of assistance or an explicit refusal, it remained for the board to gather more evidence. Naumov agreed, but added that the board report would consider “not only the matter of the petition from Sergiev-Posad, but also the pronouncements made here regarding

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46 Ibid., 219.
47 Ibid., 219.
48 Ibid., 219.
relief for other cities. There was no objection, and the assembly instructed the board to prepare a “detailed report” for presentation to an upcoming extraordinary session of the zemstvo.49

Frustratingly, we do not have available the minutes for the following sessions, so we do not have the specifics of the board’s decision. Later accounts show line items for expenditures in support of the Sergiev Posad school (as well as those for several district capitals), so we know that the advocates of assistance were able to garner at least some measure of backing.50 But, we do not have a clear sense of the principles applied to justify the aid. However, the tenor of the debate makes it quite clear that the delegates approached this question from dramatically different perspectives, and under dramatically different assumptions. The debate over the school funding did little to resolve these larger disagreements, and in essence put them off for another day.

Thus, we are not surprised to find that the question of zemstvo support for city schools came up for renewed discussion at several later points. In 1879, delegates raised concerns about the destination of the funds sent to Sergiev Posad for support. There was some question as to whether the money was being spent wisely, and whether the school’s development was proceeding according to the arranged plan. Ultimately the assembly elected to continue to approve the funds, but imposed several conditions on the Sergiev Posad Duma in return. They would have to officially request the money, and a portion of the overall sum would only be dispensed if the city duma could affirm that the 5-class progimnaziia had actually opened.51 The minutes for the extraordinary session in 1891 make brief mention of progimnaziia support being offered to the Kolomna Zemstvo and the Sergiev Posad Duma. It seems that, despite the continuing contention over the appropriateness of the assistance, the Sergiev Duma was on the

49 Ibid., 220-221.
50 See, for instance, Zhurnaly MGZS 1878, 38-39.
51 Zhurnaly MGZS 1879; Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemskoe Sobranie.
zemstvo’s dole for several decades or more. Either the provincial assembly was unable to bring the Dmitrov zemstvo to heel, or simple inertia pushed the delegates to accept a less-than-ideal resolution over the course of a decade or more.

These issues, and the debates they engendered, again reveal the unresolved tensions at the heart of the city-zemstvo relationship. The cities levied their own taxes and managed their own affairs within city limits. However, they were subject to some zemstvo taxes, and as a consequence public funds moved from the urban centers into the countryside. Local beneficiaries could (and did) argue that such an arrangement was proper and just on redistributive grounds, but they had a much harder time arguing that the benefits accrued equally to all. City residents, of course, saw the matter very differently. In their view, these taxes were taken from one political entity and spent on another. They may have shared the same name with the district, but they clearly did not see a unified polity.

This conflict had a significant impact on the basic tenor of zemstvo-duma relations as they developed in Moscow province. Despite this intellectual connection that many delegates established between the zemstvo and the duma, the actual ties between the two organs usually stayed at an ad hoc level. The assembled delegates were not able to develop a principled articulation of the proper sort of relationship that between city and countryside. Instead, they avoided developing a relationship at all, and their deliberations then pitted the interests of one part of their population against another.

Unsurprisingly, our assembled evidence from the district zemstvos reveals many of the same tendencies and proclivities. Certainly, the evidence from the provincial minutes shows that there were quite a number of occasions on which they collaborated for mutual benefit. So, for

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52 Zhurnal MGZS 1890-91, 584-586. However, bear in mind that the assistance was to be halted according to the minutes from 1891.
instance, we see the Dmitrovsk zemstvo passing the Sergiev Posad petition to the provincial meeting, in the hopes that assistance from above will alleviate its own financial obligations. In the same spirit, we see an 1872 appeal from the Vereia district organ regarding its road plan for the province—the lower assembly was appealing to change a prior ruling about the establishment of highways and rail lines in the district. They were joined in their position by the Verei Duma, which took the quite unusual step of sending its own delegation to the meeting to remonstrate with provincial delegates, “in order to present to the provincial assembly about the necessity for (sobstvenno) for the city of Vereia to be connected to the nearest railroad station. The Vereia Duma sees in this [project] a vital question for the city.”53 But, these joint projects were the exception, rather than the rule.

In Penza, the evidence for collaborative effort is even scarcer, and we see very little sense that the duma played a significant role in the zemstvo’s deliberations. For instance, in 1879, the Penza district zemstvo considered a total of forty-two different reports and projects. Of these, only one direct concerned the city duma, and this was a mere reporting of income from city properties for the purposes of zemstvo tax assessments.54 Even an extremely small project could create innumerable complications. In 1889, the Penza provincial zemstvo petitioned for the use of a plot of city land to allow fresh-air exercise for the mentally ill patients under the zemstvo’s care. The duma was able to find an appropriate area, have it surveyed, and offered it to the zemstvo rent-free for twelve years. This process, however, took the better part of a decade to complete. The city’s final verdict on the matter (presumably accepted, if even the need still

53 Zhurnaly MGZS 1872, 191-2. The chairman acknowledged that it was a departure from his usual role to act as spokesman for a particular petition, but proceeded to do so anyway.
54 Zasedaniia Penzenskago Uezdnago Zemskago Sobrania v sentiabre i oktiabre mesiatsiakh 1879 goda (Penza: Gubernskaia Tipografiia, 1880). The specific report is on p. 6-7.
existed) was not delivered to the zemstvo until January of 1897. Clearly, collaboration between
the two organs was not a high priority for either.\textsuperscript{55}

Even the joint meetings, one of the more significant innovations of the city legislation,
seem to have had little actual impact. In Moscow, the joint sessions are few and far between,
and the attendance is weak. In 1875, for instance, we see two joint meetings between the
Moscow Duma and the District Zemstvo on the legislatively-mandated requirement to develop
jury lists. These meetings, held as a part of the general Duma meetings, saw minimal zemstvo
participation. The first, in June, drew seven zemstvo delegates; the latter, in October, drew eight.
In both cases, the decisions were made in a matter of minutes. The zemstvo representatives, in
fact, did not even speak.\textsuperscript{56} In Penza, the evidence of joint meetings is almost nonexistent. The
records of the GZGDP contain records of a request from the provincial zemstvo and capital city
duma to hold a joint session to elect an honorary trustee for the Penza Real’noe Uchilishche. We
have no reason to believe that the governor turned down the request, but in any event it is hardly
a sign of strong collaborative ties.\textsuperscript{57}

Given the delegates’ oft-repeated idealization of the city-countryside relationship, we
might be surprised at the lack collaboration between duma and zemstvo, and the failure to
articulate a more coherent model for action. But, so long as the issues under consideration
remained minor, the disagreements could be kept within reasonable bounds. However, during
the 1890-91 Moscow provincial zemstvo meeting, the delegates took up an issue of far greater
financial and political significance: zemstvo taxation of city property. The ensuing discussion,
which stretched over the next several years, revealed deep cleavages over the role of the city

\textsuperscript{55} GAPO, f. 109, d 278.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Zhurnalnye zasedanii Mokovskoi Gorodskoi Dumy v 1875 godu} (Moscow: Tipografia V. Islen’eva, 1875), 111-113,
162-164.
\textsuperscript{57} GAPO, f. 11, op. 1, d 142.
within the entire provincial apparatus. In place of the prior polite disagreements, the new tenor
was one of resentment and antagonism.

Prior to that point, the Moscow provincial zemstvo had adhered to its original schema for
taxation of Moscow residents. It restricted itself to the portions collected from trade patents and
certificates, while leaving real estate and all other property within city limits to the authority of
the duma. But, in its financial report for the December 1890 meeting, the board proposed that
the zemstvo establish a tax on city residences that were also used for business. In addition to the
obvious financial benefits that would accrue to the zemstvo, they reasoned that the new structure
would put Moscow establishments on a par with those in the rest of the province, which were
already subject to a provincial levy.  

Discussion of the report commenced on December 11th, and the proposal met with
immediate opposition. N. S. Chetverikov first argued that the legal foundation for the new taxes
was shaky at best; moreover, the board’s proposal required the active collaboration of the city
board, and that assistance was rather unlikely to be forthcoming.  
P. N. Grekov then rose to
speak, telling his fellow delegates that he would like to address “the very essence of this
question.” He made an appeal to tradition, pointing out that the prior principles had persisted for
more than twenty-five years. In addition, however, he argued that the proposed measure was
most likely not legal. Drawing on the text of the 1864 law regarding the division of
responsibilities and authorities between city and zemstvo, he contended that the authors intended
a wall of separation between zemstvo and duma prerogatives. “For me it is quite clear, that these
cities [Moscow, Petersburg, and Odessa] are completely divided from the provincial zemstvo,

58 Zhurnaly MGZS 1890-91, 90-91. N. A. Alekseev, speaking in support of the proposal cited an 1869 decision from
the State Senate, which held that the zemstvo could not establish a specific tax on trade establishments within
domiciles. In his view, this decision signified that the zemstvo could not make arbitrary distinctions about which
particular trade establishments were to be taxed, but it could tax all such establishments at a constant rate.
59 Ibid., 92.
and thus the collection of taxes and duties is reserved entirely for them.\textsuperscript{60} N. F. Gagman seconded the arguments made by Grekov, and made his argument in blunt fashion “I’m looking for a basis [for this new taxation], and the short answer is that we have very little money.”\textsuperscript{61}

Olenin took the floor to defend the board’s proposal. He pointed out that the question had come up previously in assembly discussions, and as a consequence it could not be considered unprecedented. Moreover, the Senate had already ruled such taxation legal in cases involving other cities (including St. Petersburg), so it was hard to see how Grekov and others could argue that there was no legal foundation for the new levy. In making his case, Olenin introduced a conception of the city that left some of his fellow delegates fuming, and highlighted the conceptual gap among members of the zemstvo. “It’s impossible to come to any other conclusion, but that the delegates from the city of Moscow in essence are nothing more than the representatives of the fourteenth uezd, which is obligated to pay the tax in question to the Provincial Zemstvo, just like every other district—Verei, Klin. Until the present time the provincial delegates from the city of Moscow have been representatives of a non-paying uezd.”\textsuperscript{62}

This formulation of the city’s role—the fourteenth uezd—would be the foundation of much of the ensuing debate. P. N. Grekov returned to the floor after Olenin’s speech, and he took direct aim at this particular idea: “The board in its report does not present and sort of foundation for the establishment of this tax. I can in no way agree with this statement of the question, that the city is the 14\textsuperscript{th} uezd. I can in no way understand, why the city should be the 14\textsuperscript{th} uezd, when it’s made separate by particular legislation.” Grekov returned to the legal question in his conclusion: “It’s completely understandable, that the zemstvo people wish to

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 94. Grekov did not explain how he accounted for the already-existing zemstvo taxes on city goods and holdings.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 95.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 96.
unite the city of Moscow to the zemstvo, but it’s impossible to actually do this, because it wouldn’t be established in a legal manner.”

His colleague, L. N. Sumbul, was equally indignant, but couched his answer in more mercenary terms. By his calculations, the city currently paid more than 250,000 rubles per year into zemstvo coffers, with more than five million in payments since the opening of the zemstvo a quarter-century before. In return, he argued,

“…except for the participation of its delegate in the debates and decisions about various questions, Moscow has received nothing from the Provincial Zemstvo. Moscow, that 14th uezd, as they call it, received nothing from the Zemstvo—neither the development of schools, nor health care, as is done for other districts. Moscow only has the right to participate in examining and deciding matters such as whether to establish a pharmacy in Spas-Nudol village or Ōstashov, to give one district 500 rubles of assistance for a school and another 400 rubles on loan, or to give 300 rubles to establish a horse exhibition (konskaia vystavka) in Ruza. All of these are matters that have no interest for the city.”

Sumbul’s opening argument, of course, echoes those made by Sergiev Posad two decades prior. But, his subsequent formulations go quite a bit beyond. In his view, decisions made about the countryside are not the duma’s prerogative. From a certain perspective, Moscow was not just something more than a fourteenth uezd—it was not a proper part of the province at all.

Sumbul’s sentiments were echoed by several of his colleagues, though their language was not as direct. N. F. Gagman said that Sumbul echoed his main argument, so he simply issued the warning that “One cannot use Moscow as an Economic Bureau, nor as a guinea pig.” G. B. Grudev was more humorous and playful with Olenin’s formulation, but also served to underscore the sense of special status felt by the city delegates: “I’m quite surprised by this suggestion that

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63 Ibid., 97-98.
64 Ibid., 98.
65 Ibid., 99.
Moscow, which has a particular situation as a national capital, is in fact the fourteenth uezd. Perhaps we will next be told that it is, in fact, a village.”66

In the midst of these jabs, Olenin then returned to the floor to defend his controversial formulation:

I said, with perfect justification, that the delegates from the city of Moscow at the present time are representatives of the non-paying fourteenth district. Mr. Sumbul attests, that he only participates in the resolution of presented questions. How can it be otherwise, when they don’t pay anything? The provincial zemstvo gave the city of Moscow everything that it could give. It freed it from the plague. Sanitation Doctors were brought in at the initiative of the provincial zemstvo. All the transportation routes of the zemstvo lead to Moscow as the general center, and she [Moscow] makes use of them. One may positively say, that the city does nothing for the districts, but everything that the Provincial Zemstvo does for them passes to the benefit of the City of Moscow.”67

The course of the debate turned to more technical matters. Even then, however, new voices rose up on both sides of the argument. S. S. Rumiantsev agreed with Grekov on the legal questions, but also questioned whether the new taxation in fact, set a bad precedent. Though the current proposal was modest enough, “in the next year, on the foundation of this precedent, it [the board] will propose a levy on other items, and we’ll reach taxation of real estate, horses, carriages, and so on…”68 S. V. Lepeshkin, arguing for the other side, took aim at Sumbul’s apathy and appealed to a (perhaps chimerical) sense of common purpose: “if the city of Moscow cannot be subject to this taxation, if it were not linked with the Provincial Zemstvo in a material way, then the City Duma would have no reason to send its delegates to the Provincial Assembly, and when they come here, they become provincial delegates and cease to be city delegates.”69 Even these brief asides give some sense of the gulf in comprehension between the city delegates and their zemstvo counterparts.

66 Ibid., 100. After that opening, however, Grudev was more accommodating than his duma colleagues, and admitted that the matter would ultimately require Senate resolution.
67 Ibid., 100.
68 Ibid., 107.
69 Ibid., 103.
The last words (at least for this round) were left to the board’s defenders. First, Olenin took to the floor to repeat once again his basic premises. In his opinion, the taxation of city property in St. Petersburg rendered moot any arguments about legality. What was illegal, he argued, was “the fact that Moscow, up to this day, has not been subject to taxation.” The proposal, he asserted, would bring city holdings to an equal level of taxation with those in the rest of the province. As such, there was no need, as some had suggested, for a commission to study the question any further, and the time was long past for the zemstvo make use of the “inexhaustible riches” of Moscow. After Olenin sat down, Naumov took the floor. In his only major oration during the debate, he focused largely on the judicial side of the question, leaving the others for another day. After a careful discussion of the authorizing legislation, Naumov detailed the taxation system in Petersburg province, which was in fact quite different from that in Moscow. Nevertheless, when considered as a whole, one point was clear: “…there is no doubt, that Petersburg has provincial zemstvo taxes, and there is no basis for refusing to apply them to Moscow.”

In the end, the assembly voted against the establishment of a commission to study the legal questions, and in favor of accepting the board’s proposal in its entirety. As was often the case, the recorder for the assembly did not specify the precise vote totals in recording the results, so we cannot know how closely the measure was contested. The rejection of the committee, however, is in itself significant—as we have seen, the zemstvo quite regularly used the committee approach to address issues that delegates did not necessarily wish to consider in depth. From this, we might surmise that the majority of the delegates were quite certain of their position, and at long last were ready to tap what they perceived as an unused resource. What is

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70 Ibid., 107.
71 Ibid., 108-110.
more certain, though, is that the minority was strongly opposed to this direction. They had lost the original fight, but they would continue to press the issue in the months and years to come.

The opponents were granted a temporary boost a few days later, when word arrived that the provincial governor had decided to veto the assembly’s actions. Shortly after receiving word of the assembly’s actions, the governor, Prince V. A. Dolgorukov, chose to act. According to his interpretation of the zemstvo statute, the “administration of zemskie dela” in the cities of Odessa, St. Petersburg, and Moscow was explicitly afforded to the city authorities. As such, though the zemstvo was delegated the designation and assignment of “zemskie sbory,” he could only conclude that such responsibilities stopped at the borders of the city of Moscow. Interestingly, the governor’s protest noted that provincial zemstvo levies existed in St. Petersburg, he did not know the conditions or the circumstances under which that authority had been granted, he could not accept that decision as a precedent.72

The assembly was undeterred. It first designated a committee to examine the protest. The committee reported back on December 20th, and presented its report, which was unanimous but for one dissenting voice. The final conclusion avoided the questions of propriety or advisability, simply declaring that it held “the tax [to be] legal; because it subjects to taxation owners of property, which by law can be subject to zemstvo taxation.”73 K. F. Odarchenko, the one holdout, articulated his opposition, but the measure passed with no further discussion by the assembly.74

Not content to wait for Senate resolution, the board decided to up the ante. The assembly re-convened in January after the holiday break. When they arrived, the delegates were presented

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72 Ibid., 248-51.
73 Ibid., 292.
74 Ibid., 292.
with a new plan of taxation. Instead of targeting solely places of business within Moscow, the new plan called for a levy on all real estate within the city at a rate of one-half of a percent.\textsuperscript{75}

This new tack produced two strains of debate. In the first instance, the delegates considered whether or not such an approach was procedurally legal or viable. There was a substantial amount of concern that re-instituting the tax in this manner violated legal protocol, and some argued that the law required them to wait for Senate approval before proceeding. Grekov raised another procedural concern. According to the “protocol for compilation, examination, and approval of estimates” for the zemstvo, the board was required to present its yearly projections in advance of the zemstvo’s meeting. Thus, any new presentation was automatically contrary to law and could not be considered.\textsuperscript{76} Others worried about the effect on the zemstvo’s finances if the new collections were not ratified by the Senate. The money would have already been spent, leaving a gaping hole in an already-shaky budget.\textsuperscript{77} Undoubtedly, the delegates’ procedural preferences were influenced by their opinion on the matter as a whole (Grekov, of course, was one of the most vocal opponents of the city taxation), but this connection was not absolute. Other delegates counseled caution, even as they supported the overall contours of the board’s plan.

These procedural questions were overwhelmed, however, by the number and vehemence of speeches by delegates attempting to re-open the central question of city benefits vis-à-vis the zemstvo. Sumbul, making his first speech after the resumption of debate, opened with a full-fledged assault:

It seems to me, that a tax has a fairly defined understanding. Every tax is a payment, established by the relevant governing authority, to satisfy the general needs of the payers. With this understanding of a tax there is a related right, but also a responsibility. The

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 495.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 496-97.
\textsuperscript{77} See, for instance, ibid., 504-05.
taxes about which we’re giving speeches are established by the zemstvo law to meet the needs and demands of the population, from which they are taken, that is, these funds are used for the needs and demands of the payers themselves. Take away that understanding of obligation, i.e. meeting the needs of the payers, and that will be not a tax, but a contribution. Which needs of the city of Moscow will be satisfied in this case? I’m not going to re-list the expenditures; we have been looking at them for two days and we know them by heart. Which city needs are they proposing to satisfy with this new levy? Are they proposing to improve the means of transport that the residents of Moscow use? No, they are not proposing that. Maybe they are proposing to help Moscow with public education?...No, they are not proposing anything. For what exactly are they taking this tax? Wouldn’t it be better to follow that good advice, that the Zemstvo Board presents in its report, in which it says straightaway, that twenty-five years have gone by, that it’s time for the Zemstvo to step back and look at its affairs, to correct its deficiencies, to make good its shortcomings. We’ve needed to step back for a long time, because there are deficiencies and shortcomings, and they are quite large in relation to Moscow.78

Continuing, Sumbul considered in detail the scope of the perceived shortcomings. Repeating his assertions from the earlier debate, he pointed out the significance of the contribution from Moscow to the zemstvo budget—now 250,000 rubles per annum, and more than five million in total since its founding. In return, Sumbul argued, it had received very little. He disputed the supposed benefits provided by the zemstvo’s support. The zemstvo roads, for instance, benefited the districts, but Moscow’s most important highways were supported by state funds, not local ones. Aside from a few “insignificant” contributions, the city received nothing in return for the 250,000 rubles it contributed each year (a number he repeated several times during his speech). A true examination of the accounts would reveal the basic fact that “in each article, one would have to answer that the zemstvo has done nothing for the city of Moscow and is still doing nothing.”79 In his closing, Sumbul returned to the suggestion that the city itself was considered an outsider in zemstvo affairs:

Until this point Moscow has received nothing from the zemstvos, except for obligatory regulations related to sap…When any kind of question arises about the roads around Moscow, it has asked the opinion of the district zemstvos about their direction, but never asked the opinion of the Moscow Duma. That proves, that the Zemstvo Assembly always

78 Ibid., 498-99.
79 Ibid., 501.
looked on the city of Moscow not as a member of the zemstvo, but as an Other \[\textit{kak na chuzhaka}\].\textsuperscript{80}

Not surprisingly, these assertions did not sit well with the assembled delegates. Even Shcherbatov, in the course of an address that mostly agreed with Sumbul’s arguments, suggested that he had been overeager in his reasoning, and appealed to a sense of the common good. “But I am not coming at it from the point of view that each payer should receive in equal measure to his payment, that a payer who brings in 1000 rubles should receive the same amount in benefit and utility, and a payer of five rubles should receive them only that that sum. If we direct ourselves from this [principle], then it will be impossible to carry on any type of public task. Private interests should not be brought into the public task. But also, private interests can’t be completely forgotten…”\textsuperscript{81}

Others emphasized the economic links that tied Moscow to its surroundings. S. A. Muromtsev suggested that the very question was a near impossibility, given the tight links between Moscow and its surrounding environs. “Between Moscow and its surroundings there is a tight economic dependence, which in truth precludes any possibility of asking questions about what Moscow does for the zemstvo and what the zemstvo does for Moscow.”\textsuperscript{82} Lepeshkin emphasized the city’s dependence on the influx of semi-educated workers:

“They said that hay and firewood come in to Moscow by railroad and not by zemstvo roads, and therefore it’s all the same to Moscow whether the Provincial Zemstvo exists or not… I will talk not about hay or firewood, but about people. Where does Moscow get the people, the workers, the cheap driver, the cheap servant, that they can’t live without? All these people are raised, educated, and made literate in those zemstvo schools, about which Delegate Sumbul was speaking. I will not speak further about this, but I ask those delegates, who think that it is immaterial for Moscow whether the province exists or not, to pay attention to the fact, that if the Provincial Zemstvo were to disappear tomorrow, that would affect Moscow.”\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 501.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 506.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 510.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 508.
We also see a strain of argumentation that is more aggressive in its approach, even going so far as to emphasize the negative on the part of the city and its representatives: Shakhovskoi faulted the city duma itself, pointing out that the zemstvo had never received any requests for assistance from the city.84 M. D. Pfeifer was particularly pointed on this score. He drew on his own personal experience to highlight the inequities in benefits that persisted within the limits of Moscow. “We see, that in the center of Moscow—it’s richer, there are well-known public services, they have gas lighting, water the year round, good bridges. Meanwhile, the suburbs have nothing. I have the misfortune to own a home on the outskirts of Moscow, I have neither bridges nor light nor a bucket of water. That’s the situation that we find in Moscow, a small radius [of public works, presumably] in comparison with the taxes that the city administration takes.”85 The implied accusation of hypocrisy would have undoubtedly stuck in the craw of Sumbul and others. In a speech a few minutes later, Pfeifer cut even deeper, emphasizing the negative aspects contributed by the city along with its tax burden: “I will allow myself to point out what it is that the Moscow district receives from the city: all the refuse, plus typhoid fever and all the contagious diseases in all their forms. The zemstvo has to carry on the fight with this refuse and the fight is not easy. One uezd spends more than thirty percent of its taxes on it.”86

Olenin, the principle advocate of the tax in the prior debate, was more restrained during this go-around, but did manage to contribute a few jabs in support of the revised proposal:

There is the essence of the question in principle—whether Moscow is an indivisible part of the province, and if so, then it is subject to taxation. On the basis of the Zemstvo legislation every particle [chastichka] which composes Moscow province, should be subject to equal taxation with all the other objects of zemstvo taxation. They say that Moscow doesn’t receive anything from the Provincial Zemstvo, but there are uezdy, which do not receive anything from it, and they pay from their means, but you barely

84 Ibid., 503.
85 Ibid., 514.
86 Ibid., 522.
hear from the district delegates about it. That is not a zemstvo point of view [ne zemskaja tochka zreniia].

Given the significance attached to the adjective “zemskii,” the phrasing of this last sentence could not have been accidental. Olenin is implicitly accusing the Moscow delegates of uncharitable thinking, of an unwillingness to contribute their portion to the common task.

Once all the speeches had been made, though, the second round of voting went in much the same manner as the first. Once again, the zemstvo passed a tax plan in the face of an anticipated protest from the governor. And, once again, the governor did not disappoint. He sent his protest a few days later, and he was clearly not pleased about what he perceived as a challenge to his authority. “Based on all this, it is doubtlessly impossible not to see, that in the January 16th session the Assembly adopted a decision similar in all respects (with the exception of the size of the taxation and other details) as the decision, which I have already protested and halted in execution; the re-adoption of such a decree, without waiting for clarification from the Governing Senate—is a breach of section 96 of the Law on the Zemstvo Authorities.”

The governor’s response was delivered on January 19th. Upon receipt of the governor’s statement, the delegates went back to the well once more (Naumov debate). However, this discussion was much shorter than the previous. The delegates realized that the matter would not soon be settled, and would presumably require the intervention of higher authorities. As before, they nominated a new committee to tackle the governor’s protest and issue a response. But, because the assembly was on its last day of meetings, the next stage in the response would have

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87 Ibid., 516.
88 Ibid., 529.
89 Ibid., 568.
to wait for another day. The session closed that evening with the matter of Moscow taxation still unresolved.\textsuperscript{90}

Though we don’t have the particulars of the committee’s response to the governor, we do know that in the end the zemstvo won out. Dolgorukov’s petition was left without further action by the Senate.\textsuperscript{91} With all legal obstacles now out of the way, the zemstvo began exercising its plans for use of Moscow’s “inexhaustible riches.” Unsurprisingly, the need to utilize those riches increased as the years went on. As Rumiantsev had feared, the assembly’s victory opened the door to continual increases in taxation. The year after the zemstvo’s victory, the real estate tax was doubled to one percent. The level was raised another half-percentage point in 1898, and a tenth of a point five years later.\textsuperscript{92}

The city delegates, for their part, did not soon forget this defeat. During a protracted discussion in 1899-1900 over the relationships between province and uezd, Boris Chicherin published a brief article commenting on the situation. In his opening salvo, he asserts that although the specifics of the committee’s resolutions cannot be predicted, “one may foresee with sufficient confidence that, no matter how conscientious it [the commission] works, out of its labors will come nothing that can serve as a guide for other assemblies.”\textsuperscript{93}

In the ensuing pages, Chicherin outlines the reasons for this sober valuation. The problem, for him, lies in the fundamental contradictions of the current arrangement of local self-government in Russia. In his ideal formulation, localities would govern themselves with minimal oversight or outside help. They would be responsible for their own finances and local

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 587.
\textsuperscript{91} Veseolovskii, \textit{Istoriia zemstva za sorok let}, vol. 1, 91.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid. Veseolovskii cites an article from the city duma calculating that this tax contributes 39.5 percent of the entire zemstvo budget for 1903, but it is unclear whether the report is referring to the tax on all holdings throughout the district or only those collected from holdings in the city itself.
\textsuperscript{93} Boris Chicherin, \textit{Voprosy politiki} (Moscow: Tipografiia I. N. Kushnerev i Ko., 1904), 94. For a detailed discussion of this committee’s deliberations, see below, ch. 7.
needs, such that a taxpayer would have always weigh the benefits of a particular endeavor against the costs that he would bear.\textsuperscript{94}

This problem is particular telling in Moscow, where the anomalous situation of the capital city vis-à-vis the zemstvo had led to all sorts of conflicts and disagreements. The city, as he would have it, was a single entity, with its own structures of government and own responsibilities. Yet due to the Senate’s recent decision, the city was also considered to be a part of the provincial zemstvo, and its residents were required to pay taxes toward that end as well. In Chicherin’s view, this led to a situation in which the minority (Moscow residents) paid “local” taxes that were then transferred to the districts and from which they would not benefit.\textsuperscript{95}

After discussing the districts at some length, Chicherin concluded by returning to the question of Moscow’s anomalous situation. The discord between uezdy has already begun, but of course here the increase in provincial authority was beneficial for them, because “they take their funding from the capital.” The provincial zemstvo, then, is “a pump…a means for water to be taken from the communal reservoir and poured into a neighboring field.”\textsuperscript{96} Thus, he claims, Moscow’s commission can never serve as a model for other provinces to follow. Even leaving aside these considerations, however, all provinces must come to terms with the dangers posed by zemstvo centralization, and must adhere to the principles he articulated in the opening. In this formulation, the province is to be the “fulfiller, not the replacement” of local self-government. Ultimately, it is only on these grounds we will see the establishment of that “internal agreement, which is the primary condition of strength and correct development.”\textsuperscript{97}

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 95.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 96.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 100.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 101.
Here, Chicherin is undoubtedly being a bit disingenuous. In any sort of public endeavor, there will invariably be a shift of resources from those taxed to those receiving benefits. Even when these two populations are largely the same, the overall burden and the overall benefit will not be evenly distributed. This principle would be true within the city of Moscow, between various sectors or populations, just as it would be within the province of Moscow as a whole. And, indeed, the city of Moscow had ample representation in the zemstvo.

The fact that this issue does not cross his mind, however, speaks volumes about his perception of the natural contours of the political units. For Chicherin, at least, the city of Moscow was a political entity unto itself. Redistribution within the city was a natural development—city services would be largely funded by the rich, but the beneficiaries would be their fellow residents of the capital city. Redistribution throughout the province, on the other hand, was another matter entirely. It would be undemocratic and unjust to shift substantial resources from one side of the province to another, from a rich area (like the city itself) to a poor one. For Chicherin, as for many of his duma colleagues, the city of Moscow was a separate entity, and both legislation and tradition had vindicated the particularity of its relationship to the provincial zemstvo. They might begrudgingly accept some measure of taxation to support provincial zemstvo programs, but when the demands for funds increased, the true fractures revealed themselves.

**Conclusion**

The two major reforms of local self-government drew clear analogies between the newly-established zemstvos and the newly-reconstituted city dumas. The statute’s authors made explicit reference to common privileges, procedures, and responsibilities, but did little to address
the more technical questions of competing poles of authority, jurisdictional conflict, and redistribution of wealth. This perhaps-deliberate omission ostensibly ensured that key matters would have to be worked out on a city-by-city, province-by-province basis.

The leaders of these organizations echoed this pattern in their implementation efforts. The early meetings show a particular enthusiasm for the zemstvo-duma connection, and there is a palpable sense of possibility about future endeavors. But, this enthusiasm masked the deeper conflicts, rooted in fundamentally conflicting visions of the relationship between the city and the countryside. Zemstvo leaders, for their part, sought to use some of the wealth from richer areas to support projects across the district or province. Though they supported some operations within city limits, their priorities were mostly focused on the poorer areas under their jurisdiction. City leaders, on the other hand, wanted to manage their own affairs as much as possible, and leave the zemstvo to manage affairs outside of the urban center. In their view, taxation of city residents to benefit the countryside represented a transfer of their wealth to a population with which they felt no kinship.

These disagreements remained largely hidden, so long as the issues in question remained small-scale. The two organs stayed surprisingly independent of each other, only rarely coming together to collaborate on technical issues, jurisdictional problems, or to solicit funds from the province as a whole. When conflicts did arise, the provincial zemstvo provided a release. The Moscow zemstvo assembly, for instance, afforded small measures of aid to various city projects, and in so doing was able to avert impending conflicts between district zemstvos and their capitals.

But, the increasing scope of zemstvo ambition eventually forced these questions into the open. In Moscow, the gulf in conception came into focus when the zemstvo board proposed a
tax on city property. In making their case, supporters of the measure characterized the capital as the “fourteenth uezd” of Moscow province, and argued that it should be treated on the same level as the other thirteen. The city delegates, however, held fast to their sense of a distinct identity. They saw the additional levies as exploitation, taking money away from one area merely to give it to another. Although the zemstvo ultimately prevailed (as, indeed, it had in other provinces), the debate over this topic revealed the enmity that persisted on both sides, and the true lack of a sense of common purpose. Their arguments called into question the very relationship between the city and the countryside, and the optimism of prior days withered into suspicion and resentment.
Chapter 7: Like a Brother or Like a Banker?: Contesting the Relationship between Guberniia and Uezd Zemstvos in Moscow Province, 1899-1900

In 1899, the Moscow provincial zemstvo published a multi-volume collection of every decree it had ever passed from its first meeting until the year 1897. The work was dedicated to Dmitrii Alekseevich Naumov, the man who had led the organization from its inception in 1865 until his resignation, shortly before his death, nearly thirty years later. The volume was prefaced by a lengthy biographic treatment of Naumov’s life and work, in which the author attempted to characterize the particular achievements of his subject’s tenure in the zemstvo. In the very beginning of this discussion, the author highlights the relationships with the uezd zemstvos as a particularly notable exemplar of the chairman’s sagacity and good will:

“It is sufficient to point out the fact, well know by all, that the activity of the Moscow Provincial Zemstvo was distinguished by the broad development of various endeavors for the benefit of the entire population and by the significant collaboration of the provincial zemstvo with the district ones, in their local initiatives. This collaboration, as is known, is expressed in the most varied forms and thus touches on almost all sides of zemstvo activity, yet at the same time ensures the full preservation of the independence of the uezd zemstvos...[this characteristic] cannot be explained by the abundance of resources [available to the provincial zemstvo]; it showed itself from the very first years of existence of the Moscow Zemstvo, when its financial means were quite insignificant.”

Indeed, Naumov’s early reports to the zemstvo assembly were rife with the questions of clarification of this relationship. He and his fellow board members were forced to wrestle with ambiguous legislative language on such issues as taxation authority, financial management, and allocation of administrative responsibilities. Nor were they alone in this regard. Other provinces faced similar difficulties in delimiting the particular prerogatives of the district and provincial organs. Naumov, it seemed, had achieved the proper balance between the two

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1 Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemskoe Sobranie, Sbornik postanovlenii, 6.
2 See especially Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemskoe Sobranie, Obzor deistvii Moskovskago zemstva v pervoe trekhletie ego suschestvovaniia (n.p.).
3 See, for instance, Tambovskaia Gubernskaia Zemskia Uprava, Doklad o raspredelenii zaniatii mezhdu gubernskimi i uezdnymi zemskimi uchrezhdeniiami (Tambov: Tipografiia Gubernskago Pravleniia, 1868).
zemstvo forces, and through that balance the organization had maximized its potential achievement.

Given the laudatory words of the Moscow zemstvo for Naumov’s achievements in this area, one is rather surprised to find that in 1899, only a few short years after the biography’s publication, the Moscow zemstvo once again plunged into the task of clarifying and delimiting the appropriate modes of interaction between the two levels of zemstvo authority. Sparked by competing polemics from two of the most prominent zemstvo leaders, the provincial zemstvo formed a special committee to study the “theoretical” relationship between province and district. The ensuing work brought a flood of reactions, as commissioners, board members, and regular delegates throughout the province sought to articulate the proper balance. The level of attention paid to this topic, and the disparate views it generated, demonstrate the high levels of contestation and disagreement over the very essence of the zemstvo task, persisting almost four decades after its establishment.4

The commission’s task had its roots in a series of policy changes among the Moscow zemstvos in the 1890s. The increased revenue provided by the decision to tax real estate holdings in the city of Moscow, coupled with the change in leadership surrounding Naumov’s resignation in 1893, provided the occasion for new programs and new approaches on the part of the provincial leadership. Dmitrii Shipov, Naumov’s successor, did not see his conception of the zemstvo task as a sharp departure from Naumov; in fact, his later summary of his views could have been taken almost verbatim from Naumov’s biography:

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4 Given the significance of this issue for the entirety of the zemstvo debate, and the ready availability of the materials, it is rather surprising that the question has not received more attention from historians. The commission receives brief treatment in Veselovskii’s study, but even there the issues are covered in a cursory manner, with little reference to the debates within the zemstvos themselves. See Veselovskii, Istoriia zemstva za sorok let, vol. III, 422-25.
The characteristic feature of the activity of the Moscow provincial zemstvo from the very beginning of its emergence has been the broad cooperation with the district zemstvos in their undertakings. This cooperation was expressed on the most varied forms and touched almost all spheres of the zemstvo task, and the provincial zemstvo always posited the preservation of the independence of the district zemstvos as a foundation of its support. This assistance to the uezdy manifested itself from the very first years of the introduction of the zemstvo authorities and even in those times, when the provincial zemstvo’s funds were extremely limited.5

Nevertheless, upon taking over the chairmanship, Shipov and his board colleagues shepherded in a number of changes in the relationship between the provincial and uezd zemstvos. They established a committee of district board chairmen to discuss issues of common interest. When the consensus suggested that this body was useful, it was established on a permanent basis.6 Through this commission, Shipov was able to develop a consensus on the need for a new system for financial accounting to be used by all the Moscow zemstva. The chairmen, in turn, secured the support of their respective assemblies, and the new system was fully approved in the 1897 meeting.7 Most notable of all, we see an increased effort on the part of the provincial zemstvo to offer assistance targeted assistance to particular districts and particular projects, in the form of grants or interest-free loans.8

However supportive he was of the general theory behind the assistance, Shipov was also frustrated by the pragmatic obstacles that frustrated his efforts. The interest-free loans offered by the provincial zemstvo remained in arrears for long periods of time, and some districts even used the provincial collections “to cover ongoing expenses of the district zemstvo.”9 Even more frustrating for him was the fact that the provincial assembly seemed inclined to overrule the board in resolving these questions. He cites several examples to underscore his point. For

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5 Shipov. *Vospominaniia*, 63-64. Naumov’s biography has no author listed, but the similarity of these two formulations suggests that Shipov, at the very least, had a strong influence over its creation.
6 Ibid., 64.
7 Ibid., 65-66.
8 Ibid., 64.
9 Ibid., 64.
instance, an 1895 resolution on the part of the provincial assembly offered supplementary salary funds for district schoolteachers, provided they were paid at least 200 rubles per year and carried the appropriate educational qualifications. Yet, in 1897 the assembly, contrary to the board’s recommendation, offered support to the Mozhaisk zemstvo even though the teachers in question were not able to meet either of those conditions.10 Similarly, that same session saw the provincial assembly increase the amount of loans for school construction to three uezd zemstvos, despite the board’s protestations that the funds were never meant to cover all costs, that building costs were the same as they were when the program was implemented, and that the allotted funds were nearly exhausted.11

The frustration grew so great that it produced a crisis of leadership in the provincial zemstvo. At the close of the 1897 session, when the time came for new elections for the board chairman, Shipov was nominated on the majority of ballots. But before accepting his candidacy, he made a speech in which he expressed his dissatisfaction with what he believed was an insufficient level of support on province-district issues:

“Feeling it necessary to fully eliminate the possibility of misunderstandings, and not wishing to leave anything on this question not clarified and agreed upon, I precisely laid before the assembly my understanding of the question on mutual relations between the provincial and district zemstvos. I expressed the conviction that the executive organ could only fulfill its task, if there was a feeling of full solidarity between itself and the assembly, and I asked the delegates to keep in mind during voting all that I had said. I finished with the following words: ‘It would be preferable for me to not be chosen, if my sentiments were not shared by many delegates, than to be chosen and subsequently not find moral support from the majority of the assembly.’”12

10 Ibid., 72-73.
11 Ibid., 73.
12 Ibid., 74.
Shipov was re-elected by a 35-19 margin, and his colleagues on the board were re-elected by even greater margins. For the time being, his address had settled the question, and he felt confident to continue in his prior course.

The ensuing year, however, only brought more frustrations, and Shipov became increasingly convinced that he did not have the full support of the assembly. He catalogued a host of new frustrations with the assembly’s fickle attitude towards what he considered a vital question. Time and again he was frustrated in his efforts to develop what he considered an even balance in the relationship with the uezdy.

The last straw came in the following year’s meeting, when the assembly took up the question of financial support for a number of new schools that had been proposed in conjunction with the 1894 marriage of the then-heir Nikolai Aleksandrovich. The intervening years had repeatedly held that these schools would be constructed by the provincial zemstvo, but annual funding and oversight would come from their particular district zemstvos. Several uezdy, however, eventually reversed course on their prior commitments, and during the 1898 assembly it was proposed that the operating funds for these schools be paid out of provincial funds. In opposition to the existing agreements on the subject, and the express recommendation of the board, the assembly agreed to pay the full load.

Reacting to yet another veto, and to what he termed an “adversarial relationship” that he sensed from various district chairman, Shipov resolved to take drastic action. Once the assembly had finished its work on the annual reports, he took to the floor and reminded delegates of the speech he had made the prior year. He suggested that the collected decisions of the session “attest, that the majority of the delegates have a negative reaction to the provincial zemstvo’s

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13 Ibid., 75. A. F. Schneider chose not to seek re-election, and was replaced on the board by F. A. Golovin.
14 Ibid., 78-80.
program and understanding of the question.” As a consequence, he declared, “I consider it my
duty to lay aside the power invested in me, and I have petitioned to the governor about my
resignation…”

Although the delegates perhaps did not support his plan in full, they did not expect such a
declaration, and a number of them quickly worked to urge Shipov to reverse his decision. At the
opening of business the next day, G. I. Kristi expressed “full trust and the greatest respect for
your activities, which are valued by all…” The disagreements that had arisen, Kristi argued,
were inevitable when confronting an issue such as this. Nevertheless, Shipov was unmoved. He
only relented after receiving an overwhelming majority of the nominations and numerous
speeches supporting his point of view. One in particular drew his attention. V. I. Ger’e, a
delegate from the city of Moscow, attested that Shipov had “not only posed this important
question, but tried to give it practical resolution,” and suggested that the assembly should
consider it in greater depth.

After Shipov was elected on a new ballot (by a measure of 49-10), Ger’e took the
initiative to bring the matter to a full resolution. He rose and issued a brief proposal: “In view of
the great significance of the question of the actions of the provincial zemstvo in relation to the
uezd zemstvos, and for the removal of misunderstandings or disagreements that may arise on
those grounds, I ask permission to propose that the provincial zemstvo assembly elect a
commission and direct it to work this question out.”

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15 Ibid., 81. In form, if not in subject matter or resolution, this episode mirrors the series of events that led to
Naumov’s resignation only five years before.
16 Ibid., 81.
17 Ibid., 82. There is a slight disagreement between the two sources on the exact timing of events during this
particular meeting, but their overall depictions of events do not significantly diverge.
18 *Materialy po razresheniui v Moskovskom gubernkom zemstvo voprosa o vyiasnenii otnoshenii Gubernskago
zemstvo k uezdnym* (Moscow: Pechatia S. P. Iakovleva, 1901), 1.
Shipov, not surprisingly, immediately offered his support. He declared the consideration of these matters a “task of the highest level of importance,” and suggested that their resolution would be “useful for the successful course of affairs, both in Moscow province and for the zemstvo task as a whole.”

Interestingly, however, Shipov also seemed to conceive of the task of this commission as a conceptual one, rather than a pragmatic one. In the same short speech, he makes the point that “No obligatory decrees can be made on this question, there should be no formal regulation…”

During the ensuing discussion, it quickly became apparent that there was a strong consensus in favor of Ger’e’s proposal. The major point of contention, in fact, was not the existence of the committee, but its composition. Some delegates argued that the matter should be referred to the already-existing committee of the chairmen of the district zemstvos. Shipov sided with those arguing for the establishment of a separate commission, and in elaborating his reasoning he developed more fully his conception of the committee’s purpose:

“A. N. [Sazonov] says that this committee should examine questions of a practical nature, but I think that it is not worth it [ne sleduet] to touch on these questions. The questions about the mutual action of the provincial and uezd zemstvos, about the tasks of the provincial zemstvo organization, about the district zemstvo organizations and on the mutual relationships between them—[these questions] first of all demand a principled elaboration. I am of the conviction, that there cannot be a division between the interests of the provincial and district zemstvos. In the zemstvo’s task there is only room for the interests of the people, in which the zemstvos exist only as a means for the best satisfaction of the needs of the demands of the populace, for the creation of the conditions which will provide for their economic and moral development. The commission shouldn’t address specific [ chastnye] questions, such as how the uezdy are to collaborate in some sphere or another of zemstvo affairs, but rather it should elaborate the foundational position delineating the sphere and borders of activity on the part of the provincial zemstvo. It’s important to clarify a principal question, establish a principal point of view, in order to then by guided by it in examining distinct questions of one form or another.”

Again, it is interesting to note Shipov’s emphasis on the notion that province-district relations needed a theoretical foundation for proper decision-making in the future. Implicit in his characterization is the suggestion that such a foundation had not been previously agreed upon,

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19 Materialy, 1. --
20 Ibid, 1. --
either in the directives from the central government or worked out in the day-to-day interactions between the two levels of power.

Ultimately, the assembly acceded to Shipov’s view of the matter. It formed a committee of seven delegates, with the stipulation that none of them had previously served as members of an uezd board. The seven men chosen were Ger’e, S. A. Muromtsev, N. N. Shchepkin, Count P. S. Sheremetev, P. D. Dolgorukov, V. V. Przheval’skii and A. O. Shneider. The first three were delegates elected by the Moscow City Duma, the other four represented Zvenigorod, Ruza, Podol’sk and Serpukhov districts, respectively. Sheremetev and Dolgorukov were Noble Marshals of their respective uezdy, and neither had served in the Moscow zemstvo prior to taking that post. The seven varied significantly in their experience with zemstvo affairs. Ger’e and Shneider were both first elected in 1877, whereas Muromtsev, Sheremetev, and Przhevalskii had all joined the zemstvo in 1897 or later. Of the seven, only Ger’e and Muromtsev had participated in the original discussion of the committee’s formation. The minutes of the zemstvo debate make no mention of a selection of a chairman or reporter, but Ger’e is listed as chairman in the committee’s final report.

The commission worked over the course of the next several months, with the intention of presenting their report at the next meeting of the assembly. In the meantime, however, interested commentators began to air their views, presenting the case to the public for a particular conception of the relationship at the center of the dispute. In so doing, however, these commentators also made their case for a particular conception of the relationship between the various branches of government, constitutionalism, law, etc.

21 Ibid., 4.
22 Data on zemstvo tenure taken from Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo, Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo v poluveykovaui godovshchinu osnovania zemskikh uchrezhdenni 1864-1914 (Moscow: A. A. Lebenson, 1915).
23 Materialy, 18.
First out of the gate was Boris Chicherin, whose short article was, as suggested earlier, most likely meant primarily as an attack on the zemstvo’s decision to tax city property. Nevertheless, as he knew quite well, most of his comments could apply equally well to both situations. In his view, the increasing centralization of zemstvo authority had led to a situation in which the uezdy could not truly exercise their supposedly sacrosanct independence. Granted, there were certainly situations—Chicherin mentions fire insurance and nursing schools, among others—in which the province was the correct level for action. And, of course, certain emergency measures would require redistribution from the common fund to a particular area. But, in his view, the increase in authority on the part of the provincial zemstvo moved far beyond that goal. A district, although naturally protective of its independence, had to fight a two-front battle in the provincial zemstvo: “to strive to get as much as it can for itself and to give as little as it can to others.” In the end, they followed the only logical course open to them—to chase their own piece of the pie.

Shipov, unsurprisingly, saw the situation rather differently, and decided that he could not let Chicherin’s assertions stand unanswered. He published his retort in the form of an extended article in September of 1899, just as the uezd zemstvos were beginning their consideration of the proposal. Shipov’s rebuttal is quite extensive, stretching more than fifty pages in length. In the opening paragraphs, he suggests that he was moved to write by “frequent articles that had recently appeared” on the “supposed antagonism” that had developed because of the provincial zemstvo’s efforts. However, he does not yet mention any opponents by name, nor does he

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24 For a longer discussion of this question, see above, pp ---.
26 According to a later speech by Prince P. D. Dolgorukov, a copy of Shipov’s brochure was provided to every district delegate along with the commission’s report. See Materialy, 136.
27 D. N. Shipov, K Voprosu o vzaimnykh otosheniakh gubernskikh i uezdnykh zemstv (Moscow: Típo-Lit. I. N. Kushnereva, 1899), 3.
refute particular arguments made by Chicherin or others. Rather, he commences on an extended
collection of the topic as a whole, the better to elucidate his conception of the zemstvo
mission.

Shipov first outlines two potential conceptions of the ideal province-district relationship:
one in which the spheres of the two zemstvos were “strictly demarcated,” and another which
“believes that in the vital zemstvo matter we need friendly, collaborative work from the
provincial and district zemstvos, following the same goal—to more fully and more equally
satisfy the needs of the populace.” To make the argument for the latter viewpoint, he conducts
an intensive study of the language utilized in the authorizing statutes, paying particular attention
to those sections (2, 3, 63, and 64) that govern province-district relationships. This exhaustive
review, as he sees it, leaves no doubt that the authors of the legislation clearly intended that there
be extensive collaboration between the provincial and district authorities. “It’s impossible not to
come to the conclusion, that the existing legislation and views of the government did not have it
in mind to demarcate the subjects of management for the provincial and district zemstvos, but, in
fact, they more (skoree) call these authorities to collaborative work.”

Stepping back, Shipov then articulates his formulation that the zemstvo was in truth not a
collection of institutions within a single province, but rather a unitary entity. “The zemstvo is
nothing other than an association—a social union of the residents of one locale for the
satisfaction of their general administrative needs.” In this viewpoint, discord could not truly
persist between one district and another, or between the province and the district. When these

28 Ibid., 6.
29 Ibid., 9.
30 Ibid., 12. One wonders whether Shipov would have said the same about the relations with the zemstvos in other
provinces.
issues did pop up, they were by definition the result of misunderstanding, rather than true
disagreement, and reasoned discussion could reveal the true “zemstvo task.”

Having established that principle, he then articulates the need for the provincial zemstvo
to take the lead in managing this process:

Zemstvo administration can develop correctly and successfully, and zemstvo measures
will surely achieve their goals with less expenditure of effort and funds only if zemstvo
activity in each of its spheres is guided by a predetermined system, by solidly established
principles. From this flows the necessity, in the majority of cases, before organizing any
sort of zemstvo measures, to subject them to a thorough elaboration. This sort of prior
working-out of various questions of zemstvo activity should, because of its essence and
nature, be considered a duty of the provincial zemstvo.”31

In practice, this mindset required an active commitment on the part of the provincial zemstvo to
help locales that were unable to help themselves. Shipov highlighted the disparities in tax
collection between the more industrialized and the more rural districts of Moscow, and argued
that the latter were reaching the limits of their taxation capabilities. Because there was still more
to be done, the provincial zemstvo would have to intervene. In doing so, they would of course
have to concentrate their efforts on those areas that could not achieve the common goals with
district funds alone. “Such a disparity in the satisfaction of the comparable and equally urgent
needs of the population of the province in its separate areas cannot be an indifferent concern for
the provincial zemstvo, and it cannot but turn its attention, cannot but take measures on its part
with the goal of developing a possible balance in the matter of just satisfaction of the needs of
the province’s populace.”32 By concentrating on poorer areas, the provincial zemstvo would of
course be pursuing a policy of redistribution from the more well-off districts.

To elucidate his account with specific examples, Shipov turned to recent events in
Moscow province. In 1896, the provincial zemstvo had developed a plan for a network of new

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31 Ibid., 20.
32 Ibid., 29.
schools in the province. After intensive study and consultation with the district school councils, they had developed a plan for 277 new schools, requiring an additional annual expenditure of 127,740 rubles, of which the district zemstvos were expected to contribute 94,260. An analysis of taxation rates revealed that certain districts were well below the average for the province in certain areas. Some could make up the additional funds needed by simply raising taxes, but others would still fall short, and a healthy minority was already overstretched despite an already-high tax rate. Consequently, the provincial zemstvo developed several levels of assistance, based on a particular district’s ability to meet the new requirements. The council of district board chairmen approved of the arrangement in August of 1896. They made two major points in their conclusion, which Shipov proudly cited as evidence of the correctness of his approach. “1) The provincial zemstvos should have as their aim the general direction of the zemstvo task in the province by means of a principled working-out of various questions of zemstvo activity, and 2) The provincial zemstvo should be, to the degree possible, a regulator of the zemstvo funds in the province, with the goal of an equivalent use of all sources of zemstvo taxation and an equivalent satisfaction of the populations of all locales in the province."34

This example allowed Shipov to turn to a direct refutation of Chicherin’s criticisms, which had appeared in various forms over the past few years. On the school issue in particular, Shipov took aim at an 1897 article from Chicherin entitled “The Moscow Zemstvo and the Question of General Education.” In it, Chicherin had opposed the taxation decrees because they represented an inappropriate intervention into local affairs. “Decrees of this sort cannot be recognized as in agreement with the law, nor with the very spirit of the zemstvo authorities. The province is given the authority to make decrees, conditionally or unconditionally obligatory only

33 Ibid., 32.
34 Ibid., 34.
for all, and not exclusively for a few localities."\(^{35}\) From Shipov’s point of view, such a mindset was entirely wrongheaded. An evenhanded administration of the province, he contended, \textit{required} such an approach. The goal of the provincial board was to provide for “the minimally necessary number of new schools,” and within this plan the preservation of the districts’ independence was assured.\(^{36}\) As such, Chicherin’s fears about provincial interference in local matters “had no factual basis whatsoever.”\(^{37}\)

The difference between the two men, however, was more profound than simple disputes over policy or legislative interpretation. At the heart of their disagreement were fundamentally different conceptions of the nature of the social task. In a subsequent section, Shipov struck at the heard of the dispute:

“The rich,” B. N. Chicherin says, “can help the poor out of Christian love, but that is not justice, but charity, i.e. a \textit{moral principle, not a juridical one}. The state is not a moral union like the Church, but a coercive union, rooted in the same principle, on which rests every coercive organization; not self-sacrifice, which is in its essence voluntary, but \textit{law}. [\textit{pravo}]” The provincial board, according to B. N. Chicherin, has not clarified for itself in the appropriate manner the significance and the rights [\textit{prav}] of the zemstvo, and it mixes up “the highest moral exertions with coercive organization of law.” So, B. N. Chicherin proceeds from a point of view of full delimitation of the sphere of actions of the moral principle from the sphere of \textit{pravo} and on those grounds we should search for the source of our disagreement in our views on the basic principle of zemstvo activities in general.\(^{38}\)

For his part, Shipov’s conclusion expands on this notion, and paints a remarkably idealistic conception of his conception of the zemstvo’s work:

“The zemstvo idea in its essence is a moral idea, and therefore that zemstvo task is always alive and nurtures in people the desire to work for others and belief in the creation of altruistic ideas. Only consciousness of the demands of the moral law can serve as a firm foundation for uniting people and uniting them in the strongest unions possible. Only on condition of consciousness on the part of the members of the provincial and district zemstvo assemblies, that at the basis of the zemstvo idea there should be moral principle, a feeling of social solidarity in the zemstvo midst, to obtain the appropriate

\(^{35}\) Chicherin, \textit{Voprosy Politiki}, 35.
\(^{36}\) Shipov, \textit{K Voprosu...}, 36.
\(^{37}\) Ibid., 38.
\(^{38}\) Ibid., 46-47.
development. Only under these conditions there will be no place in zemstvo assemblies for any sort of private interests; misunderstandings between provincial and district zemstvos, which are otherwise always possible, will be done away with, and these authorities will be united in harmonious work, pursuing one goal—the possibility of accomplishing the common good.”

Shipov’s conceptualization of the zemstvo’s work relied on an idealistic framing of the task that lay before the zemstsy.

Chicherin, apparently never one to back away from an argument, responded in kind (and at greater length than in his previous missive) in a subsequent article. His opening argument once again took aim at Shipov’s model of the zemstvo mission and social action as a whole. As he saw it, the basic structure of the zemstvo regime dictated that delegates would wrestle with each other to win the greatest prizes for their districts. In this formulation, the “moral duty” was no more than self-interest in a democratic guise. Without proper restraints, dictatorship of the majority would be the inevitable result:

…the very activities of the provincial zemstvo generate endless strife, and the more this activity increases, the more aggravated are the relationships. Particularly if the zemstvo sets for itself the goal of extending money from the wealthy districts and bestowing it on the poor ones, then such actions by the controller will rarely get by without protest. In actuality each person who participates in provincial assemblies knows, that when it comes time to rule on general measures, the first question that the majority of delegates ask themselves is this: will this be beneficial or not for the district? Such is human nature, with which we must reconcile. And the delegates have a natural urge to find moral justification in the idea that they are representatives of their districts, and are therefore obliged to defend its interests. I have the right to expend my own funds, but not those entrusted to me.

…

[D]espotism of the majority is one of the most unjust and unbearable [abuses]. The protection of the minority is one of the most essential tasks of lawgiving, and it is precisely this that most often requires government guardianship. Those who wish to avoid this outcome should have mercy on the minority, and for that one must before anything refrain from those measures, which will make its interests a sacrifice to others.

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39 Ibid., 49-50.
40 Chicherin, Voproxy Politiki, 106-107.
He also repeated his arguments about the inherent contradictions of Shipov’s model of zemstvo independence:

Under the arrangement proposed by D. N. Shipov, there can be no other relation than guardianship [over the districts by the provincial zemstvo]. As soon as one is given another’s money, then directly is required an accounting [for it] and supervision over its disposition. On this is founded all of zemstvo administration. When the representatives of the population entrust the district board with the money taken from them, they require an accounting and they supervise its activities. The same occurs in the provincial assembly. So, when the provincial zemstvo gives money to one uezd that it has taken from another, it is not right for it to do this other than under conditions of supervision and accounting.

... The independence of the districts can be demarcated in only one way—by the offering to the uezd zemstvo of an independent sphere of operations; that is, the separation of matters into provincial and district.”

Chicherin concluded by refuting Shipov’s notions of zemstvo morality:

The Russian zemstvo cannot and should not go along this path. Not forced altruism, which consists in the right to fleece one for the sake of others, but justice, giving each his own, makes up the true foundation for the comfortable (blagoustroyenny) civil order. In the zemstvo each person who gives a kopeck for social needs should know that he is taking it from his own pocket, and not from another. Only under these circumstances is it possible for the zemstvo powers to take decided action for the benefit of the fatherland.

The dispute about districts and provinces, seemingly simple at first, had revealed much greater conflicts lying beneath. For Shipov, victory on this question would mean not only a vindication of his approach to affairs in Moscow, but a vindication for his entire conception of the zemstvo mission. Given the complications that had arisen during his first few years in his post, one would not blame him for considering the report’s resolution a question of the utmost importance.

Amidst this flurry of public polemic, the committee busied itself with its appointed task. We have no record of their deliberations, but if evidence from other commissions is to be believed, Ger’e as chairman took the lead in drafting, with input from other committee members.

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41 Ibid., 108.
42 Ibid., 121.
The report was ready by the following zemstvo session, held in January of 1900. In its conclusion, the report offered seven conclusions (polozheniia) for approval:

1. The law entrusts both the uezd and the provincial zemstvos with general care for the material and spiritual prosperity of the local population of the district and province.
2. This task should be realized from the side of the provincial zemstvo: in some instances through direct management of affairs – in which case the sphere of these affairs is to be determined (in accordance with the dictates and limitations of the law) by considerations of expediency; in other instances: a) through the financial support of district zemstvos with provincial zemstvo funds and 6) through the study of common conditions (statistics), the resolution of common problems and care for the general interest of the population of the province.
3. Upon distribution of its means (funds) the provincial zemstvo should have in view the interests of the whole population of the province as a whole and, where possible, the total (povcemestnoe) maintenance of the needs of the local population (hospitals, schools, public health, improvement of sanitation conditions and so on) to the extent of their financial means and those of the population.
4. For the realization of the aforementioned task the provincial zemstvo should be guided by a considered, systematic plan and by specified rules, adherence to which it may require from the districts, as a precondition of the funds given to them.
5. Such activity of the provincial zemstvo, composed of the delegates of the district zemstvos, cannot lead to a limitation of their independence, [which is] absolutely necessary for the success of their affairs—but, to the contrary, will serve for the revitalization of energy and stimulation of interest in the common task from the side of local zemstvo activists. For the guarantee of that independence of the districts, the general plans and basic statutes worked out by the provincial zemstvo should be turned over for the prior approval of the district assemblies.
6. Financial assistance from the provincial zemstvo should be rendered in accordance with the degree of ability for the districts to satisfy known needs through their own local means and under condition of participation on the part of the local zemstvo in the given expenditure—whereupon, however, the degree of strain on the financial strength of the district should be taken into account. Note: In order to establish the necessary consistency of standards, it is desirable that the provincial zemstvo provide the evaluations.
7. In the event of a clash of interests and objections on the part of one or more district zemstvos against a plan of action established by the provincial zemstvo, it is necessary to: 1) meticulously discuss, whether these objections flow from local conditions that should be taken into account, and 2) in unavoidable situations to subject the entire general plan to a review, but not to permit arbitrary deviations from it in the given situation.43

The report came up for initial discussion during the following assembly meeting, which took place in January of 1900. However, before they were able to discuss the substance of the report, a new issue presented itself. At the commencement of the debate, G. I. Kristi raised the question of whether the report should be passed to the district zemstvo assemblies for comment before the provincial assembly rendered its final verdict.

The discussion of this topic was fairly brief, but when voting commenced, the proposal squeaked by on the narrowest of margins—28 in favor, 27 opposed. This is particularly

43 Materialy, 17-18.
interesting, because we have seen substantial evidence that the Moscow zemstvo was marked by
a rather high degree of comity and consensus in its voting patterns. This is not to say that close
votes never occurred, but rather to point out that this outcome contrasts sharply with the
seemingly strong consensus in favor of the commission itself. One wonders whether this divided
vote indicates a more fundamental divide on provincial-district questions than we might have
anticipated.

Subsequent to this vote, N. F. Rikhter proposed that the report also be passed to the city
duma for Moscow—what he called the “14th uezd”—for examination. As he pointed out, the
city residents were the largest contributors to zemstvo taxes, and as such they “could not be
uninterested” in the distribution of those funds. Interestingly, this vote was much less
contentious than the previous, and Rikhter’s motion passed with unanimous support. Apparently
the opponents of the prior proposal, having lost the debate on the merits, decided to not press the
matter, and either supported the resolution or chose not to vote. These resolutions undertaken,
the assembly turned to other matters. They would re-visit the question only after receiving uezd
comments.

The uezd comments, however, would come in two parts. First, the report was sent to the
district boards with a request that they submit it to their subsequent assembly meetings for
approval. A number of the boards—those of Bogorodsk, Volokolamsk, Mozhaisk, Podol’sk,
Ruza, and Serpukhov—did just that, submitting the report with no added suggestion or
evaluation. Most of the other upravy, however, took the opportunity to add additional
recommendations and commentary of one form or another. Some of these recommendations
were quite brief—the Vereia district board simply declared that it “joins with the sentiment of

44 Ibid., 28-29. It is interesting to note Rikhter’s use of the phrase “fourteenth uezd” to describe the city of Moscow.
As discussed earlier (see p. --), this formulation aroused the ire of several duma delegates when first used during
debate.
the commission on this question”45—but the majority were much more substantive, presenting extensive assessments of the commission’s proposals to their respective assemblies.

The responses, however, are remarkably varied in their approach. The Dmitrovsk board, after a detailed discussion of the issues at hand, issued a ringing endorsement: “…the board finds that the conclusions worked out by the commission are responsive to the existing order of things in the Moscow zemstvo and are capable of introducing even greater consistency and regularity in the common work of the provincial and district zemstvos, and in so doing to contribution to an even more successful course for the zemstvo task…”46 Less effusive but still fully supportive was the special commission in the Moscow Duma, which concluded that it “recognized the point of view in the report to be correct,” and recommended approval by the Duma as a whole.47

Other boards, however, found the commission’s conclusions to be problematic. The Klin and Bronnitsk board both recommended changes in the wording of particular points, while approving of the rest of the conclusions. The Klin board recommended the addition of a last codicil, which would require that all actions taken pursuant to paragraph seven be approved by the provincial board in conjunction with the committee of district chairmen.48 Bronnitsk, on the other hand, suggested that the commission remove from point 4 the reference to conditional release of funds, and add to point seven a codicil for allowing temporary deviation from the plan if such action proved necessary.49

The Kolomna Board, on the other hand, was much more critical. After an intensive review of the relevant legislation and administrative rulings, it concluded that the question of district-province relations was “neither timely nor urgent,” and that “there exist no basis for

45 Ibid., 32
46 Ibid., 39.
47 Ibid., 78.
48 Ibid., 45.
49 Ibid., 31-32.
changing nor for adding to the guiding principles in the relationships between the provincial and the district zemstvos.”

Rather unsurprisingly, the most extensive response came from the Moscow District Board. After an extensive survey of the existing legislation, it ultimately came to oppose the commission’s conclusions. The codicils, in their opinion, constituted an attempt on the part of the provincial zemstvo to exercise “general direction” (obshchee rukovodstvo) over district affairs. Such an attempt was a priori contrary to existing law. For proof, they cited a recent Senate ruling stemming from a case in Khar’kov province, where the governor had overruled the zemstvo on similar grounds. As such, they concluded that the stated reasons for action (the lack of clarity in the law and the precedent provided by prior interactions) “did not give even the smallest reason for instigating the question of the mutual relationship of the provincial and district zemstvos,” and “any sort of further regulation” of these relationships would be superfluous.”

A few leaders actually had the temerity (or audacity) to probe the personal disagreements that had generated this dispute. In a telling response, the Zvenigorod district board acknowledged and articulated the dispute that (at least, in its view) lay at the heart of the commission’s work—that between Chicherin and Shipov. After a short discussion of the principles at issue between the two men, the board set out to “split the baby,” and provide reasonable grounds for either side. The board’s ultimate conclusion, while remaining studiously neutral on the intellectual dispute at stake, seems to carry a slight sense of doubt as to the absolute necessity of the committee’s work:

“If it is so, if the question on the mutual relationships of the provincial and district zemstvos exists only as a general question, and not as a misunderstanding among the Moscow zemstvos, then, according to the

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50 Ibid., 56.
51 Ibid., 70-72.
board, if the district assemblies find it necessary to pronounce on this question, then their opinion can be expressed only from that point of view, that is in the sense of a clarification of the general theoretical question, the practical application of which has never caused in Moscow province any sort of principle discord or disagreement.52

After receiving the report (with or without additional commentary), the assemblies were left to issue their own verdicts on the conclusions. In so doing, they could affirm, modify, or contradict the recommendations from their own leadership.

The collected reactions of the district zemstvos are striking, both in the variety of the responses and in the level of attention they devote to the issues at hand. As with the boards, certain districts gave the report a good deal of attention, others barely engaged with the report at all. Again, we see a remarkable level of diversity among the responses. The majority of the districts ended up expressing their approval of the report, but once again the relative levels of enthusiasm varied significantly. The Volokolamsk assembly unanimously echoed the committee’s report, and the Podol’sk body approved it after a short debate.53 Moscow and Dmitrovsk both echoed their boards in approving of the report, but did so in the face of significant opposition—delegates in both assemblies penned dissenting opinions to include with the minutes.54

A substantial minority, on the other hand, was far less supportive, and chose to reject the report in its entirety. The Zvenigorod assembly was one of these, and the course of debate is particularly interesting. After the board’s report erred on the side of platitudes in its treatment of the commission’s work, the assembly went in the opposite direction. The proposal was attacked, in whole and in part, as an untenable attack on the independence of the uezd zemstvos. The board chairman, E. D. Artynov, postulated that the question at hand was a matter of confusion not between the two levels of zemstvo authority, but within the members of the provincial

52 Ibid., 43. The Kolomen board also referenced also referenced Shipov and Chicherin before rendering its verdict.
53 Ibid., 95, 104-5.
54 Ibid., 95-98, 101-104.
assembly, who were caught on the horns of their dual identity as “organs of the provincial zemstvo and defenders of uezd interests.” The assembly, in a 15-8 vote, rejected the conclusions put forth by its own board. In a subsequent 12-11 decision, the delegates voted to cast aside the commission’s report in its entirety, contending that it “leads to the complete subordination [my italics] of the districts zemstvos to the provincial [zemstvo].”55 The minutes of the Vereia zemstvo do not provide the same level of detail, but the result and even the language of their conclusion was the same: the commission’s report was rejected for fear of “the complete subordination” of the uezd zemstvo.56

Not all the delegates saw the matter in such stark terms. A delegate from Dmitrovsk took the initiative to ask his board chairman, Count M. A. Olsuf’ev, whether he had any recollection of misunderstandings between the various zemstvos over the course of his tenure. Olsuf’ev could recall no such problems. The assembly took the lead from this exchange, and issued a decree that “…not finding in all prior collaborative deeds…any sort of disagreement, [the assembly]…sees no need for the clarification through any sort of new rules on the existing activity and regulation of the relations between the provincial and Dmitrovsk zemstvos…”57

This diversity is interesting not only for the fact that the final outcomes were so different, but also for what it shows about the relationships between the assemblies and their boards. Despite the generally high level of support afforded to district assemblies, this was one issue where support could clearly not be guaranteed. More often than not, the assembly made significant changes to the board’s findings, and in several circumstances the board was overruled entirely. The two assemblies that most completely rejected the report in its entirety—Vereia and

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55 Ibid., 99. Opposition was likely significantly higher than the vote total would indicate. Some members considered the commission’s report to be objectionable only in part. They presumably voted against its total rejection, but would have demanded substantial changes before approval.
56 Ibid., 95.
57 Ibid., 96.
Zvenigorod—did so in the face of endorsements by their board. Of course, none of these judgments were binding on the provincial zemstvo. The report had been sent out for comment, not for ratification. But, the significant opposition to the proposal would undoubtedly have given the delegates pause, particularly for those who had considered its provisions uncontroversial and its passage a fait accompli.

Thus, when the provincial assembly re-convened in December of 1900 to take up the question once again, the prospects for ready agreement seemed murkier than they had just a few months prior. Clearly, a number of zemstvo officials and delegates considered this dispute to be a key issue. Although the assembly only counted 47 regular delegates in attendance, every single district board chairman and eleven of the twelve district Noble Marshals were in the meeting-hall for the debate. The ensuing discussion would consume two days of meetings and demonstrate the wide gulf that still existed in the conception of the province-district relationship, and in views of its future direction.

After the chairman brought the issue to the floor, the first to speak was Count P. S. Sheremetev, Noble Marshal from Zvenigorod uezd and a member of the commission. In a surprising turn, Sheremetev announced that he was withdrawing his support for the proposal which he had helped to draft. Citing his relative inexperience with zemstvo affairs, he declared that he had not previously been able to resolve this “complex dispute,” and instead simply sided with the conclusions of the other members. Upon further reflection, however, he had decided that this decision was in error. In particular, he was concerned about the implications of points 4 and 7 of the final report, the two that seemed most threatening to district autonomy. Sheremetev spoke at length of his fears about the effect that the new policies would have on zemstvo life. He believed that the strictures regarding the conditions for receipt of provincial zemstvo funds

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58 Ibid., 116.
would prove to be dangerous for the districts. They would, of course, still accept the money, but in so doing would become “mere voluntary executive organs of the provincial zemstvo.” In stark terms, Sheremetev laid out the eventual effects that such a change would have: “…the districts will implicitly agree with the rules for receiving money. The district zemstvo assemblies will more and more lose their liveliness and significance. Everything will be pre-decided and pre-examined from above. They [the delegates] will come, in order to silently agree with the rules. The delegates from the peasantry will have less and less opportunity to speak up and present their practical knowledge. The entire affair [the zemstvo’s work] will take on a deathly hue.” Sheremetev proposed changes to resolutions four and seven of the committee report. These were the two principles that had engendered the most opposition during the discussion in the uezd assemblies, and they would be the two most controversial as debate continued.

Subsequent opponents did not have quite the same vividness in their predictions as did Sheremetev, but they also forecast a loss of independence for the uezd zemstvos. M. V. Dukhovskoi argued that the districts would not be in a position to refuse zemstvo funds, because to do so would “destroy the entirety of its operations.” Though he believed that the Senate clarification in Khar’kov was unclear and thus a commission was needed, he backed Sheremetev in the need for revision of the final conclusions. F. F. Kokoshkin, speaking more narrowly, expressed the fear that “the rules worked out by the commission could, in the ensuing

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59 Ibid., 117-118.
60 Ibid., 117. In March of 1901, he was granted permission to publish a copy of his speech from the prior December. Perhaps a bit surprisingly, he chose not to expand on his original points; in fact, the speech is verbatim as it appears in the minutes of the meeting. As printed, it stretches a full four pages. Nevertheless, the fact that he undertook the effort to secure publication is a strong indicator that he considered the issue to be one of great importance, and significantly regretted that his epiphany had come too late. See P. S. Sheremetev, ----
61 Materialy, 122.
implementation, lead to a weakening of the independence of the uezd zemstvos, if these rules were to assume too detailed a character.”

Of course, the commission’s work had its supporters as well. With the exception of Schneider, the six remaining committee members were all active during the debate. Ger’e was particularly dynamic, delivering numerous speeches, rebutting counter-proposals, and shepherding delegates toward the final vote. Shipov, too, was vocal in support of the committee’s proposals. However, since he had already elucidated his conception of the matter in his article, he did not feel the need to press his case with lengthy speeches. Instead, when he took the floor, he issued a series of point-by-point rebuttals, countering specific arguments that had been put forth in the debate thus far. The other members of the board spoke even less than did he, but Shipov assured the assembled the delegates that “all my colleagues [on the board] stand in complete solidarity with me.” He even went so far as to characterize his article as “our program,” as though the other board members were co-authors.

Though the two sides were both quite firm in their opinions, they did not, in fact, disagree on general principles. In fact, the course of the debate shows a number of key conceptual tropes when discussing the overall conception of zemstvo affairs. The debaters generally did not disagree on these larger ideas, though there was certainly room for disagreement. Rather, both sides adhered to them, while insisting that their position on the report was in line with these larger principles.

One recurrent narrative trope was the notion of an unbroken zemstvo tradition, stretching from the moment of the 1864 reform all the way to the present day. Debaters on both sides sought to portray an unbroken tradition of comity and collaboration between the districts and the

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62 Ibid., 147.
63 Ibid., 132.
uezdy. The resolution’s defenders maintained their insistence that the purpose of the report was merely to confirm the principles that had developed over the preceding thirty-five years. Prince P. D. Dolgorukov, the Noble Marshal from Ruza, took to the floor several times to contend that the report was in keeping with the long-established zemstvo tradition.

The commission is not proposing anything new, it is simply formulating the existing mutual relationship of the provincial and district zemstvos in Moscow province, which are completely in agreement with current legislation, which have not caused any misunderstandings, that has been confirmed by the responses received from Moscow, Dmitrovsk, and several other districts. I can in no way agree with the notion, that the commission’s proposal allegedly reaches the conclusion, that the district zemstvos are to be subordinated to the provincial one.”64

A. D. Samarin used similarly laudatory language in characterizing the achievements of the Moscow zemstvos to that point, arguing that “that system, which the provincial zemstvo has held to in its dealings, has [not] led to any bad results; we have never seen anything but good from it.”65 After expressing his disagreement with the more dire predictions of Sheremetev and others, Samarin expressed his support for the proposal from the Bogorod Assembly, which had ratified the general principles of the committee but made a few subtle changes in emphasis.

For opponents of the report, the new resolutions marked a break in that tradition; an attempt to deviate from long-standing tradition. G. I. Kristi, for instance, expressed complete agreement with Samarin’s premises, but came to a completely different conclusion about the implications for the report as a whole: “I completely share the opinion expressed by the Dmitrovsk district assembly in its statement, which speaks for the desirability of continuing matters as they have been for the past thirty-five years, and speaks against any sort of new institution of rules, related to the collaborative work of the provincial and district zemstvos…I completely disagree with A. D. Samarin, that the commission proposes to maintain what has

64 Ibid., 137.
65 Ibid., 131.
been there over the course of thirty-five years. I contend that the commission’s proposal will lead to the complete opposite.”66

Only rarely did a delegate raise the question as to whether changing circumstances demanded changing conceptions of this relationship. V. V. Przheval’skii was one of those few. He opened his defense by enumerating the many changes in zemstvo life that had recently taken place, and the consequent need for reconsideration:

“When an abundant source of revenue has opened up for the provincial zemstvo (in the form of taxation of Moscow), when the district zemstvos have come to make ample use of provincial assistance and loans in the most varied spheres of local administration, when the needs of the uezd have begun to grow faster than the receipts of the provincial zemstvo, when we’ve attained the experience of many years, then it is inescapable, on the strength of inexorable logic of events, that the time has come for the provincial zemstvo to look at the path it has taken, and having summed up the past, should gather useful indicators for the future.”67

Even having made this assertion, however, Przheval’skii then backed away from it. Echoing the other supporters of the commission’s report, he maintained that the resolutions introduced “nothing new” and would aid, rather than hinder, the progress of the “zemstvo task” in Moscow province.

Such a formulation could put supporters in an awkward position, forcing them to engage in verbal gymnastics to press their case that the conclusions were necessary. On the one hand, they had to assuage those who feared that the report’s conclusions portended a stark shift in province-district relations. On the other, they had to argue against those who, like the Mozhaisk assembly, argued that the report was superfluous precisely because it introduced nothing new. Thus, A. A. Averkiev began his speech by attacking the fears of subordination to the provincial zemstvo, and contended that “Nothing new is being presented now, everything will remain as

66 Ibid., 149.
67 Ibid., 144-145.
before.”68 Just as the speakers articulated an idealized vision of zemstvo progress, so too did they use idealistic and elevated language to characterize the existing relationship between the province and the district. Speakers on both sides expressed the certainty that the achievements of the Moscow zemstvo were due to a spirit of comity between district and province. G. I. Kristi went one step farther, contending that the true model for the relationship was not just amity, but fraternity:

“…there are two ways to help: one, brotherly, the other, as a creditor to his debtor. If a younger brother turns to his older brother for help in obtaining those funds that he lacks, then the older brother, offering help, can dictate the date of repayment, but may not exercise coercion against the person of his younger brother. If he, having given help, were to say, that in such a case the entire affair should be left to his management, were to go into all sorts of details of the matter and demand their fulfillment, then that would be coercion against the person of his younger brother. These sorts of relationships will be established between the provincial and district zemstvos, if the former works out detailed rules to manage the districts when they take out loans. But if the provincial zemstvo, in giving a loan to the uezd, allows it to act according to its own reasoning and council, then such a loan would truly be brotherly help.”69

Despite the specific policy disagreements, no one would argue openly with Kristi’s conception of the relationship between the two levels of power. The notion of an interaction based on the rule of law, rather than principles of charity and brotherhood, seemed antithetical to the very principles of the “zemstvo task.” N. F. Zograf, in one of several speeches opposing the commission’s work, gave voice to the fear that seemed to undergird much of the discussion (in part because of the diversity of the province): “If these rules are to work out the narrow details, I very much fear, that we will then fall into bureaucratism, I greatly fear, that then there will be no need for a zemstvo…there is no chronic illness more difficult than bureaucratism…”70 Like most of his fellow delegates on both sides of the issue, Zograf is unable to articulate the specific

68 Ibid., 153. Aver’kiev then pivoted and conceded that the new standards would, in fact, “change a little bit” the standards for distributing assistance funds to the uezdy.
69 Ibid., 125-126.
70 Ibid., 130.
point at which brotherly dealings become bureaucratic. Yet, he is quite sure of the danger that it poses should the zemstvo fall too far into its clutches. The surprise comes not from the invocations against bureaucracy—a common enough target—but from the apocalyptic language that he uses. Bureaucratism is not merely a danger to be avoided, but rather a chronic illness, and its very appearance would mean the end of the zemstvo.

As we know from Shipov’s discussion, however, all was not perfect in the province-district relationship, and some orators took it upon themselves to carefully highlight the difficulties that had occurred over the preceding several years (while, of course, exercising care to underscore their great respect for the district zemstvos as a whole). A number of supporters were quick to point out issues that had developed in previous years, illuminating problematic aspects with the current arrangements. In fact, the very treatment of the committee’s report became grist for the mill. Some delegates cited the responses as definitive proof of their lack of fitness to address the issue. M. P. Shchepkin highlighted the fact that several of the uezdy had considered the report in desultory or even negligent fashion. In the previous year’s debate, he had sided with the narrow majority in deciding to send the report to the district assemblies, in the hopes that this decision would allow them to add their considerable local insights. But, as he put it, “a year went by, and that hope went unanswered. In their reports, the district assemblies didn’t present anything factual, anything tangible; they didn’t present any sort of local data, on the basis of which we might be able to make some sort of firm, unshakeable conclusion. Two district zemstvos rejected all the conclusions of the committee, considering them harmful for the independence of the uezd zemstvos, but they didn’t show any proof to back up this assertion…”

\[71\] Ibid., 172.
In his ensuing discussion, Shchepkin indicated that he did not believe that all was well in province-district relationships. “They [the district zemstvos] propose to remain under the currently existing order; under which, every year we have to hear objections, protests against various proposals, resolutions from the provincial assembly, denouncing the effort to interfere in the local district zemstvo life. These protests are heard from those zemstvos that are now proposing to remain under the current order.”

Certainly, a number of the principal antagonists were motivated by their regional preferences on the issue. Ger’e acknowledged as much in his opening statement. Speaking as a city delegate and a resident of Moscow proper, he alluded to the recent decision subjecting city holdings to zemstvo taxation, and argued that the city needed guarantees that its money would be well spent. He also argued that economic considerations, in fact, drove most of the responses to the commission’s report: “The uezdy that are generally weaker in economic circumstance supported the resolutions worked out by the commission, and reckless attacks on them were presented by only two districts, which could get by without and sort of help on the part of the provincial zemstvo and would feel much less of the encumbrance from them.”

It was apparently lost on Ger’e that, as a resident of the city of Moscow, his perspective was no less biased than those he attached. In an event, an accumulation of evidence suggests that he may have been overbroad in assigning strictly economic motives to the various actors debating the issue. Kristi pointed out as much, arguing that Gere’s formulation was overly reductionist: “As is seen from the report, Bogorod uezd was in favor of it, and it’s the richest district of the province, [while] Mozhaisk was opposed, and it is one of the poorest. Thus, to

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72 Ibid., 172.
73 Ibid., 120. Given the range of reactions to the report on the part of the district zemstvos (see above, p. --), it is not entirely clear which two assemblies Ger’e was referring to.
suggest that the district assemblies were guided by this principle would be mistaken.”

Likewise, the most vehement advocates on each side of the debate did not always line up with the districts they represented. Kristi was from Dmitrovsk, where the board had supported the report but the assembly had opposed it. Even that opposition, however, was because it considered the commission superfluous, not because it echoed Kristi’s dire predictions about the effects of adoption. Similarly, Zograf, also an opponent was a long-serving delegate from Ruza district, where both the board and the assembly had expressed support for the commission’s recommendations. And, as we have seen, there were numerous instances of disagreement between district boards and their assemblies on the treatment of the commission’s report. In sum, it is clear that opinions on this matter were shaped by far more than regional loyalty; political ideals also played a major role.

As the objections mounted, a number of delegates followed Sheremetev’s lead proposing compromise language, in the hopes that doing so would lead to a report that could be agreed upon by all. F. F. Kokoshkin, for instance, began his proposal by expressing support for the work of the commission, but was concerned that the wording of points 4 and 7 had engendered such significant opposition. As such, he proposed an addition to the commission’s list of conclusions:

“The Moscow provincial assembly, having accepted the resolutions of the report, expresses certitude that both its composition and the general direction of its prior activities eliminate the possibility of a fear, that the rules it has compiled regarding disbursement of loans and aid will take on the character of an unreasonable regulation, weakening the independence of action of the uezd zemstvos.”

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74 Ibid., 124.
75 Delegates’ districts and time in service are taken from Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo, Moskovskoe Gubernskoe Zemstvo v poluvkevovuiu godovshchinu osnovania zemskikh uchrezhdenii 1864-1914 (Moscow: A. A. Lebenson, 1915).
76 Materialy, 146-7.
Like Sheremetev, however, Kokoshkin saw his proposal fall on deaf ears, as he was unable to develop enough support for a change of course.

Shortly thereafter, the chairman declared the general debate concluded and moved to a discussion of the individual points of the committee’s report. In the interim, however, M. P. Shchepkin took the floor and presented an alternate list of resolutions. His conclusions, fourteen in number, in many ways echoed the principles of the existing report, but he also included several points that had been adopted by the Bogorod zemstvo. Shchepkin made it clear that he respected the work that had been done by the commission, but argued that his new formulations were “more concrete, more palpable, accessible to all, and would in no way overthrow the existing order.”\(^{77}\) Ger’e, however, rebuffed this proposal, telling Shchepkin that his formulations had “far greater wordiness and greater inconsistency” than the carefully-worded proposals he sought to replace.\(^{78}\) Ger’e pointed out that zemstvo convention dictated that a report would first be voted on before any substitute resolutions would be offered. On behalf of the committee, he declined to accept Shchepkin’s proposed substitutions, and the voting commenced.

The resolutions that had attracted little attention remained non-controversial. A. N. Sazonov pointed out that the first resolution was merely a restatement of current law, and proposed that it be combined with the second. This proposal met with no objections, and the combined paragraph was approved unanimously.

The third point (now the second) also passed unanimously, though an interesting exchange prior to the vote suggests disputes still bubbling under the surface. G. I. Kristi, one of the delegates generally opposed to the commission, proposed that the text be amended to read “Upon allocation of its activities” rather than “Upon allocation of its funds.” Though

\(^{77}\) Ibid., 174.
\(^{78}\) Ibid., 177.
Muromtsev protested that such a formulation was “too general.” Ger’e declared that he had no objections to it, but “feared to deserve the reproach” from Shchepkin, namely that the commission was working only on academic problems. Kristi refused, and the vote went forward in the original format.79

The fourth conclusion had been the most controversial throughout the district zemstvo discussions and the general debate, and it was to be the same in the final discussion. To recap, the original language of the codicil held that “For the realization of the aforementioned task the provincial zemstvo should be guided by a considered, systematic plan and by specified rules, adherence to which it may require from the districts, as a precondition of the funds given to them.” Ger’e, acting on a suggestion by M. V. Dukhovskoi, presented a revised version of the codicil. “For the realization of the aforementioned task the provincial zemstvo should be guided by a considered, systematic plan and should give out various means of assistance from the provincial means only under the maintenance of conditions, established by rules worked out by the provincial zemstvo assembly related to the designation and expenditure of these assistances.”80

This version deleted any reference to withholding support from the uezdy, yet it remained controversial. Under this formulation, the provincial zemstvo was still to be guided only by its own dictates in developing the plans for its assistance. There is, in fact, no mention of the district zemstvo at all, and thus no suggestion that their input should be included in establishing reasonable rules for the expenditure of funds.

To ease fears, A. A. Averkiev proposed an explanatory note to be appended to the codicil, as follows: “In the rules, general plans, and basic decrees worked out by the provincial

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79 Ibid., 180.
80 Ibid., 181-2
zemstvo, there should not be overly-detailed regulation that could put them [the rules, plans, and decrees] in non-agreement with the local conditions of the districts.” Ger’e argued that such a formulation was unnecessary, because the resolutions already required the consent of the district zemstvos, and they could simply refuse to endorse any plan they considered to be too detailed.

Despite these assurances, a number of delegates pressed for the inclusion of Averkiev’s formulation, and Zograf even contended that he could not support the resolution without the new addition. The commission’s supporters held fast, and insisted that the vote on Averkiev’s addition could take place only after the assembly had voted Ger’e’s version by itself. This gamble worked, and the revised fourth codicil passed by a narrow margin. Twenty-four delegates voted against it, presumably echoing Zograf’s fear that a codicil without Aver’kiev’s addition was not sufficient. Immediately afterward, however, the additional note passed with no additional debate.

The fifth and sixth resolutions also passed without opposition or comment. The seventh and final codicil (what would be the sixth in the final report), despite the significant prior discussion, did not engender any further debate. Like the other controversial passage, it passed in the face of significant opposition, receiving 27 ‘nay’ votes on its way to passage. According to traditional rules of order, the assembly would have then turned to Kokoshkin’s proposed amendment. However, he declared that the Averkiev amendment was sufficient for his purposes, and declined to pursue it further. At long last, the assembly had finished its work.

81 Ibid., 182-3.
82 Ibid., 183.
83 Ibid., 186. The minutes do not list the total number of votes in favor of the proposal, but given the attendance information provided on p. ---, we would anticipate no more than seventy or so delegates casting votes.
84 Ibid., 186. It is worth pausing for a moment to consider the significance of the number of ‘nay’ votes on the two controversial resolutions. One might argue that there was a notable minority opposed to the project as a whole, given that the resolutions garnered twenty-four and twenty-seven ‘nay’ votes, respectively. Remember, too, that twenty-seven was the number of votes opposed to sending the report to the uezdy for consideration.
85 Ibid., 186.
After the vote on the final point, Shipov asked for the opportunity to address the delegates. He delivered a valedictory address of sorts, thanking the assembly for its work, and assuring the representatives that their actions would lead to a brighter future for the zemstvos of Moscow province. Undoubtedly mindful of Chicherin’s criticisms, Shipov went on to emphasize the significance of the commission’s work for zemstvo activists well beyond Moscow’s borders:

The question of the mutual relations of the provincial and district zemstvos not only has outstanding significance in the zemstvo life of Moscow province, but in fact the further successful development of the zemstvo task in general will undoubtedly depend on the correct resolution of this question. The question of mutual relations of the provincial and district zemstvos, which has come up more or less in all zemstvo provinces, has risen quite sharply in Moscow province, because nowhere has the mutual work of the provincial and district zemstvos had such broad development, as in Moscow province.\(^86\)

Concluding, Shipov returned once again to a familiar point of emphasis—that sense of unity that he considered a hallmark for all those who shared in the zemstvo’s mission: “In this sort of collaborative work of the provincial and district zemstvos and particularly in the mutual agreements between them, concessions in the details will be unavoidable and inescapable, but these concessions will be much the easier, than penetrates into the zemstvo’s midst a consciousness of the need for unity of zemstvo people, a consciousness of the necessary solidarity in the social task.”\(^87\)

At the suggestion of the assembly’s chairman, the session concluded with a round of applause for the commissioners.

For Shipov, the work of the commission and the approval of the final report represented a great success. Reflecting in his autobiography, he expresses pride in the achievements of the commission, and the level of approbation accorded to him as its instigator:

\(^86\) Ibid., 187. It is interesting to note that Shipov repeatedly emphasizes that the decision was made by a “majority” in the assembly, rather than simply referring to the zemstvo as a whole. This may be a simple acknowledgement on his part that the support for the commission’s work was by no means unanimous, but it might also be a way of suggesting to his opponents that they must throw their lot in with the collective decision—perhaps a prelude to his discussion of zemstvo unity (see below).

\(^87\) Ibid., 188.
“The principled settling of the question in the provincial had a not-small influence on the elucidation of that important question of zemstvo life in the general consciousness of the zemstvo environs and was beneficially reflected in the practical sphere, in the relations of the district zemstvos to the provincial. In the time of my long activity in the provincial board there arose various disagreements with the uezd boards, but in general relations with the uezd zemstvos took on a more balanced character, a character of greater striving for unity.”

For validation, Shipov cited a later conversation with N.F. Rikhter, the chairman of the Moscow Uezd Zemstvo Board. “N.F. said that previously in the zemstvo assembly there had more than once been speeches on the mutual relationships between provincial and uezd zemstvos, and at the root of this questions were various disagreements and “roughness” (sherokhovatost’), but in recent times there were no misunderstandings, there were no speeches about any sort of efforts on the part of the provincial zemstvo to encroach on the independence of the districts and in conclusion, N. F., speaking on behalf of himself and his colleagues, thanked me for my actions and expressed certainty, that I would remain in the position of board chairman for many years to come.”

Shipov’s conclusion is quite interesting. Though he and his supporters expressed the certainty that the committee’s discussions were merely theoretical, he clearly takes pride in the sense that the commission had a positive impact on the zemstvo. That evidence of that positive impact, however, came not from increased productivity, or more stringent accounting of revenues, but from a diminution of discord in assembly meetings. To say the least, given the vast attention he had given to the issue over the preceding seven years, Shipov’s final standard set a rather low bar for success.

**Conclusion**

89 Despite his rather prominent position, Rikhter had been quite reserved during the debate in the zemstvo. He took to the floor only once, and reiterated the position of the Moscow district board that the commission was unnecessary, though many of its points were valid.
Officially, of course, this debate settled nothing. As was underscored by even its most ardent supporters, the proposal was meant to establish the theoretical basis for action, rather than and could not be cited as binding precedent for future zemstvo actions. In any event, the report, in both its draft and final versions, expresses a set of general principles with plenty of leeway for divergent interpretations. Thus, in assessing the evolution of the uezd-guberniia relationship in the wake, it is difficult to discern whether the work of the commission had a measurable impact. In the ensuing years, Moscow continued to be among the more centralized zemstvos, measured in terms of the provincial expenditures as a portion of overall zemstvo spending. However, we do see a slight decline in the provincial government’s overall role. In 1903, provincial expenditures were a full 45.2 percent of all zemstvo outlays in Moscow province. This figure dropped to 43.7 percent in 1906, and 39.6 percent in 1910.90 One might therefore conclude that Shipov’s efforts had the effects of tightening the ship, so to speak, such that the district zemstvos became slightly more inclined to raise funds themselves rather than to seek provincial assistance.

In any event, the question of mutual relations between province and district was always about more than simple financial accounting. This debate serves as a window into the ways in which the Moscow zemstvo delegates conceived of the current state of relations between the province and the district. In many ways, this issue was clearly contentious. The actions of Shipov and his colleagues since taking office had clearly engendered some concerns, to the point that he considered resignation to be a real possibility. Moreover, the reactions to the proposals on the part of the various district actors show the wide variety of opinion on this issue. We see narrow votes, lots of dissenting opinions, and vetoes of district boards—all of which were rather rare on the zemstvo world of the time. The final debate in the provincial assembly revealed a

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90 Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1903 god (Petrograd: N. Ia. Stoikovoi, 1908); Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1906 god (Petrograd: N. Ia. Stoikovoi, 1909); Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1910 god (Petrograd: N. Ia. Stoikovoi, 1912).
similar level of attention, interest, and contestation. Ardent advocates on both sides spent two
days of meetings contesting the matter from every angle and viewpoint, and forecast dire
consequences if their particular viewpoint were not adopted. Clearly, the matter was of more
than theoretical interest to them.

Yet, despite the contention, we find that delegates on both sides of the debate maintained
a stubborn adherence to tried-and-true formulations of the zemstvo task. The striking appeal of
the notion of an unbroken zemstvo tradition stretching back to 1864 forced advocates to couch
their arguments in a language of preservation, not change. Similarly, convention necessitated
that delegates speak in laudatory terms about the relationship between province and district, and
downplay any notion that the two levels of zemstvo authority could reasonably be at odds.
Indeed, this phenomenon serves as a strong predictor that Shipov’s idealism would emerge
triumphant. The similarity in their rhetoric had masked larger gaps in the conceptualization of
the zemstvo mission, and the appropriate steps to take going forward. This supposedly
“theoretical” exercise had revealed to all how deep the fault lines truly were.
Conclusion

This dissertation has attempted to develop a sense of the genesis, characteristics, and evolution of the political culture of local self-government in Russia during the last half-century before the Revolution of 1917. As always, the historical data is not complete, nor does it all point irreversibly in one direction. Nevertheless, the material assembled here allows us to make several conclusions about the nature of this political culture, and to posit several speculative explanations to account for its growth and development.

Section 1 of the dissertation argues that the institutional apparatus and the political culture of local self-government combined to create the conditions for a particular model of leadership. On the institutional side, voters were isolated from the decision-makers by a multi-tiered elections process, while potential office-seekers were dissuaded by the level of work and the limited pay for their labor. As such, voters were often not presented with much of an option in picking their leaders. Moreover, even when there were more candidates than seats, many of the delegates simply voted for all candidates, essentially declining to express any preference at all.¹

Even after election, delegates did not stay long in office. The vast majority of them left after one or two terms, leaving a small coterie as the only source of institutional continuity in the upper echelons of zemstvo operations. Though these longer-tenured delegates were more likely to wind up in the leadership ranks, they did not take every seat available. As a consequence, it was not uncommon for those relatively new to zemstvo service to accede to prominent positions in their first terms in office.

¹ From this viewpoint, one is hard-pressed to suggest that the re-apportionment of delegates in the zemstvo “counter-reform” of 1892 was a particularly damaging blow to zemstvo independence.
As we see from the consideration of zemstvo leadership in action, even the elected delegates were circumspect in fulfilling their duties. For the most part, the assembly tended to delegate decision-making on particular issues to the board, the relevant standing committees, or to specially-established temporary committees and commissions. Although the recommendations from these bodies could be contested, more often than not they passed without objection. Additionally, the committees themselves showed a rather significant imbalance in participation, with a small number of assembly members demonstrating a high level of engagement, while the vast majority served on few (if any) zemstvo committees.

The combination of these two interrelated elements of the political culture (irregular political engagement at the electoral level, followed by irregular engagement by the delegates themselves) created a model whereby a small leadership cadre was able to develop its own preferences for administration with little interference from competing parties or the public at large. Such a picture becomes even more plausible when we consider the relatively hands-off role played by the central government in the process of local administration. Like the local organs themselves, the various bureaus charged with supervising the zemstvos and city dumas demonstrated a political culture that emphasized consensus and comity, rather than ideological discord. They certainly had their hands full hearing petitions, complaints, and allegations of illegality, but whenever possible chose to exercise restraint when conflict arose. The governor, who served as chairman of these committees, was quick to exercise his prerogative for raising issues for debate, but rarely pressed for wholesale overhaul of local initiatives. Consequently, the local officials who made up a minority on the committee were generally deferential to the governor’s leadership, only rarely voting to overturn his initial objections.
In consequence, then, we would expect to find a significant degree of variation among the local organs, both in terms of the overall level of financial activity in their respective areas and the level of attention to particular areas of focus. A statistical analysis of city and zemstvo finances in Part II of this study largely confirms this hypothesis. It is true that we see significant variation among the various organizations of Penza and Moscow, and between the two provinces as a whole. In Penza, the highest-spending towns (on a per-resident basis) outstripped their counterparts by a factor of four. Among the zemstvos of Penza and Moscow, the variance was two to one or higher. And, despite a general convergence in budget priorities over the course of the zemstvo era, the relative proportions still varied significantly at the close of the nineteenth century. For instance, the Penza districts spent anywhere from seven to twenty-six percent of their overall budget on education 1903, in Moscow, the range was between twenty-six and forty-two percent.2

What is surprising, however, is that these tendencies were remarkably tenuous. City spending patterns showed essentially no relationship to patterns for the surrounding districts, calling into question the possibility of a common and consistent political culture in a particular sub-region. Even more significantly, districts that showed a high overall commitment to spending, or to certain action areas in particular, were unable to maintain this level for any significant period of time. The correlation was tenuous only a few years later, and essentially nonexistent within a decade. If this trend is replicated through further research for other provinces and districts, it would call into question some of our primary assumptions about the driving forces behind local priorities.

Some explanation for this phenomenon can come from the patterns of election and tenure that we characterized above. Although the zemstvo offered a relatively easy route to public

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2 *Dokhody i raskhody zemstv 34-kh gubernii po smetam na 1903 god.*
office for those willing to serve, for most it did not offer sufficient incentive to stay in office for long. Though Dmitri Naumov and Aleksei Beketov, the two original chairmen in our respective provinces, were remarkably long-serving, tenures such as theirs were overwhelmingly the exception rather than the rule. At the district level in particular, consistency in office was a rarity. As such, it is perhaps not surprising that this irregularity in tenure then contributed to irregularity in taxation and spending habits. The high levels of deference encouraged a political culture in which the preferences of the individual leaders had more impact than the traditions of the locality.3

This phenomenon comes into sharper focus when examining the particularities of interactions among the organs of local self-government (Part III). To a surprising degree, the duma and zemstvo did not make use of the options afforded them for collaboration, nor did they develop regular parameters for managing their interconnected responsibilities. This tendency even persisted within the zemstvos themselves. The authorizing legislation had used rather expansive language in its articulation of the relationship between the provincial zemstvos and the district bodies that made it up. The uezd organs were to act “independently,” yet the provincial organ had the authority to issue mandatory decrees to govern their operations. Moreover, delegates from the city or the countryside wore two hats in the provincial assembly, purporting to represent the interests both of their particular constituency and of the province as a whole. It is little wonder, then, that confusion resulted. As the zemstvo’s activities increased, so too did the significance of the provincial assembly in the overall operations. This intervention ineluctably raised questions about the redistribution of resources from one area to another, and the

3 Admittedly, there are any number of other factors that may have contributed to these variations, and further study will help assess the significance of each.
obligations and limitations on local government when assisting those areas that were less well off.

In the concluding chapters of this work, I studied a number of cases in which Moscow zemstvo delegates wrestled with these problems. In short sequence, they debated the appropriateness of zemstvo taxation of city property. Although the countryside ultimately won out on the first issue, and the provincial centralists won out on the second, the problems raised and the contentious sparring among the delegates reveal the gulf in understanding among the parties. Despite precedent from prior years and other provinces, the delegates could not agree on a common framework for understanding the tasks of local administration.

This, in fact, is perhaps the central conundrum of the political culture of the zemstvos we have studied, and perhaps the zemstvos as a whole. For the most part, despite the unquestioned enthusiasm of their leaders, they did not develop enduring institutional patterns of behavior. We might posit any number of reasons for this failure. Certainly, the central government bears some responsibility for its attempt to harness the benefits of local initiative without allowing a full measure of independence—in other words, its desire to have its cake and eat it too. But, we might also cite the lack of material incentives for officeholders, the strictures on such conventional democratic functions as partisan voting or campaign promises, and the multi-tiered separation between constituents and their representatives. One might even go so far as to mention the oft-repeated assertion about Russia’s underdeveloped civil society. Whatever the reason, it may safely be said that Russia’s new institutions of local self-government were on the whole unable to form coherent, distinctive, and lasting principles to guide their future actions.
Further Study

The issues raised in this dissertation offer a contribution to ongoing questions in Russian, European, and comparative historiography, and in so doing raise questions for further research and analysis.

Most narrowly, one might explore more broadly the significance of these conclusions for our understanding of local self-government in Russia and of the zemstvo in particular. The material gathered here suggests a significant variation between the various zemstvos and city dumas in our case study provinces in their levels of taxation and their funding priorities. As such, it clearly underscores the recent trend towards more attention to regional particularity in the historiography of Russia. The evidence, however, goes a little farther than do these recent works of regional history. First, the substantial variation between districts argues against a consistent political culture even within a single provincial apparatus, and thus our studies must be even more narrow in their focus. Second, the priorities of these organs fluctuated with a fair amount of regularity, suggesting that individuals, rather than institutions, can explain the choices made.⁴

In turn, this argues for a closer examination of the particular model of leadership that was on display in Penza and Moscow. If, indeed, this model of short tenures and powerful leaders was replicated elsewhere, it would be possible to analyze it for the entirety of European Russia. By correlating data about the tenure of individual leaders with the spending patterns of the zemstvo organs, one could ascertain more clearly the full impact of this particular political culture on local life. A collaborative database of financial, electoral, and other zemstvo statistics

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⁴ Steven Nafziger has begun to explore these questions using the material from the MVD’s. See Steven Nafziger, “Did Ivan’s Vote Matter? The Political Economy of Local Elections in Tsarist Russia.” European Review of Economic History, Volume 15, Issue 3, 393-441. He argues that there are correlations between levels of spending on certain priorities and certain endemic conditions within the districts.
would be a valuable contribution to historical study, but the resources required are beyond the capacity of this dissertation.

More broadly, this information can recast our understanding of the development of Russian society and politics in the decades leading up to the Revolutions of 1917. In the ongoing debate about the state of civil society in late Imperial Russia, the evidence here seems to offer a mixed verdict.5 On the one hand, we see a number of factors that argue for a reasonably well-developed civil society. The zemstvos held elections, conducted business, and were able to regularly increase their expenditures on social projects. And, despite disagreements with the central government over a number of issues of policy (and a number of petty issues as well), the zemstvos and city dumas established a functional working relationship with the tsarist regime. From this point of view, the experience of local self-government could have served as a crucible for the democratic traditions needed to maintain a stable civic order.

On the other hand, the relative small leadership cadre and the isolation of that cadre from the voters argues for a civil society sphere that was confined to a narrow sector of society, and one that emphasized comity over debate. In turn, one might surmise that this particular political culture shaped political liberalism in the post-1905 period. We see numerous signs that leading Duma politicians were unable or unwilling to relate to their constituents, and failed to react accordingly to public opinion.6 It seems quite plausible to argue that the political culture of zemstvo democracy contributed to these tendencies. However, this is a plausible explanation, not yet fully proved. In order to establish this link on firmer ground, one would more closely

5 It was a hotly-debated question of the time as to whether the zemstvos and city dumas should be considered organs of the central government, so one may be left to wonder whether their practices should rightly be described as a component of “civil society.”

6 The most obvious examples are the overly confident reaction to the elections to the First Duma (a victory brought on more by the leftist boycott than by actual policy agreement) and the stasis of the Provisional Government after February 1917.
examine the particular backgrounds of those zemtsy who were elected to Duma office, and ascertain if their zemstvo service demonstrated a similar political culture.\textsuperscript{7}

The third area of study is a further attempt to incorporate Russia into transnational narratives related to local self-government, both within Europe and worldwide. This dissertation has highlighted a number of factors that were particularly significant in the political culture of local self-government in European Russia. It remains to ascertain whether these factors mark a similarity to or a departure from norms in other areas of the world.

For various reasons (linguistic difficulties, the sense of Russian “separateness,” and the differences in political outcomes), scholars have been reluctant to include Russia in a larger comparative context.\textsuperscript{8} Many of these reasons are debatable, but even then they should not apply to the practices of local self-government in the nineteenth century. As electoral organs with taxation power and discrete responsibilities, the zemstvos and city dumas should be recognized as one component of a larger transnational narrative associated with democratization and increased state activism in social welfare.

Even more significantly, this is a worthy goal because the zemtsy themselves were quite aware of the models offered by their counterparts in Western Europe and elsewhere. Earlier, we noted N. F. Zograf’s predictions of doom should the Moscow zemstvo follow in the footsteps of France and (allegedly) subsume the independence of the district zemstvos under the authority of the provincial organ. For Zograf and others, this “bureaucratism” would mark the downfall of

\textsuperscript{7} One might also consider correlation studies relative to the regional particularity mentioned above, to see if Duma elections and Duma delegates showed the same tendencies as the zemstvos in the same districts.

\textsuperscript{8} One welcome recent exception is David Hoffman’s \textit{Cultivating the Masses}, in which he situates Stalinist policies in a larger European context of aggressive efforts to mobilize the population through demographic measures and other means. See David L. Hoffman, \textit{Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914-1939} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).
the zemstvo movement, and any inclinations in that direction were to be avoided at all costs.

Boris Chicherin echoed this notion in one of his discussions of the city-zemstvo split:

“In that relationship we have the same thing that occurred in France. There the old monarchy developed a type of bureaucratic administration, which made its imprint on all of the life that followed. The monarchy fell, in its place arose the Jacobins, inspired by completely different principles, but they too with frenzy were accepted to administer and regulate everything. Napoleon took the place of the Jacobins, but under him the same sort of system continued, as had prevailed up to that point. Contemporary Frenchmen bitterly complain about the fact that the bureaucratic spirit has entered into their flesh and blood; each man strives to government service, and self-government, notwithstanding the almost anarchic freedom, has merely withered on weak foundations.”

For Chicherin, these precedents carried an obvious lesson for the Moscow zemstvo. The imposition of what he saw as a more bureaucratic-minded approach (such as that favored by the members of the commission), as opposed to a more strictly local mindset, would undermine the very principles on which local self-government was allegedly based.

Dmitri Shipov, in his defense of the commission’s work, argued for a consideration of England as a more appropriate exemplar. He cited the English school law of 8 August 1870, which guaranteed an additional government subsidy in the case that local taxes could not provide sufficient schooling. In his view, this was an ideal application of the balanced relationship between strictly local initiatives and broader supervision.

One is struck not only by the particularities of their disagreement, but by the fact that both sought to base their conclusions on referents from beyond Russia’s borders. Nor are these references an isolated phenomenon. The zemstvo minutes and commentary are replete with references to developments in other countries, which (depending on the situation) offered hopeful prospects or dire warnings for would-be reformers.

Thus, a comparative analysis might expand on any number of the following elements, related to the three principal questions raised in this dissertation:

9 Chicherin, Voprosy Politki, 105.
10 Shipov, K Voprosu..., 46.
11 See John Corcoran, “Mandates from Above and Models from Abroad,” Russian History (forthcoming).
First, one might consider the distinctive nature of zemstvo leadership in Russia—or, indeed, whether those leadership patterns are distinct at all. One might well argue that Russia was not the only country in which democratic bodies of local self-government led to a situation in which local elites held substantial control, faced minimal opposition during campaigns for re-election, and thus were able to act with minimal intervention from voters or outside forces. The example of England in the 19th century seems particularly salient here, as an increased democratization allowed voters an opportunity to participate alongside long-entrenched elites. On the surface, at least, the patterns of deference appear to be similar. Additionally, one might address this problem from the perspective of the voters themselves, in which case Imperial Germany serves as an appropriate point of comparison. There is a substantial literature examining the Reichstag elections for evidence of voter inclinations during a period of limited democratic activity preceding an authoritarian takeover.

Second, one might consider the patterns related to spending. In particular, the zemstvo records open the door to a cross-national comparison of the development of welfare programs in the nineteenth century. This is another area in which scholars have vied away from including Russia in trans-national narratives. Because the expansion of social spending was authorized, but not mandated, by the central government, it becomes more difficult to incorporate the

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zemstvo into a narrative that leads to the development of the welfare state in the post-WWII period. Nevertheless, the Russian experience clearly parallels the developments occurring in Europe at this point.

Third, the rather idealistic political culture evidenced in chapters 6 and 7 would also form an interesting point of contrast with Russia’s counterparts elsewhere. On this issue, however, it seems that Russia stands unique. The zemstvo reform authorized the creation of a new electoral body with a broad financial and programmatic mandate. In turn, the early years of zemstvo operations were marked by a meteoric rise in social activism and a sense that ever more could be accomplished. To my knowledge, this process is almost entirely without precedent in the European experience. It seems likely that this process would also go a long way to explaining the particular zemstvo idealism evident in this dissertation. After a long period of dormancy with no real outlet for social action, idealistic local elites were given ample authority and responsibility. For several decades thereafter, they were able to realize many of their most ambitious goals with little in the way of institutional restraint, either from the voters or from the central government. Because their development occurred quite rapidly, rather than evolving over decades or even centuries, the zemstsy had only a short period of time to accommodate their idealist, almost messianic self-conception to the mundane realities of government. Conflict was the inevitable result.

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On the heels of successful zemstvo action during the First World War, the February Revolution brought the hopes of further expansion of the spheres of responsibility for the local
organizations. Most significantly, zemstvo delegates lobbied for the establishment of a zemstvo at the volost’ level, in the hopes of entrenching their model of self-government even more firmly in the countryside. The October Revolution, of course, put an end to these dreams, and ushered in an entirely new mode of local administration. Consequently, we are left merely to speculate about what might have been had the Bolsheviks not cut off any chance for further development and evolution.

Certainly, there are reasons to feel optimistic. The dedication of the most devoted and engaged zemstsy is undeniable; men both modest and notable engaged in consistent efforts to improve the life of the cities and countryside. The overwhelming conclusion is that their endeavors were bearing fruit. On the whole, the zemstvos and city dumas were able to continually increase the scope of their interventions. Despite supposed “setbacks” such as the counter-reform period and the period of gentry reaction in the wake of the 1905 Revolution, zemstvo and city expenditures in all jurisdictions under study demonstrated constant improvement both in real terms and when inflation and population growth are taken into account.

At the same time, the evidence also suggests that there were a number of challenges that were never truly overcome. The leadership issue never came into its own. Even as the zemstvo took on more and more areas for action, its leadership cadre did not grow at the same rate. We see a bureaucratization of city and zemstvo affairs, a continual expansion of temporary and permanent committees with oversight over particular areas.

Finances, too, remained tricky. Indeed, the very evolution of the tax collection procedures argues for a weakness in the mechanics of zemstvo funding. Particularly in the early

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decades, the instability of zemstvo tax collections meant that arrears, shortfalls, and temporary loans were a near-constant concern, particularly on the district level. The land captain legislation of 1889 was, in part, an attempt to exert more authority over the collection of taxes (zemstvo and otherwise). Even that endeavor was not entirely successful; the later zemstvo financial ledgers show that more and more of their largesse was paid out of “assistance funds” from the central government. Any plans for a post-Romanov zemstvo order would have to account for this conundrum, either through independent taxing authority or a subordination of zemstvo independence.

Perhaps even more significantly, the delegates seemed unable to articulate a resolution to some of the basic tensions of government in general, and local government in particular. When questions arose as to the responsibility of the city for the countryside, or of one side of the province for the other, the delegates could not articulate a model for administration that balanced the desire to assist poor areas through redistribution with the desire for local autonomy. Without a greater level of public engagement in these issues and these problems, the achievement of the “zemstvo task” would be a long way away indeed.
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