



About the Book by N. P. Verkhovsky «Railway Confusion». Part 3



News from the archives

The final part of the article published in two previous issues.

Let us remind that in 1910 the experienced railway manager Nikolai Petrovich Verkhovsky presented in the 8th Department of the Imperial Russian Technical Society the book «Railway Confusion» written by him, dedicated to the comprehensive solution of a wide range of pressing issues of organising the work of railways.

In the third part published in this issue, the emphasis is on the functions of the so-called local government councils within the railways and under the auspices of administrators of railways, role of the divisions of the traffic control within the railway companies and on countering the thefts and misappropriations. The speaker also commented on the organisation of the railway companies regarding the staff, and summed up his report with his main thoughts about the importance of railways.

Punctuation and vocabulary of the author are preserved in the text as much as possible. This publication exhausts the content of the report of N. P. Verkhovsky. Nevertheless, the Journal will publish in forthcoming issues extracts from the discussion that followed the report. Some aspects of the debates are still relevant at least from the point of view of statement of the problems.

Keywords: history, Russian railways, education, staff, management.

Verbatim report of N. P. Verkhovsky and the conversation in 8th Department of I. R. Technical Society on December 2, 1910, under the chairmanship of A. N. Gorchakov.

Chairman. – Gracious sirs! The program of Nikolai Petrovich's report is placed on the agenda. As you can see, it is very extensive, at least in terms of the number of lines it occupies.

Organisation of railway management

Organisation of local government councils. – «Non-technician» complains

about the Council of Local Road Administrations, in which representatives of the State Audit Office and the Ministry of Finance paralyze the energy of the head of the road and deprive him of proper practical performance.

«Therefore», he says, «the immediate goal of the local reform of the railways should be to create such conditions for the activity of the head of the road, under which he would really be free and independent in his orders, only then can one reasonably make the broadest demands on him

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and make him responsible for unsatisfactory performance».

I disagree with this conclusion.

Author's opinion about the councils. – I must make a reservation that, in general, in my opinion about the utility and the need for the councils, at least at this time, I completely disagree with both the «Non-Technician», and with all higher railway engineers, as well as with the commission of the State Duma.

Not embarrassed by the exclusivity and isolation of my view, going against the favorite dreams of the chiefs of roads, I take on the thankless task of proving the irrationality of abolishing the institution of the councils.

The council cannot paralyze the energy of the head of the road, if only he has it. An energetic, active, capable and authoritative head of the road, possessing spiritual power, will always be able to prove to the council the rationality of his demands. Only a leader deprived of moral strength, incapable and not authoritative, or if he does not have such negative qualities, but only a weak character, can lose moral influence on representatives of outside departments and fail to impress them. The latter the more easily impose their veto on the demands of the head of the road, the more pliant he is and the more frivolously he defends his proposals. The seriousness of the protest of the head of the road paralyzes the views of the representatives; they, for special opinions, with which they are obliged to motivate disagreements with the leaders of the road, will not find serious grounds for refusals and refrain from them.

The chiefs of roads, as chairmen of the councils, have such extensive powers as to give them, in cases of disagreement with the council, to suspend the execution of the decision of the council and appeal against it before the management committee, and in urgent cases they have the right to spend sums on their own responsibility. In such cases, of course, a sufficient supply of civic courage and self-righteousness is required. Questions are only decided collectively, but they are carried out by the sole authority of the head of the road.

The competence of the Councils. – Since the establishment of the Councils, I have served with six chiefs of roads, of which two really authoritative persons have always brought the Council to an agreement, although often after long disputes. «*C'est la force morale qui gagne les batailles*», said Napoleon.

The Council is in charge of economic and economic issues, which, with very rare exceptions, do not require haste: moreover, they can always be removed from the program for additions and changes and transferred to the next meeting. It is the official guardian of economy and economic conduct of business.

The head of the road himself is in charge of technical traffic and administrative orders without the participation of the Councils.

In the estimate of 1909, the expenditure for operation of all state-owned roads was given in the amount of 434 million, of which 41 million were allocated for new work alone. Somehow, it is even embarrassing for some persons to take on the sole responsibility for solving large monetary issues, not only in order to avoid mistakes, but even criticism – in a possible predilection.

Before the establishment of the Councils, complaints were constantly heard about various irregularities in the delivery of contracts, and there were even accusations of dishonesty. All this, with the establishment of the Councils, ceased, since for contractors of all kinds, the collegial decision of their affairs represents much greater guarantors of impartiality and justice than the sole one – by one head of the road according to the report of the head of the service. The practical, many-sided criticism to which economic questions are subjected in the Council protects them from the risk of hasty and subjective decisions.

The Councils saved the chiefs of roads from complaints and suspicions of dishonesty.

In almost all departments, financial, economic and economic issues are resolved in the presence, in the composition of many officials and with the participation of a representative of the State Audit Office. Why should an exception be made for the Department of Railways.

The Council without the participation of representatives of departments is one fiction that has no meaning, since not a single head of service will dare to object to an authoritative head of the road if he wishes to decide matters at his own discretion and under the pressure of his ferula. Such a family Council would be a ridiculous sham institution.

The question of the abolition of the Councils. – Last year in the State Duma the question of the abolition of the Councils was raised in the Duma, and they were defended only due to the persistent evidence of the Minister of Finance. Of their



composition, only one member from the Ministry of Railways was abolished, since the Minister of Railways and his comrade failed to defend their offspring, although they tried.

Unfortunately, the State Duma did not delve into the essence of the function of the Councils, identifying them with ordinary Councils, which have only advisory functions. In its own halls, harsh reviews and condemnation of the absolutism of the bureaucracy were heard, and the idea of collegial conduct of business was recommended, meanwhile, in this matter, it itself, apparently, unconsciously patronized absolutism and played into the hands of the desire for autocracy of the chiefs of roads.

The Duma sought to streamline and reduce the costs of the railways and began by wanting to abolish the collegiate institution, whose function is mainly to keep the railways from unproductive expenses, to defend the broad interests of the fiscal, against the claim to carry out the narrow interests of the Department of Railways.

In an effort to protect the state chest, it wanted to remove sentries from it.

Permanent member of the Ministry of Railways. – So far, one indispensable member from the Ministry of Railways has been reduced, which is done incorrectly, since this weakens the Ministry of Railways and the representation of its interests in the Management Council. The function of an indispensable member in the Council itself was almost exclusively pacifying, and as a neutral person who did not belong to the composition of those who spend public funds, representatives believed more than in management, and thus it was easier for the head of the road with the help of an indispensable member to conduct business and defend the interests of the road. Finally, the Minister of Railways often gave instructions to its permanent members for investigations of various kinds, and many permanent members presented detailed studies on the situation of various organisations on the roads and even made scientific investigations of the economic situation of the region of the roads in which they were part of the management. In many cases they earned their 6000 in good faith.

After the abolition of the credit for maintenance of permanent members and the abandonment of their positions, their absence from the Council was often very noticeable. Even the head of the Nikolaev road asked to leave the

representative of the Ministry of Railways for the performance of his duties without pay due to the fact that the indispensable member of the Council of the Nikolaev road was provided with a salary in another position, he willingly agreed to continue his service in the Council, which was allowed by the Minister and did not contradict the decision of the State Duma, since its credits have been destroyed, but the posts have been left.

Destruction of the Councils. – The Council is a young institution; its functions had to be developed, changed and supplemented, and not to destroy the very foundations of its existence. Inspired by the idea of cost reduction inspired by the State Duma, its speaker did not possess either the knowledge or the talent that would enable him to find really any significant articles for reduction, because of which it would be worth bothering the State Duma and break spears with the railway department. It limited itself to snatching out several posts from the general organisation of departmental institutions, without ascertaining their usefulness.

Another reduction in the cost of paying for posts, which constituted additional earnings for officials living in St. Petersburg and receiving double and triple salaries in combination, had its *raison d'être*, but the reduction in permanent members from the Ministry of Railways, that is, 120 thousand in a half-billion budget, is a trifle in financial success, as if tangible, but, in essence, bringing much greater losses that cannot be easily accounted for.

In the State Duma voices were heard about such insignificant reductions, which, by their insignificance, compromise the seriousness of the measures introduced into its life (member of the State Duma Nekrasov).

By destroying the Councils themselves, or even some representatives of the Department of Railways, the speaker, as an engineer of railways, played into the hands of his comrades in Kant, the very comrades whom he also smashed for their mismanagement, lack of system and abuse.

Inexplicable paradox. – There is some inexplicable paradox in this question. They accuse the local railway departments of mismanagement and abuse, and as a logical way out of this situation, the State Duma is recommended to abolish the Councils, as if they were founded, by their guardianship over the administration, to hinder the proper conduct of business. In my extreme understanding, such a conclusion is far from logic. The only logical

conclusion is to find and establish some defects in organisation of both institutions, that is, in the administrative and guardianship bodies. After all, the indicated abnormalities in the conduct of business existed in a more pronounced manifestation even before the Councils, where is the guarantor that the abolition of such an institution and the return to the old regime will have a beneficial effect on business?

One of the goals of the establishment of the Councils. – The establishment of the Council, among other things, was intended to bring together the services and departments in the person of the heads of services and departments, to mutually acquaint them with the activities of their colleagues, so that all leaders of the case were aware of the affairs of other services, thus achieving commonality and solidarity in the actions of the entire composition management, under the unifying and dominating influence of the head of the road, forming, as it were, a semblance of a cabinet in miniature, with the prime minister head of the road.

The project of the new organisation of the department. – According to rumors, in the project of the new organisation of the Department of Railways, the Councils were left with the participation of the chief controller and a member from the Ministry of Finance. If they go to the State Duma, with the organisation of representatives of departments not in the sense of bureaucratic screens, but in the sense of actual figures, then the question of their necessity will be finally resolved.

If, however, representatives of the State Audit Office and the Ministry of Finance are deprived of the right of veto and use only an advisory vote in the Council, these will be purely margarine Councils, devoid of any collegiate significance.

It is unlikely that the Auditor General and the Minister of Finance will agree to such an insignificant role of their representatives, dropping the prestige of these departments, not accustomed to props.

Representatives of these departments hold their banner high and are accustomed to always being real representatives who must be reckoned with, and not marginalized.

At present, the head of the road and the head of the service and departments must, with serious arguments, obtain the consent of representatives of departments to the measures they introduce to the Council, and so that their veto would not slow down the matter. With the abolition of the veto,

their deliberative voices will lose all meaning and significance, they will be the voice of one crying in the wilderness – and even worse, they will be listened to, but concretely show how much they are ignored, as if avenging their former strength. The situation will be ridiculous and insulting, and in any case unenviable for those who will have to be such representatives.

Participation in the Councils of chairmen of regional committees. – The project assumes the introduction of the chairmen of regional committees into the Management Councils, the event is almost fictitious, since in fact they are not able to fulfill their duty. There are three in Moscow, and two in St. Petersburg, local departments of state roads, therefore, the chairman of the regional committee will have to lose at least 2–3 days a week, devoting them to the activities of the Council, which, of course, it cannot do without prejudice to the committee's business.

The Eastern Committee, which has its residence in Samara, is too far from the road administrations included in its region, – Ashgabat at 3358 versts, Tomsk at 2559 versts, Perm at 1639 versts. Therefore, for one trip to these three departments, a whole month is required. Obviously, the chairman can visit the Councils of these departments no more than once a year, and such a visit, in order to take part in business, cannot have any business value.

Participation of representatives. – Invitation by the head of the roads, as the project suggests, to participate in the meetings of the Council of representatives of various public institutions, with the right of an advisory vote, in my opinion, cannot decisively have the slightest influence on the success of the management affairs. Obviously, the head of the road will invite his good acquaintances to the Councils, who will sing panegyrics to him and will not contribute anything significant to the economy of the road. Persons who could point out defects in road management will not be invited. In general, the introduction of participation in the Councils of the chairmen of regional committees, and outsiders, at the arbitrary invitation of the chiefs of roads, in my opinion, is a bad compensation – the removal of the right of veto from representatives of departments and the removal of permanent members from the Councils from the Ministry of Railways.

History of the question. – In order to clarify the actual state of affairs, it does not hurt to cast



a retrospective glance and look a little into the history of the railway business, which I will recall here in brief.

Inspection. – In the good old days, when the roads were still private and there was an inspection, which also interfered with the road managers (?), things went decently; why? – it's hard to say. But, in all likelihood, the matter itself was much simpler, and at the head of the roads stood people who had come to the fore in their organisational abilities.

The inspection was canceled, giving the manager inspector functions over the manager, or over himself, his hands were untied; but did it get any better?

Coal Committee. – Already in the eighties, difficulties in coal transportation, which independent road managers could not cope with, forced the Minister of Railways to apply for appointment of a special engineer with the highest authority to regulate coal transportation in the coal region. This engineer (V.M. Verkhovsky) organized coal transportation and organized the Kharkov Committee, which later became the prototype of the current regional committees.

Depersonalisation of rolling stock. – By the way, the same engineer, by virtue of the authority given to him, introduced depersonalisation of car rolling stock of all Russian broad-gauge roads, and the roads were finally spared from overloading goods at all transfer points, which represented an extreme difficulty in the speed of transporting goods and a lot of inconveniences that have long been recognized by all roads. But the administrations of various roads and the governors could not come to an agreement among themselves and did not decide on such a generally useful measure, the necessity of which was recognized by all. It took a sole power hand to cut at once this Gordeev knot, tightly tightened by obsolete and harmful traditions.

Such a statement of burning questions does not prove the independence of road managers and their ability to achieve solidarity among themselves in solving important basic issues and indicates the need not to leave them without authoritative employees (nannies).

General charter. – This commission developed the General Charter, which was put into effect in 1885, which laid the foundation for the regulation of the railway business and established the legal relations of the railways to their customers, i.e. passengers and cargo

owners. Road customers have the right to legally seek their losses through the court in case of violation by the roads of the rules for transportation and delivery of goods established by the General Charter, which became law.

Distribution bureaus. – Already in 1894, the formation of constant blockages of the station and the clutter of cars even of entire roads necessitated the establishment of distribution offices, which were not to the taste of the road chiefs and managers. Some of them did not even want to carry out the orders given by the heads of the distribution bureaus to send cars to the border stations.

But if the roads themselves could agree among themselves on the regularity of movement of laden cars, then there would be no need to invent special bureaus. Obviously, the existing defects in transportation, which independent chiefs and road managers were not able to eliminate by the solidarity of their actions and orders, caused an organisation that intruded into their competence.

Attorney's instructions. – Around the end of the eighties, the Minister of Railways approved an instruction for attorneys for judicial affairs of state-owned railways, developed by the railway department, which put the legal advisers of local departments in a position almost independent of the chiefs of roads. Obviously, this was done only because the chiefs of the roads, due to their tyranny, showed a tendency not to recognize the legal provision and not to take into account the opinion and conclusion of legal experts.

Such an event could not but damage the prestige of the chief of roads, but it was caused, on the one hand, by the tactless manifestation of tyranny of engineers who consider themselves universally educated and competent in solving even court cases, and on the other, to raise the authority of the legal consulate in the eyes of the chiefs of roads.

In the meantime, deficits, riots were crescendoing.

State control, councils and general assemblies. – Finally, state control was established, first subsequent, and then preliminary. Councils, general presences, and finally, in the last stage, regional committees were necessary.

District committees. – The last institution, more than any Council, tied the heads of roads, as well as managers, as they say, hand and foot, and, most importantly, tied them not in economic functions, but in purely administrative ones.

In view of the novelty of this extremely useful institution, the special sympathy for it by the Minister himself and the Railway Administration, who rightly place great hopes on it, they do not yet risk complaining about the constraint they have on the initiative of the heads of the roads; but that it really paralyzed their independence, so it does not require proof in its obviousness. In addition, the committees demand a lot of work from the roads, and the Councils only copies of reports that are typed in several copies on a typewriter and do not give extra work.

Management of private roads. – There are constant voices in the general and special press claiming that private roads are better managed than public ones. If this is true, is it not because the manager of a private road has incomparably less independence than the beginning roads. All orders, purchases and contracts with counterparties are made by the board, which is also a collegiate institution of three or four directors.

The board, having one road in its charge, establishes constant and direct communication with the administration and is aware of all the affairs of the road, and the manager consults the board on everything and asks for its permission. The appointment of all higher and even middle agents depends entirely on the will of the board, and without its consent, the manager of the road cannot dismiss any of the agents appointed by the board.

The head of the road is an authorised representative of the railway department, and the manager is only the clerk of his board.

The administration of state roads, having 40000 versts of roads in its charge, cannot communicate with the lines at all and is almost completely unaware of everything that happens on the lines. The role of the Board of private roads, in some way, is included in the functions of the Councils and an indispensable member from the Ministry of Railways on public roads.

In any case, if we consider the Councils as uninvited spies on the activities of state roads, then there are much more spies on private roads.

If the mediocrity of some road chiefs deprives them of the opportunity to fight with the members of the council, then the abolition of the latter can be mistaken for the patronage of mediocrity. Such a decision by the State Duma sins against the natural historical and economic evolution – the absorption of weak lifeless elements – by strong

viable ones. Only the triumph of absolutism glimpses in it.

It is impractical to squeeze real life into the framework of doctrinaire regulations; it won't fit in them. I am deeply convinced that in a few years the impracticality of abolishing the Councils of the former organisation will come out in bold relief and will have to, volens-nolens, move back.

Only one event can save the department from such a retrospective movement – this is a serious preparation of the chiefs of roads for their difficult activities and strict businesslike, without any influence of connections and recommendations, the selection of worthy engineers and figures who are outstanding for their talents, honesty, abilities and merits before the department and the railway deed: «*Da ist der Hund begraben*».

Railway revisions. – Having worked on the railways in the highest positions for 38 years (since 1871), I had to serve with 5 managers and 6 chiefs of roads and, unfortunately, I had to come to a conclusion that was not particularly flattering for most of them.

Attitude of managers and chiefs of roads to business. – In the old days, the roadmasters did business, or at least tried to do it quite rightly; their relationship to employees was distinguished by impartiality and even fatherly participation; in everything one could see, as it were, a consciousness of the seriousness of one's duties, there could be responsibility for one's actions, although at that time life and service were much simpler and freer, but on the other hand, everyone was somehow more conscientious about work and worked not out of fear, but for conscience (Good Old Time!!!).

Resolutions. – In recent years, such an attitude towards business and employees has been noticed, which, as it were, excludes any possibility of being liable. One has only to look at the resolutions imposed by some road chiefs on papers, reports and reports to be convinced that a lot of them are imposed on the assumption that they will never see the light of day and will not catch the eye of those who are superior or revise their activities. The assumption is absolutely correct, since none of the persons expelled from the road administration and the Ministry ever looks into internal correspondence. It is like a domestic affair, in which, as they say, the soul is wide open, and here its good and bad sides are most visible.



Office correspondence. – Meanwhile, all the senior officials of the administration and, of course, the chiefs of the roads themselves devote the greatest amount of their official time to correspondence, and it can serve as a characteristic criterion for the outlook and activities of the chief of the road and every senior employee; to look into it not only does not interfere, but it should. As long as the internal correspondence of the head of the road with the heads of services and the latter among themselves and internal office work are not subject to control or review, until then there will be no order on the roads.

I have in my portfolio many samples of various resolutions on very serious issues and cases that are not only in the field of order on the roads, but also in traffic safety, and are more suitable for humorous magazines than for serious business. Someday they will see the light and surprise it with their absurdity. During the audit, such correspondence will specifically show the unpreparedness of many senior employees and chiefs of roads to carry out the serious tasks assigned to them, and on the other hand, it will put forward capable people who for some reason remain in the shadows.

Permanent ministerial audits. – To lift the veil of such hiding places, an organisation is needed, something like senatorial audits, carried out periodically on all state roads, without any specific reason. High-ranking members of the Council of Ministers could be appointed to carry out such audits.

Audit method. – 20 public roads could be surveyed every four years, up to five roads per year. Of course, it is necessary to start the revision from those roads, behind which there are many defects.

The commissions of council members must include specialists from all services, so that the system of «rubbing points» does not take place and that the audit is carried out by the members personally, with knowledge of the matter and complete impartiality.

Persons with an impeccable past should be appointed as the chairman and members of the audit commission, so that neither society nor employees could suspect them of one-sidedness and predilection for persons within the scope of the audit. At the same time, the audit should be quite business-like – without any tendency to a police investigation.

The same audits could deal with complaints from employees and individuals about the road management.

Such an institution would have a beneficial effect on the reconciliation of society and the press with the railways and on the course of railway business, and at the same time would give the Minister a powerful key to the study of the railway Terra incognita, with all its ethnographic life and its features.

The dominant position of the traffic control service. – The traffic service is the only service that generates railway values, and the entire profitability of the road depends on the correct organisation of its activities.

Its main functions are to meet the needs of the population in transportation of passengers and goods, under the indispensable condition of the lowest costs and the greatest utilisation of rolling stock provided at its disposal.

The task is difficult, and its fulfillment depends entirely on the following conditions:

- 1) Successful selection of personnel, from the top to the bottom inclusive.
- 2) Funds provided to the service in relation to the reception, throughput and carrying capacity of the road.
- 3) Friendly cooperation of all other services, especially technical ones, in installation of permanent and temporary equipment necessary for performance and facilitation of the work of the service.

Traffic administrators. – For a long time, the positions of chiefs of the traffic service were occupied exclusively by practitioners who stood out for their diligence and ability to manage business and successfully use the rolling stock.

Thus, the traffic service, due to the lack of authority of its principles and the significant authority of the chiefs of the track, which were always engineers of the lines of communication, and subsequently the chiefs of traction, which were mostly headed by mechanical engineers, was relegated to the background and lost its real place.

Change of view on traffic service. – Recently, the view of the dominant position of the traffic service in the environment of other services has been revived again, and it is beginning to be given its due place. This is mainly facilitated by the realisation that the success of the business and profitability of the roads depend on sufficiency and convenience of the equipment necessary for correct

performance of the functions of movement, and on the diligence of its agents. The scarcity of roads forced everyone to pay serious attention to the correct operation, to elimination of unproductive costs, and mainly to productivity of rolling stock runs, its turnover and disposal. The damage caused to the state economy forced me to take up arithmetic and learn how to count, extending this calculation to all sectors available for accounting.

Raising the prestige of the traffic service was greatly helped by the Management Councils, in which the representatives of the traffic service were equal among three main services and *«began to dare to have their own opinion»*, and, moreover, quite openly and officially. They even have the right to submit dissenting opinions.

An authoritative position is won back by the heads of movement with their personal desire and energy: but this is not enough, it is necessary to regulate this issue and de jure put them in a dominant position. The cause itself and its interests beg for it; one must go with the current demands of the interests of agriculture, industry and trade, which in this case are in solidarity with the interests of roads.

Let's take even the domestic business of management: at the head, all services and departments have reports once, many times twice a week; only the head of traffic has a daily mandatory report, and in hot times, so his meetings with the head of the road are even more frequent and longer. This means that the whole essence of the matter is in the orders for movement, and the head of the road should be most interested in them. Finally, a lot of general orders in the interests of the traffic service must be made by the head himself or the manager of the road, and all of them are prepared only by the head of traffic and his office.

Nine-tenths of all the requests of the Ministry and the Road Administration, with which the head of the road is bombarded during the hot time of heavy traffic on the road, are entirely derived from the field of activity of the traffic service and the answers are given by the same head of traffic, in agreement with the head of the road, or at his direction.

The business trips of the chief inspector, senior and junior inspectors on the line are mainly focused on issues related to transportation of passengers and goods. Finally, a new vast organisation of the Central and Regional Committees is exclusively created for the vast

business of regulating transportation of goods throughout the Empire. It deals almost exclusively with traffic service functions.

All this shows how important the activity of this service is in itself, how much the activity of all other services is exclusively dependent on it, and how much they are obliged to try, by all their means, to contribute to successful fulfillment by the traffic service of its obligations that it concludes with road customers, as from a legal entity, and are binding.

Theft. – Now let's consider the issue of one of the main modern plagues – mass theft.

Theft is an element, a thousand-headed hydra, engulfing the entire railway business with tenacious tentacles. This is a poison that has been absorbed into the flesh and blood of the railway brethren. We intellectuals, to our shame, are deprived even of the possibility of blaming everything on our little brother. The latest major predatory tricks show that former senior employees are among the leaders and organizers. Stousy rumor even names people who are in the service and, moreover, in fairly high positions.

Nowhere in the world is theft so widespread as it is here. It is especially pronounced in two areas: in the commissariat and on the railways.

In the first, the treasury suffers directly and indirectly the population. In the second – on the contrary.

The losses inflicted on the treasury by embezzlement are too great to be overlooked, and serious measures must be developed to combat them.

Dismissal from service and bringing to justice, with the vastness of our road network, becomes only a local event, why should it be extended to the entire network by starting a special black book in which to enter the names of those dismissed with notes on their exploits and notify all departments about them, in order to avoid accepting them for service on roads remote from the former arena of their actions. Such subjects should not be returned to the railway. They should also lose the right to state pensions, if they have earned them, and to state surcharges on their pension contributions.

It seems to me that all the measures I have outlined in relation to raising the moral level and well-being of employees should help to eradicate the desire for theft among the employees themselves; then the theft should be significantly reduced, and the fight against them will become easier.





Freight artels of the Varyag Union. – There is one method and an extremely radical one, but its implementation requires a lot of work, perseverance and endurance with the direct participation of the Railway Administration and even the Ministry of Railways, and, perhaps, some other ministries.

My colleague on the Transcaucasian roads, Mr. Semyanyshyn-Ardatiev, came up with the bright idea to form a common artel of loaders both on railways and on steamships, under the firm of the Varyag Union. This artel should consist of all persons involved in the reception, storage, transportation, loading, reloading, unloading and delivery of goods of all kinds and speeds.

Thus, from the moment it enters the railway or steamship, the cargo must be under the control and protection of a responsible artel, which, according to an agreement concluded with the Railway Administration, or even with the Ministry of Railways, is fully responsible for its integrity and safety.

Such a huge common artel, spread over the whole of Russia, and taking into its strong hands

the entire commodity business of means of communication, will be the only reasonable and real measure to eliminate all theft and abuse in transportation of goods. Small artels are aimless: they themselves steal from each other.

An artel, consisting of heterogeneous elements and based on commercial principles, based on monetary gain, will be able to monitor its members so that they not only do not plunder the goods, but also protect them from strangers who are not involved in the artel. No one can see to the integrity of the cargo and to each individual member better than his own brother can. It is unprofitable to steal from each other; it is better to be content with an honest conduct of business and receive the due remuneration for work, and even dividends from the general income of the enterprise.

Having familiarized myself with the project of the «Varyag Union» and finding it quite expedient and the only measure that could save not only roads, but the entire population from mass theft, I submitted a note about it to the Minister of Railways and wrote an article «Freight artels», which was published in No. 3 of the journal «Ways

of Communication»¹. The editorial staff of this journal proposed an exchange of opinions on this issue, but now more than six months have passed, and so far no one has responded.

The inertia of the railway intelligentsia. – Is it really that the Russian railway intelligentsia is so inert that it is not interested in such a serious and burning issue, which, representing a huge black spot lying on the entire railway world, imposes on the railway authorities and the entire railway society a moral obligation not only to actively fight this evil, but and find all sorts of ways to deal with it.

Once such a method is indicated, it is necessary to disassemble it in detail from all sides, develop it in detail and decide whether it can be carried out or not. But to leave it unattended, to pass over in silence and not to offer our own, perhaps more practical and reasonable methods, is simply unforgivable in my deep conviction. A private institution, like the journal «Ways of Communication», offers its gratuitous services as an intermediary in the development of such a burning issue, and its efforts are silenced. If it is a sign of consent, then all the more it is necessary to declare it.

The logical conclusion from such an indifferent attitude to the general topic of the day, which oppresses all citizens of our vast fatherland and brings incalculable losses, is very unflattering. It may be thought that the modern predatory *status quo* is tempting, to the benefit of the railway world, which is why they are not taking any measures to curb it.

Is it possible that those stinking slops (pardon the expression) with which railroad workers are constantly doused do not yet represent sufficient incentive to arouse in them a sincere desire to work in the interests of streamlining the case, without postponing such work *ad calendas graecas*.

This is a matter of national importance; I think the State Duma should pay attention to it and render its powerful assistance to its implementation.

Although the program of the report includes many more issues that I touched upon in my book, but due to lack of time I will limit myself to listing them as urgent and necessary.

Reorganisation of the collection service, accounting reporting, increase in legal departments and change in the activities of commercial departments.

¹ See also «Zheleznodorozhnoe delo», 1902, p. 157.

General Activity

Easing antagonism between employees; regulation of free travel and use of service and protection cars; the fight against ticketless travel, the reduction of correspondence, the fight against the dominance of foreigners, the reform of the leasing of station buffets.

Technical Equipment of Railways

Gradual systematic rearrangement of station tracks in accordance with the functions of the station.

Gradual systematic restructuring of warehouses and platforms for loading and unloading goods and changing their types.

Organisation of large and small repairs of rolling stock on more rational grounds for traction and traffic services.

Gradual systematic distribution of different types of locomotives along the roads and destruction of types of locomotives and cars that do not correspond to modern technology.

Construction in the required quantity of a fleet of special cars – refrigerators for transportation of perishable goods over long distances.

Internal Organisation of Services

Elaboration and legalisation of a systematic system for changing sleepers and rails, and coefficients for the cost of repairing the upper track of railways and the number of workers per verst of the section.

Elaboration of special rules for accounting of tarpaulins, shields, animal bars, in order to avoid their loss along the roads, as well as the rules for their maintenance and repair.

Development of special rules for the repair of inventory of traffic services.

Development of special rules for sealing cars.

CONCLUSION

Finishing the report, I cannot but make a general conclusion.

The vastness and seriousness of the railway business does not for a moment allow me to look at my work as having exhausted all its features and needs. I pointed out only what I noticed and what, in my personal opinion, needs to be reorganized and streamlined. I have no doubt that there may be much more that has escaped my memory and that others will point out.

But, in any case, what I wrote about and what I pointed out, in itself shows what colossal work



still needs to be done in order to streamline the railway business in its entirety.

Indeed, in fact, it must be admitted that there is absolutely no branch of the railway business about which one could honestly say, hand on heart, that it is completely organised and does not require fundamental changes and significant additions.

Life moves forward, especially railway life, as a technical one, in our age to improve and invent movements with great speed, and additions and changes are constantly needed in it. But in the modern formulation of the railway business, what is needed is not changes and additions, but the development of fundamental foundations, precise rules and regulations, without which the work cannot continue correctly.

There are several roads, more or less arranged, with a mass of excellent and well-organized institutions, there are a lot of partial useful and properly arranged devices on all roads, but in order for the whole organisation to be noticeable any commonality, some guiding idea of integrity and solidarity, – it is imperceptible.

On the railways, business is conducted according to the Russian proverb: «Everyone is done in his own way». The internal routines for each road are different, rarely any of the chiefs of services, having visited other roads and looking at their orders, tries to instill them in its own road, despite the fact that he recognizes their advantages.

It is understandable if the majority seeks to take the post of head of a service or department not out of dedication to the cause, love and devotion to it, but only because of an advantageous position in material terms and honor among employees and society, and does not seek to introduce possible improvements, ordering things and improving them. And it is known that any stop in development of a business leads to its regression.

Our inertia has led to a regression that has penetrated all branches of the railway business. It is necessary to stir up this inertia, and if the authorities do not have the desire to work progressively, lovingly treating the matter, then such authorities should not be allowed to get involved in the matter even for a cannon shot. I began my conversation by expressing my credo that the main thing is in the leader, and, ending it, I confirm the same view.

We see that the highest authorities are striving for this, are working energetically; need to help them. Without joint activity, friendly help, the work of the authorities will be, if not powerless, then at least less productive, since an inert attitude towards such work is tantamount to an active brake, if not a boycott.

The good intentions of the current Minister to work hard to put the railway business in order make, in turn, to wish that his Ministry work would not be short-lived.

It is not superfluous to mention that frequent changes of ministers had an unfavorable effect on the course of the entire railway business. Before the department has time to get used to and adapt to the views and requirements of one minister, as with the appointment of another, new views and new requirements appear, most often completely opposite, so it is rather difficult to adapt to them right away.

In addition, a lot of time and labor is completely unproductive, in reshaping the old order, only in order to start a new Sisyphean work with new trends.

For a hundred years, from 1811 to 1909, there were 19 Ministers of Railways; only four of them managed the Ministry for a long time: Posiet for 14 years, Count Kleinmichel for 12, Duke of Wirtemberg and Prince Khilkov for 10 years each. The rest are from one year to 8 years. Five ministers held office for one year or less.

Even a professional genius in such a short time could not have done anything serious for the department.

The current Minister is already the twentieth in the century of existence of the department; we wish him success in his work and continued leadership of the ministry.

Everything I have said shows what a colossal amount of work the Department of Railways has to do in order, one way or another, to lead to a successful solution of urgent problems and to carry out the organisation, reorganisation and improvement of the entire railway economy.

Modern railroad leaders, in my opinion, should take on the work and honor of such work. God is with them!

– Dixi et animam salvavi!!

End of Part 3
N. P. Verkhovsky
(Zheleznodorozhnoe delo [Rail Business],
1911, Iss. 21–22, pp. 50d–60d) ●