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Reports on Gubernia Supervision in the Paperwork System of the Second Quarter of the 19th
Century: Materials of the Orenburg Gubernia

Abstract

The article is devoted to the analysis of reports on the gubernia supervision (obozrenie) in the Russian Empire as a special type of reporting documentation, which has not been studied enough. There is comparative analysis of the supervisions of the Arkhangelsk, Vologda, and Olonets governor-general, and Olonets governors of the first quarter of the 19th century. It is concluded that they differed from the annual governor's reports and were regulated by circular law. The article attempts to trace their evolution over the second quarter of the 19th century, considering the gubernia supervision reports a kind of paperwork in the system of "general local supervision" carried out by the governor. Establishment of government inspection (reviziya) as the most important means of control over the local government occurred under Paul I. Since then, there implemented principles and mechanisms of both "higher" (Senate) and general local supervision. Supervisions, as well as Senate inspections (reviziyas), had a common program. Inspector and civil governor, when considering complaints and requests of the gubernia inhabitants, could initiate an investigation into officials' abuses to remove them from office. The reports' content coincided with problems of the most faithful governor's reports; the former, however, did not have an established form. As a rule, they were compiled either for structural divisions of local government, or thematically. Personality of the gubernia head, their interests and administrative experience are quite discernible in the reports. In comparison to annual reports, more attention was given to the governor's personal analysis and proposals. Gubernia supervision reports became an important channel of communication, through which the central government received the necessary information on the state of gubernia institutions and could evaluate the activities of the governors. Reports frequency, established by law, was not always respected; it varied with gubernias. In the first half of the 19th century gubernia supervision reports evolved from a variety of governor's reporting documentation to their inclusion in annual most faithful reports. This was the result of the government policy to unify paperwork, reduce volume of interdepartmental correspondence, and expand methods of covert supervision over local government. The evolution of the gubernia supervision reports did not change their nature.

Keywords

Source studies, paperwork, accounting documentation, gubernia supervisions, reports, revision, annual most faithful report, civil governor.

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