



[DOI: 10.35549/HR.2026.2026.59.007](https://doi.org/10.35549/HR.2026.2026.59.007)

Original paper



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Political Police in the System of State Administration: The Case of A.A. Maksimov (1908)

Abstract

The political police of the Russian Empire comprised a conglomeration of institutions that differed not only in their functions and the sociocultural backgrounds of their personnel, but also in their views on the limits of public participation and in their political sympathies during the emergence of legal political parties. This article examines how these differences manifested themselves in the 1908 dismissal of A.A. Maksimov, Mayor of Sevastopol, entrepreneur, and philanthropist, initiated by the Acting Governor-General of Sevastopol and Commander-in-Chief of the Black Sea Fleet and Ports, Rear Admiral R.N. Viren. Particular attention is devoted to the relationships between local political police institutions (the Gendarme Administration) and the central authorities (the Police Department and the Corps of Gendarmes), as well as their interactions with other military and civilian government bodies and officials, including Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior P.A. Stolypin, Deputy Minister of the Interior and



Chief of Police A.A. Makarov, Head of the Main Administration for Local Economy of the Ministry of the Interior S.N. Gerbel, and Acting Governor-General of Sevastopol R.N. Viren. The article also advances the hypothesis that Maksimov's removal from office resulted not from concerns about his "political reliability" – the only explanation advanced in the existing scholarship – but rather from the economic interests of the Belgian Anonymous Company for Tramways and Electric Lighting, which, together with N.P. Ergopulo, Maksimov's deputy in the Sevastopol City Duma, promoted an electrification project that competed with Maksimov's own plans for the city. The controversy surrounding the electrification of Sevastopol is analyzed within the broader context of the activities of the Main Administration for Local Economy of the Ministry of the Interior and the Council of the Minister of the Interior.

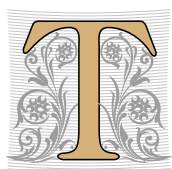
Keywords:

A.A. Maksimov; P.A. Stolypin; R.N. Viren; Sevastopol; Political police; Domestic policy; Corruption in the Russian Empire; Electrification; Belgian Anonymous Company for Electric Lighting and Tramways

For citation:

Lyubov V. Ulyanova. Political Police in the System of State Administration: The Case of A.A. Maksimov (1908). *The Historical Reporter*. 2026. Vol. 59. P. 184–219. [DOI: 10.35549/HR.2026.2026.59.007](https://doi.org/10.35549/HR.2026.2026.59.007)





he story of A.A. Maksimov's dismissal from the position of Mayor of Sevastopol began in the spring of 1908. On 30 April, the official Sevastopol newspaper *Krymsky Vestnik* published a brief report article *A Prisoner's Escape Together with His Escort*¹. It described the escape, on the previous day (29 April), of sailor P. Konovalenko, who had been convicted for desertion, and K. Shulzhenko, a sailor of the 29th Naval Crew assigned to escort him during his transfer from the detention facilities of the naval barracks to the prison hulk. The incident was reported to the police by another sailor, P. Durasov, who had been escorting the prisoner together with Shulzhenko. According to his testimony, the fugitives struck him "in the chest with the butt of a rifle" and took from him "his rifle and cartridge belt with ammunition". The Chief of Police dispatched two detachments, including mounted policemen and constables, to capture the escapees, who were soon located near the English Cemetery. After a pursuit and an exchange of gunfire, the escaped convict Konovalenko was recaptured. However, "the escorting sailor Shulzhenko, having leapt over the wall of Maksimov's country estate, disappeared into the bushes and made his way towards Balaklava". The newspaper went on to report that the Chief of Police left a detachment of officers at Maksimov's estate and the English Cemetery while he himself drove towards the Simferopol Highway. On the way, however, the chauffeur took a wrong turn, the car plunged into a ravine, and both the Chief of Police and the driver barely managed to jump clear.

Krymsky Vestnik carried no further reports on the incident. However, on 12 May 1908 Colonel V.E. Seidlitz, Chief of the Sevastopol Gendarme Administration, informed his superiors in St Petersburg – the Separate Corps of Gendarmes (SCG) and the Police Department of the Ministry of the Interior: "On the 3rd of this month, the Governor-General of Sevastopol, Rear Admiral Viren, having received information that the sailor Shulzhenko, who had been sentenced by a court for a second desertion from service, had escaped once again and was hiding on the estate of the Mayor of Sevastopol, Maksimov, and knowing the latter to be politically unreliable, having demonstrated his anti-government activities in 1905 and having escaped punishment only because of the

¹ КРЫМСКИЙ ВЕСТНИК. 1908. 30 апреля. С. 2.



Alexei Andreevich Maksimov (1853–1908), Mayor of Sevastopol.
From open sources

inexplicable inaction of the officials who held authority in Sevastopol at that time, ordered that the said estate and Maksimov's residence be subjected to a thorough search under the regulations of martial law"².

According to Seidlitz's report, therefore, the search of Maksimov's property was conducted in order to locate Shulzhenko, whom Maksimov was allegedly concealing because of his political sympathies. Yet immediately after the search, on 4 May, Seidlitz sent the following telegrams to the SCG and the Police Department: "By the personal order of the Governor-General of Sevastopol, a search was conducted at the residence of the Mayor of Sevastopol, Maksimov. Illegal literature and correspondence indicating his political unreliability were discovered"³. Notably, these telegrams made no mention whatsoever of the search for Shulzhenko as the reason for the operation. It is equally striking that in his report of 12 May, contrary to *Krymsky Vestnik*, Seidlitz referred to Shulzhenko not as an escort but as "a sailor sentenced by a court for a second desertion from service". One might suppose that the newspaper had simply made an error and that the man who disappeared through Maksimov's estate had indeed not been an escort. However, the Police Department – the empire's principal political police authority – also

² ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 1. Общ. Д. 48. Л. 23.

³ Ibid. Л. 22.



Robert Nikolaevich von Viren (1856–1917), Commander of the Black Sea Fleet.
The photograph, taken in 1901–1903, shows him still wearing the uniform
of a Captain First Rank.

From open sources

regarded Shulzhenko as an escort, as demonstrated by its enquiry of 17 May requesting information about “the escort Shulzhenko”, an enquiry to which Seidlitz never replied⁴. The distinction between an escaped sailor serving as an escort and a sailor twice convicted by a court was hardly insignificant. It is also worth noting that in the case file opened by the Sevastopol gendarmes on 12 May – the very day Seidlitz submitted his report to St Petersburg – Shulzhenko’s name does not appear at all; the documents merely refer in vague terms to “information received by the Governor-General that a fugitive sailor had found refuge at Maksimov’s estate”⁵.

It is therefore reasonable to suppose that Seidlitz invoked Shulzhenko retrospectively as a justification for the search of Maksimov’s property, solely in order to explain his actions to his superiors in the capital. Maksimov himself, in a memorandum addressed to Minister of the Interior P.A. Stolypin on 15 May, stated that the gendarmes who conducted the search had presented neither written nor oral grounds for their actions.

⁴ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. 4 делопроизводство. 1908. Оп. 117. Д. 71. Ч. 12. Л. 66.

⁵ Ibid. 7 делопроизводство. 1908. Оп. 205. Д. 3193.

This raises an obvious question. Why did Seidlitz, nine days after the search, feel it necessary to specify its justification – namely the search for Shulzhenko, now described specifically as “a sailor sentenced by a court for a second desertion from service” – if, as he had informed St Petersburg on 4 May, the materials seized during the search already demonstrated the Mayor’s political unreliability? Indeed, on the basis of those materials Rear Admiral Viren had already “temporarily suspended” Maksimov from office on 5 May; the City Duma had merely “taken note” that his Deputy, N.F. Ergopulo, was now acting as Mayor; and on 7 May *Krymsky Vestnik* published this information.

Two explanations may be suggested. First, by 12 May Maksimov had already travelled to St Petersburg to appeal directly to the leadership of the Ministry of the Interior, and it was by no means certain that the Police Department would approve the actions of the Sevastopol gendarmes⁶. Secondly, Seidlitz apparently assumed from the outset that Maksimov could be prosecuted on grounds of political unreliability. However, the Sevastopol Prosecutor’s office refused to initiate a formal investigation on the basis of the materials seized during the search⁷. This meant that, if the political police intended to continue pursuing the Mayor of Sevastopol, they would have to rely exclusively on the administrative powers at their disposal, without recourse to the courts.

The “powers” employed for this purpose was a security proceeding (*okhrannoe proizvodstvo*), initiated by the Sevastopol gendarmes on 12 May – the very day Seidlitz reported to St Petersburg. The case, entitled *Correspondence Concerning the Investigation of the Political Unreliability of the Mayor of Sevastopol, Alexei Andreevich Maksimov*⁸, was, for reasons that remain unclear, assigned to the Sevastopol Fortress Gendarme Detachment. The title itself is remarkable. Cases concerning political unreliability were normally designated simply as “Case Concerning the Political Unreliability of...” a particular individual. Here, however, the file was opened as “correspondence

⁶ For a detailed discussion of the differing approaches to “political unreliability” adopted by the Police Department and by the provincial gendarmerie administrations, see: Ульянова Л.В. Политическая полиция и либеральное движение в Российской империи, 1880–1905. СПб.: Алетейя, 2020.

⁷ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 1. Общ. Д. 48. Л. 24.

⁸ Ibid. Ф. 102. 7 делопроизводство. Оп. 205. 1908. Д. 3193.



Nikolai Fyodorovich Ergopulo, Mayor of Sevastopol, presents the traditional bread and salt to Nicholas II. 17 March 1912.

Photograph by K.E. von Hahn Studio. From open sources

concerning the investigation of political unreliability”. This wording suggests that even the gendarmes themselves regarded the question of Maksimov’s political unreliability as unresolved and requiring investigation. Yet no such investigation was ever carried out. The file was opened on 12 May and closed one month later, on 11 June, containing exactly the same set of documents throughout: the materials seized during the search conducted on the night of 2–3 May. The file mentions the “first interrogation of Maksimov” and of his daughter on 4 May, but the interrogation records themselves are absent. Moreover, since these interrogations allegedly took place on 4 May – before the case itself was opened on 12 May – they could not have formed part of the subsequent investigation.

Thus, on 12 May Seidlitz informed the Police Department that Maksimov was politically unreliable, while the case opened in Sevastopol treated that very question as one still requiring investigation. The gendarmes never conducted such an investigation, yet one month later, on 11 June, they closed the case. The following day, 12 June, Viren sent a dispatch to the Ministry of the Interior insisting upon the “final removal of Maksimov from office”.

What prevented Viren from sending this dispatch immediately after the search? Why was it considered necessary, in early May 1908,

first to search Maksimov's property, then immediately to suspend him temporarily from office, subsequently to provide an ex post facto justification for the search in the form of a search for either "a fugitive sailor" or "a sailor twice convicted by a court", and only in mid-June to inform the Ministry of the Interior that Maksimov should be removed from office permanently?

Let us return to these questions later. For the moment, it is necessary to examine what was actually discovered during the search of the Mayor of Sevastopol's residence. We should begin with the text of the telegram that Seidlitz sent on 4 May simultaneously to both the Police Department and the Corps of Gendarmes: "By the personal order of the Governor-General of Sevastopol, a search was conducted at the residence of the Mayor of Sevastopol, Maksimov. Illegal literature and correspondence indicating his political unreliability were discovered"⁹.

Thus, Seidlitz initially maintained that Maksimov's political unreliability was demonstrated by "illegal literature and correspondence". However, the *Inspection Report*, which Seidlitz forwarded to St Petersburg on 12 May, makes it clear that the "illegal literature" – nineteen pamphlets, including one entitled *Georgy Valeryevich Plekhanov* – was found not in Maksimov's possession but in that of his adult daughter, Nadezhda Maksimova. Moreover, Nadezhda Maksimova appears in the case file *Correspondence Concerning the Investigation of the Political Unreliability of Alexei Maksimov* only insofar as a separate personal information sheet was opened for her. Nothing further followed. This suggests that, from the gendarmes' perspective, the "illegal literature" itself carried little evidentiary significance.

The second basis for Seidlitz's assertion of Maksimov's "political unreliability" in his telegram of 4 May was the "correspondence". It was precisely this claim that reached the press. Thus, on 10 May the St Petersburg newspaper *Novoe Vremya* reported: "Among the papers discovered during the search of Mayor Maksimov's residence, together with revolutionary literature, was compromising correspondence with exiled revolutionaries"¹⁰.

⁹ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 1. Общ. Д. 48. Л. 22.

¹⁰ Новое время. 1908. 5 мая.



Country estate of A.A. Maksimov.

Notes of a Boring Man: <https://humus.livejournal.com>

In reality, only a single letter from a single “exiled revolutionary” was found in Maksimov’s possession. The author was S.A. Nikonov, a physician in Sevastopol and a well-known member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Besides serving as a doctor at the Sevastopol Municipal Hospital – a position to which he had been appointed by the City Duma under Maksimov’s leadership – Nikonov was also the personal physician of the Maksimov family¹¹. He was well known to the political police, including the leadership of the Police Department, and his revolutionary activities had resulted in repressive measures against him on two occasions, in 1903 and 1907. Significantly, however, Maksimov’s name had never been associated with those cases¹².

In May 1908 the authorities found only a single letter from Nikonov, who had been exiled from Sevastopol in 1907 by the same Rear Admiral Viren to Arkhangelsk Governorate for “membership in the Socialist Revolutionary Party”. Even this letter can only with some difficulty be regarded as evidence of Maksimov’s “political unreliability”, since its principal subject was the repayment of a debt. Nikonov also speculated – incorrectly – that the recipient would serve as

¹¹ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 1. Общ. д. 48. л. 24.

¹² Ibid. Ф. 102. 1903. Оп. 231. д. 2156; Ф. 102. ОО. 1907. Оп. 237. д. 9. ч. 57. л. 255–259.

an elector from Sevastopol in the elections to the State Duma, but this, too, could scarcely be considered proof of political unreliability, even by gendarme standards. It is therefore unsurprising that, when forwarding the *Report* to the Police Department on 12 May, Seidlitz merely observed that the letter “indicates a close acquaintance between Maksimov and Nikonov”.

The *report* also lists two letters sent to Maksimov in late October 1905 by A. Küri, a barrister and legal adviser to the City Administration. In these letters Küri welcomed the dismissal of D.F. Trepov, the St Petersburg Chief of Police – remarking that “how much bloodshed and how many lives have been spared” – and criticized the proposal to establish a people’s militia, which was then under discussion in Sevastopol. The report further mentions a letter from the architect V.A. Feldman, written from Kharkiv in November 1906, in which he described his work at the Technological Institute. Feldman also explained that he did not intend to return to Sevastopol: “I learned about the events in our dear Sevastopol, apart from the newspapers, from the late Mina, Miloshevich, and Aktsman. At the time we were rather glad that we had left when we did. Now they are gradually putting people on trial and executing them...”¹³

In the copy of the *Report* sent by Seidlitz to the Police Department – one of three surviving versions, the others being retained by the Sevastopol Fortress Gendarme Detachment and the Commander of the Corps of Gendarmes – this final sentence is underlined in red pencil. This indicates that the official reading the report in the Police Department paid particular attention to this passage, and to no other, since no additional red markings appear elsewhere in the document. It is reasonable to suppose that this interest reflected not an assessment of Maksimov’s political reliability but rather the Police Department’s concern with the situation in Sevastopol under martial law, where both the civilian police (Ministry of the Interior) and the judicial authorities (Ministry of Justice) were subordinated to the military. According to *Krymsky Vestnik*¹⁴ “military courts in the city were indeed passing death sentences on an almost daily basis, while the Minister of the Interior

¹³ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 1. Общ. 1908. Д. 48. Л. 25.

¹⁴ КРЫМСКИЙ ВЕСТНИК. 1908. Январь, февраль, март, апрель, май.



Pyotr Arkadyevich Stolypin (1862–1911), Minister of the Interior and Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Russian Empire.

Photograph, 1908. Library of the Bank of Russia

and Prime Minister, P.A. Stolypin, sought to restore civilian administration in Sevastopol¹⁵. Moreover, intercepted correspondence of members of the educated classes constituted an important source of information for the Police Department, particularly regarding the conduct of representatives of various state institutions¹⁶.

Finally, the search uncovered two documents in which Black Hundred activists, acting through the Taurida Branch of the Union of the Russian People, evaluated Maksimov's performance as Mayor. One of these documents, sent to Maksimov by his brother Nikolai, criticized him for failing to attend the funeral of Sukhomlinov, Assistant Bailiff of the First District, who had been killed in what the document described as "revolutionary banditry": "The fathers of the city found it impossible to honor these funeral rites with their presence and thereby express even a silent protest against revolutionary banditry. One may therefore ask the fathers of the city: what, then, does their absence signify?"

¹⁵ See: ГА РФ. Ф. 102. Оп. 105. 3 делопроизводство. 1907 год. Д. 133. Л. 1–21.

¹⁶ For a detailed discussion of this practice of the Police Department, see: Ульянова Л.В. Политическая полиция и либеральное движение. Гл. 4.

The second document, dating from November 1906, went even further, hinting at the possibility of physical violence by the Black Hundreds against Maksimov: “The Taurida Branch of the Union of the Russian People, observing the present state of affairs in the Russian Empire and recognizing that the peaceful citizens and the loyal armed forces of the neighboring city of Sevastopol cannot continue to exist under the weakness of will displayed by the authorities in suppressing criminal organizations that obstruct the peaceful life of the Russian people, considers it necessary to proclaim publicly that the life of the Union of the Russian People must be expressed not only in good intentions and speeches but also in deeds requiring the full exertion of the Union’s strength, the determination to carry matters through to the end, and to extinguish at their source the bloody crimes now being prepared. The blows will be directed not against the unconscious instrument of the cunning enemy, but against the instigator who sows disorder, circumvents the law, and hides in the darkness of deception. The lives of the Union’s members are of no value when directed along the path prescribed by the evil will of these vile organizations. Therefore, any attempt to seize power or to undermine order by spreading unrest among the Russian armed forces in Sevastopol will be mercilessly suppressed, while those leaders who are now preparing these evil deeds will be punished for their criminal activities. The names of those sowing discord are known, and, regrettably, the list now includes even municipally elected persons who occupy positions of honor”¹⁷.

It is important to note that Seidlitz himself sympathized with the Union of the Russian People. Thus, in March 1908, he informed the Commander of the Corps of Gendarmes, F.F. Taube, of a ceremony organized by the Yalta branch of this Black Hundred organization in honor of the Governor-General of Yalta, Major General I.A. Dumbadze. Dumbadze had become notorious after surviving an assassination attempt in February 1907, when he ordered the complete destruction by fire of the dacha from whose grounds a bomb had been thrown at his carriage, while forbidding the residents to remove any of their belongings. Seidlitz reported: “General Dumbadze, in warm and heartfelt words, sincerely thanked those assembled for the honor shown

¹⁷ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 1. Общ. Д. 48. Л. 25–26.

to him and declared that he would continue firmly and tirelessly to preserve order in the region and ensure the safety of the population... The celebration concluded with a prayer service at the Yalta Branch of the Union of the Russian People and speeches by orators calling upon those present to swear loyalty, to the last drop of their blood, to their autocratic monarch and to protect the life of the valiant General. Every person present took this oath as one man, and sobbing could be heard throughout the crowd”¹⁸.

It may therefore be suggested that when Seidlitz hastily informed his superiors in the capital on 4 May that correspondence had been discovered proving Maksimov’s political unreliability, his assessment largely reflected the Black Hundred view of the Mayor of Sevastopol. At the same time, Seidlitz apparently understood that such an interpretation was unlikely to carry much weight with the Police Department. Indeed, in his report of 12 May, when forwarding the materials seized during the search, he no longer referred to “correspondence proving Maksimov’s political unreliability”. Instead, he based his argument almost entirely upon documents relating to the events of October 1905 – namely, a newspaper article describing the extraordinary session of the City Duma on 18 October 1905 and an “extract from the minutes of the City Duma meeting of 19 October” of that year¹⁹.

These public documents were now described by Seidlitz as “vividly” demonstrating “the revolutionary activities of Mayor Maksimov” and revealing his “complete political unreliability”. What did they actually contain? In October 1905, Maksimov had permitted the so-called “people’s deputies” to attend an extraordinary meeting of the Sevastopol City Duma. Among them was Lieutenant Schmidt, who would soon become the leader of the Sevastopol Uprising. These “people’s deputies” had been elected informally by popular assemblies following the promulgation of the Manifesto of 17 October 1905, which promised civil liberties and a representative legislature. Maksimov allowed these representatives to address the Duma and granted them consultative voting rights. Their admission to the City Duma, however, was directly connected with events that had occurred the previous day. After learning of

¹⁸ Ibid. Л. 7–8 об.

¹⁹ ГАРФ. Ф. 102. 7 делопроизводство. Оп. 205. 1908. Д. 3193. Л. 16–20 об.

the Manifesto, a demonstration marched to the city prison demanding the release of political prisoners, whereupon troops opened fire on the crowd. As is evident from Maksimov's speech at the Duma, he strongly condemned those officials who had ordered the shooting, arguing that after 17 October political demonstrations had become lawful expressions of public opinion. Maksimov himself had not participated in the demonstration, but he visited the wounded in the municipal hospital and persuaded the City Governor to release the bodies of those killed to their relatives. During the Duma session, although the "people's deputies" demanded the creation of a people's militia, Maksimov instead proposed establishing a temporary people's guard. He agreed with their demand for a general amnesty, but refused to support the proposal to amnesty the sailors who had taken part in the uprising – apparently a reference to the mutiny aboard the battleship *Potemkin* in July 1905. Following the meeting, Maksimov and one of the "people's deputies", Emelyanov, visited the City Governor, where arrangements were made for the forthcoming funeral procession. It was agreed that order during the funeral would be maintained by the temporary people's guard, while the City Duma prohibited the sale of alcoholic beverages on that day. During the funeral itself, Maksimov addressed those assembled – the predominantly revolutionary-minded crowd – urging them to value the freedoms granted by the October Manifesto and to understand that liberty did not imply license.

These documents constituted the entirety of the material submitted by Seidlitz to the Police Department concerning Maksimov's role in the events of October 1905. The *Report* also lists a *Draft Plan for the Establishment of an Unlawful Municipal Militia and the Report of the Sevastopol City Administration Thereon and a Draft Telegram from Maksimov to Count Witte* (1905). It is impossible, however, to determine the contents of either document, since Seidlitz did not forward their texts to the Police Department.

Naturally, Maksimov himself had no knowledge of the documents concerning the search that the gendarmes had submitted to the Police Department. Nevertheless, on 6 May he travelled to St Petersburg to present a memorandum to Minister of the Interior P.A. Stolypin in his capacity as the "temporarily suspended Mayor of Sevastopol". Although mayors were elected officials within the system of municipal



Alexander Alexandrovich Makarov (1857–1919), Deputy Minister of the Interior from 1906 and Minister in 1911–1912.

Photograph by K. Bulla Studio. From open sources

self-government, their appointments nevertheless required confirmation by the Ministry of the Interior. In this sense, Maksimov was appealing to his own highest administrative authority²⁰. His memorandum, dated 15 May 1908, makes no mention whatsoever of the sailor Shulzhenko, whom, according to Seidlitz, the gendarmes had come to search for at his residence. Instead, Maksimov twice emphasized that neither the gendarmes during the search nor Rear Admiral Viren afterwards had provided him with any intelligible explanation for their actions beyond references to the events of October 1905. As Maksimov pointed out, it was entirely unclear why events that had occurred two and a half years earlier, were well known throughout Sevastopol, and had already been reported at the time to the Commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Vice Admiral G.P. Chukhnin, should suddenly have acquired such pressing significance for the gendarmes and the Acting Governor-General of Sevastopol, R.N. Viren, in early May 1908.

Maksimov's memorandum is of particular interest not so much for its contents as for the impression it made upon its recipient, Minister of the Interior P.A. Stolypin. In it Maksimov wrote: "I venture to believe that

²⁰ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. 4 делопроизводство. 1908. Оп. 117. Д. 71. Ч. 12. Л. 57–58.

my selfless public service” (Maksimov had refused to accept the mayor’s salary, leaving it to the city. – *L.U.*) “and my many years of service entitle me to hope that, by virtue of the sense of justice which characterizes Your Excellency’s conduct of state affairs, I shall find in you a lawful and impartial judge should I prove guilty of the accusations brought against me” (clearly referring to the allegation that he had encouraged the “revolution” in October 1905. – *L.U.*), “but likewise a powerful defender against the unjust violation of my rights as a loyal subject of my Sovereign and as a public servant. In view of all this, I most respectfully request that Your Excellency be pleased to order that the entire proceedings concerning my case be submitted for your personal consideration and investigated here in St Petersburg, and that I be afforded the opportunity to refute the accusations made against me and thereby restore my good name”.

Stolypin’s resolution read: “This must, of course, be reported to me in full detail. Has an enquiry been sent to Vice Admiral Viren?”

It may be assumed that Stolypin addressed this instruction to A.A. Makarov, Deputy Minister of the Interior and Chief of Police through whom Maksimov most likely submitted his memorandum. Makarov, in turn, had already been approached by General E.V. Bogdanovich, who, on 12 May, sent him a lengthy letter requesting that he receive the Mayor of Sevastopol, whom Bogdanovich described as “an absolutely reliable man”²¹. It is evident that Maksimov was indeed received. Whether by Makarov personally or by officials of the Police Department remains uncertain, but Bogdanovich’s letter was preserved in the archives of the Police Department, as was Maksimov’s memorandum of 15 May, suggesting that the latter resulted directly from this meeting.

Stolypin’s resolution therefore may have been written somewhat later, though evidently without delay. Beginning on 17 May, an intensive exchange of correspondence – marked *urgent* – developed within the Police Department and between the Department and the Minister of the Interior concerning the legality of Viren’s actions against Maksimov. This correspondence culminated in a handwritten note dated 19 May, probably made by the Director of the Police Department, although another notation – “reported to the Minister” – indicates that Stolypin himself remained fully informed: “Viren has not exceeded

²¹ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. 4 делопроизводство. 1908. Оп. 117. Д. 71. Ч. 12. Л. 54.

the powers granted to him under martial law. Summon Maksimov to see me at the earliest opportunity, if he is still here”²².

It would therefore appear that both the Police Department and Stolypin were inclined to support Maksimov, whereas Viren’s actions gave rise to doubts regarding both their legal basis and their factual justification. Nevertheless, Stolypin was unable to resolve the matter by his own authority, and Maksimov remained “temporarily suspended from office” for the duration of martial law in Sevastopol.

On 12 June 1908, Acting Governor-General of Sevastopol Rear Admiral R.N. Viren received from Seidlitz a report declaring Maksimov to be extremely politically unreliable, and on the very same day drafted a dispatch to the Ministry of the Interior calling for Maksimov’s “final removal from office”²³. This report can hardly have come as a surprise to Viren. According to *Krymsky Vestnik*, he and Seidlitz were in frequent official contact, regularly appearing together to receive members of the imperial family and senior government officials arriving by train, as well as attending numerous ceremonial occasions, including the opening of the Yacht Club and the accompanying formal banquets. At the same time, during the first half of 1908 *Krymsky Vestnik* reported almost daily on the expulsion from Sevastopol, by order of the Acting Military Governor-General, of individuals deemed “politically unreliable”. The number of such expulsions, incidentally, declined sharply after Rear Admiral I.F. Boström assumed the same office in July 1908. Given the sheer volume of these deportations, it is difficult to imagine that each case of alleged political unreliability received careful investigation. It is equally obvious that the information identifying politically unreliable individuals was supplied to Viren by Seidlitz, whose office was responsible precisely for matters relating to political reliability.

Against this background, it is striking that Seidlitz required more than a month to inform the Acting Military Governor-General of Maksimov’s “complete political unreliability” – especially considering that, although the gendarmes opened a special case on 12 May, they conducted no further investigation after the search of 3 May. By contrast,

²² Ibid. A. 64.

²³ Quoted in: Чикин А.М. Две жизни прожить не дано... Год 1908-й: 225-летию города-героя Севастополя и 100-летию со дня кончины городского головы А.А. Максимова посвящается. Севастополь: Дельта, 2008. С. 57.

Viren needed less than twenty-four hours to prepare his request to the Ministry of the Interior. The impression is that Viren – and perhaps Seidlitz as well – was waiting for a particular moment in mid-June before advancing the case for Maksimov's dismissal, even though the decision to remove him from the mayoralty had effectively been made before the search itself, in the first days of May.

The date that Viren appears to have been awaiting may have been connected with the forthcoming municipal elections. From mid-June 1908, exactly one year remained before the expiration of the term of the City Duma elected in June 1905. Under the legislation then in force, no by-election was held during the final year of the Duma's term in the event of changes in its composition, including the office of mayor.

Consequently, from mid-June 1908 until June 1909, the duties of mayor would continue to be performed by the individual who had assumed them immediately after Maksimov's suspension on 5 May 1908 – namely his deputy, N.F. Ergopulo, officially described in the terminology of the period as the person “acting in place of the mayor”. As *Krymsky Vestnik* shows, Ergopulo, in his capacity as Acting Mayor, regularly appeared at the same official ceremonies and banquets as Viren, delivering lengthy ceremonial speeches. His role in these events will be examined later.

For the moment, it should be noted that Viren's proposal to the Ministry of the Interior calling for Maksimov's final removal from office received remarkably swift support in St Petersburg. Yet this support came not from the Police Department, where Viren's submission was received but elicited no discernible response, but from another branch of the Ministry of the Interior – the Main Administration for Local Economy – and specifically from its director, S.N. Gerbel.

The Main Administration for Local Economy was responsible for matters within the jurisdiction of municipal self-government. This institution remains poorly studied in Russian historiography. An important exception is K.I. Mogilevsky's monograph on the Council for Local Economy, which functioned within the Main Administration and played a central role in developing Stolypin's municipal and zemstvo reforms²⁴. Examination of the archives of the Main

²⁴ *Могилевский К.И. Столыпинские реформы и местная элита: Совет по делам местного хозяйства (1908–1910). М.: РОССПЭН, 2008.*

Administration reveals that they preserve a substantial number of files concerning municipal officials throughout the Russian Empire, including approximately thirty cases from 1906–1908 entitled, for example, “On Bringing Mayor X to Responsibility” or “On Imposing a Disciplinary Sanction upon Mayor X”.

This demonstrates that disciplinary proceedings against municipal officials for misconduct in office were by no means unusual and ordinarily presented no procedural or terminological difficulties. Maksimov’s case, however, once again stands out. In the archives of the Main Administration it is entitled *On the Removal from Office of the Honorary Citizen A.A. Maksimov (Mayor of Sevastopol)*. Under normal practice, one would expect a title along the lines of *On Bringing the Mayor of Sevastopol, A.A. Maksimov, to Responsibility*. The file itself was destroyed during the Soviet period. Its contents must therefore be reconstructed from documents preserved in the archives of the Police Department and from related files within the records of the Main Administration for Local Economy.

Until the third week of June 1908, the Main Administration for Local Economy showed little interest in the Maksimov affair. The Police Department forwarded to it both Viren’s dispatch of 5 May concerning the temporary “removal from office of the Mayor of Sevastopol” and Colonel Seidlitz’s report of 12 May, together with its attachments, including the *Report* and the documents relating to the events of October 1905. Only on 23 June, however, did the Main Administration request – marked *urgent* – that the Police Department transmit “the report of the Acting Governor-General of the City of Sevastopol of the 14th of the current month, No. 33, concerning the final removal from office of the Mayor of Sevastopol, Maksimov, together with all correspondence in the Department relating to this case, which, once no longer required, will be returned”²⁵.

Four days later, on 27 June 1908, the Main Administration sent the Police Department “a copy of the memorandum concerning the Mayor of Sevastopol, Maksimov, together with a copy of the resolution entered upon it by the Head of the Main Administration recording the instruction of the Minister of the Interior that a submission be prepared

²⁵ ГА РФ. Ф. 102. 4 ДЕЛОПРОИЗВОДСТВО. 1908. Оп. 117. Д. 71. Ч. 12. Л. 74.

for the Ministerial Council regarding the dismissal of the said official, while informing the Department that the original memorandum has been retained in the files of the Main Administration”²⁶.

At this point, further inconsistencies emerge. Subsequent documents in the Police Department file *Taurida Governorate. Information on Sevastopol. 1908* make it clear that the “original memorandum” which S.N. Gerbel, Head of the Main Administration, took to Stolypin was in fact a memorandum prepared by the Police Department itself.

Thus, on 23 June the Main Administration urgently requested the Department’s entire file on Maksimov, received the requested documents the same day, and formally undertook to return them. It did indeed return all of the documents – with one exception: the memorandum prepared by the Police Department. Moreover, the Main Administration made no attempt to explain why this document had not been returned. Only after the Police Department sent a formal reminder requesting its return did it receive instead “a copy of the memorandum together with a copy of the resolution entered upon it” by Gerbel concerning Stolypin’s “instruction”.

This strongly suggests that, for the Main Administration, the memorandum possessed value only in its original form – not because of its contents, for a copy would have sufficed for that purpose, but because the original bore Gerbel’s handwritten note recording Stolypin’s alleged instruction.

The Main Administration therefore appears to have intended to use this documentary record of Stolypin’s position for subsequent proceedings: first, in preparing a submission to the Ministerial Council recommending Maksimov’s dismissal, and second, as part of the justification for the dismissal itself.

In the event, however, neither purpose was fulfilled.

Stolypin’s position, as recorded by Gerbel on the original memorandum and known to us only through the typed text reproduced in the copy, never appears again in the surviving documentation. The *Memorandum on the Removal of Maksimov from Office* submitted by the Main Administration to the Council of the Minister of the Interior instead consists of a collection of opinions expressed over several

²⁶ Ibid. A. 76.

years by various state officials concerning Maksimov. These included P.V. Neklyudov, a member of the Ministerial Council; the Director of the Police Department (unnamed in the document, but clearly M.I. Trusevich); and several naval officers: former Governor of Sevastopol Rear Admiral A.M. Spitsky, former Acting Governor-General Vice Admiral N.I. Skrydlov, and the current Acting Governor-General Rear Admiral R.N. Viren²⁷.

At first sight, this is puzzling. Since the case for removing Maksimov from office was based in part upon the opinions of various officials, one would expect the documented position of the Minister of the Interior himself to constitute particularly weighty evidence before the body responsible for deciding the matter – the Council of the Minister of the Interior. Yet Stolypin is not mentioned at all in the *Memorandum*.

This strongly suggests that the Main Administration deliberately avoided revealing to the Police Department what Gerbel had actually written concerning Stolypin's alleged instruction on the original memorandum. Significantly, the "copy of the memorandum" bearing the "copy of Gerbel's resolution" carries only a single signature – that of a clerk – whereas every other document originating from the Main Administration bears two signatures: first that of the responsible official (in this case A. Nemirowsky, Head of the Municipal Affairs Section), followed by that of the clerk.

Moreover, Gerbel's resolution, known to the Police Department only through this copy and ostensibly recording Stolypin's decision, in fact reproduces Viren's own terminology – namely, "removal from office", meaning dismissal. By contrast, from the perspective of the Ministry of the Interior, one would expect the Minister's instructions to employ the Ministry's standard administrative terminology, such as "bringing to disciplinary responsibility" or "imposing a disciplinary sanction".

At the same time, submitting the matter to the Council of the Minister of the Interior fully complied with the provisions of the Municipal Statute of 1892, which assigned questions of disciplinary sanctions – including the removal of municipal officials from office – to that advisory body within the Ministry. Had Gerbel actually secured Stolypin's approval for Maksimov's dismissal, one would naturally expect the

²⁷ For the text, see: РГИА. Ф. 1281. Оп. 10. 1908. Д. 3. Л. 56–60.



Sergei Nikolaevich Gerbel (1856–1939), Head of the Main Directorate for Local Government Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior (1904–1912), Court Chamberlain.

Photograph from M.L. Levenson, The State Council. Petrograd, 1915, p. 15

Minister also to have approved the legal grounds upon which such a dismissal should rest.

Instead, the memorandum submitted by the Main Administration to the Ministerial Council one week later, on 4 July 1908²⁸, effectively reset the entire case, since its evidentiary basis for asserting Maksimov's political unreliability was entirely new. First, for reasons that remain unexplained, the *Memorandum on the Removal* contains none of the documentary evidence that Stolypin had evidently reviewed following Maksimov's own memorandum in mid-May 1908. It makes no use whatsoever of the search materials forwarded to the Police Department by Seidlitz, nor of the memoranda prepared within the Department itself concerning Maksimov. Indeed, the memorandum does not even mention that a search had been conducted at the Mayor's residence and that its results had formed the basis for his suspension from office. Instead, it merely states that on 5 May Viren "considered it necessary" to suspend Maksimov temporarily, and on 20 June to remove him permanently.

²⁸ Ibid.

Thus, the memorandum offers no explanation whatsoever for Viren's actions. Nevertheless, its concluding argument explicitly echoes his position: "All the more necessary, therefore, would be the final removal of Maksimov from the office he presently occupies, now that the Acting Governor-General of Sevastopol has found himself compelled to remove him from the office of Mayor for the entire duration of martial law in Sevastopol".

Secondly, the memorandum unmistakably reflects the right-wing political outlook of its authors, including an anti-Semitic remark characteristic of Black Hundred rhetoric. It asserts that Maksimov conducted "all his affairs" through "his agent Usov (the unofficial editor of the Jewish newspaper *Krymsky Vestnik*)".

According to the memorandum, however, the principal reason why Maksimov could not remain Mayor of Sevastopol was his alleged Constitutional Democratic (Kadet) political views. Information concerning Maksimov's sympathies for the Constitutional Democratic Party had been supplied to the Main Administration by the Police Department as early as March 1907: "...according to information received by the Police Department, Maksimov, in his political convictions, belongs to the Constitutional Democratic Party, although no instances are known in which he has openly declared his affiliation with any political party. By virtue of his position as Mayor, he moves among members of various parties and, in order to retain his office, sometimes inclines towards the views of the Right and at other times towards those of the Left, while maintaining contacts – though in no case close ones – with local socialist intellectuals. At the same time, actual state councillor Trusevich expressed the opinion that Maksimov's removal from the office of mayor would hardly be desirable, since it might reasonably be expected that his successor would prove to hold even more left-wing views".

The Main Administration immediately challenged the opinion expressed by the Director of the Police Department. In the concluding section of the memorandum it declared: "The Main Administration considers that the information available to the Ministry of the Interior sufficiently establishes that the Mayor of Sevastopol, Maksimov, in his political convictions belongs to the Constitutional Democratic Party and, as certified by the Director of the Police Department, maintains

contacts, albeit not close ones, with local socialist intellectuals. Since the Constitutional Democratic Party belongs to the category of prohibited organizations, this circumstance alone, within the meaning of the ruling of the Governing Senate of 30 March 1908, would be sufficient to justify Maksimov's removal from the office of Mayor of Sevastopol, where, owing to the particular political conditions prevailing there, it is especially necessary that the head of the municipal administration should be a person of unquestionable political reliability".

Thus, instead of accusing Maksimov of misconduct during the events of October 1905, as Seidlitz and Viren had done, the Main Administration argued that the Mayor's political beliefs themselves rendered him unfit for office. This formulation is of fundamental importance for understanding how the governing authorities of the Russian Empire conceived the limits of political acceptability. It raises, above all, the question whether an individual's political convictions – essentially a private matter in a state governed by law – could legitimately serve as grounds for excluding that individual not only from the civil service but also from elected offices of municipal self-government.

The resolution adopted by the Council of the Minister of the Interior on 28 July 1908 in response to the Main Administration's *Memorandum* is particularly revealing: "The information supplied by the Police Department concerning the unreliability of the Mayor of Sevastopol, Maksimov, is entirely insufficient to justify his removal from office; moreover, the Department itself has expressed the opinion that such an outcome would be undesirable. Furthermore, there is no indication that any explanation was ever requested from Maksimov or that the question of his responsibility was considered by the local Municipal Affairs Board"²⁹.

It follows that the Council of the Minister of the Interior was unimpressed by the allegations concerning Maksimov's Kadet sympathies and regarded the evidence of his alleged political unreliability as "entirely insufficient". More than that, the Main Administration was criticized for violating the established procedure governing the imposition of disciplinary sanctions. The resolution ordering that the "case be returned to the Main Administration for Local Economy

²⁹ Ibid. A. 246 o6.

for the submission of additional information” bears the signature of S.E. Kryzhanovsky, Stolypin’s closest associate and the principal author of many of the legislative reforms of the Stolypin era.

Three weeks later, on 21 August 1908, Stolypin endorsed this decision with the notation “Approved”³⁰. As a result, Maksimov remained temporarily suspended from the office of Mayor for as long as the city remained under martial law.

It is impossible to know how the case might have developed thereafter. Yet Stolypin approved the Council’s decision the day after Maksimov’s sudden death, which occurred on 20 August 1908. This coincidence of dates was purely accidental, since the Ministry of the Interior received news of Maksimov’s death only on 23 August³¹. *Krymsky Vestnik* reported that his death came as a complete surprise. Only the previous day he had been walking along the Primorsky Boulevard, and acquaintances knew that he was preparing to travel to St Petersburg “on personal business”³².

Reporting Maksimov’s death to St Petersburg, Colonel Seidlitz informed both the Corps of Gendarmes and the Police Department that the “former Mayor of Sevastopol” had died. Particularly revealing is a pencilled annotation on the telegram received by the Corps of Gendarmes, apparently written by its commander, Baron F.F. Taube, another sympathizer of the Union of the Russian People, like Seidlitz himself: “One revolutionary fewer”³³. The Police Department did not respond to Seidlitz’s telegram.

Yet whereas Seidlitz described Maksimov as a “former Mayor” — a characterization that did not correspond to his formal legal status — the Governor of Sevastopol, Morenschildt, employed considerably more precise language when reporting the death to the Main Administration for Local Economy: “On 20 August at 8 o’clock in the morning there died the hereditary honorary citizen A.A. Maksimov, Mayor of Sevastopol, who had been suspended from office by order of the Governor-General for the duration of martial law”.

³⁰ Ibid. А. 296.

³¹ РГИА. Ф. 1288. Оп. 5. 1907 год. Д. 80. Л. 5.

³² Крымский вестник. 1908. 24 августа.

³³ ГА РФ. Ф. 110. Оп. 1. Общ. Д. 48. Л. 48.

It was in precisely this capacity – that of Mayor of Sevastopol – that Maksimov was buried. Throughout the obituary notices published in *Krymsky Vestnik*, he is consistently described by that title. Significantly, it was only after Maksimov's death that the newspaper ceased referring to N.F. Ergopulo as the "Acting Mayor" and began calling him simply Mayor of Sevastopol. Ergopulo retained that status until June 1909, when he was elected Mayor for the following four-year term.

The achievement for which Ergopulo is best remembered as Mayor – the conclusion of a highly favorable contract granting the City Duma a 30 per cent discount on the standard tariff under an agreement with the Belgian Anonymous Company for Tramways and Electric Lighting for the electrification of the whole of Sevastopol – did not originate in the summer of 1909, however, but in the spring of 1908.

At precisely that time, Maksimov submitted to the City Duma his own proposal for the electrification of Sevastopol through the establishment of a municipally owned, profit-making electricity enterprise. At the end of April 1908, he urged the Duma to reject the proposed agreement with the Belgian company for the city's electrical lighting. Only a few days later, the gendarmes searched his residence in search of evidence of his alleged political unreliability. On 7 May 1908, Maksimov's project for constructing a municipal power station was published in *Krymsky Vestnik* – the very same day that the newspaper announced his suspension from office by order of Viren³⁴.

The history of the Belgian Anonymous Company for Tramways and Electric Lighting in Sevastopol is well known. It was through this company that the city acquired both electric street lighting and its first tramway lines at the end of the nineteenth century, developments that contributed substantially to urban improvement and economic growth³⁵.

The Belgian Anonymous Company was one of the major enterprises in the Russian electrical industry at the beginning of the twentieth

³⁴ Крымский вестник. 1908. 7 мая. С. 1.

³⁵ Крушинин М.С. Экономическое развитие Севастополя // История Севастополя. В 3 т. Т. II. Севастополь в эпоху Российской империи. Конец XVIII века – 1917 г. М.: ИстЛит, 2021. С. 628–631.

century. According to P.V. Ol's statistical handbook published in 1915 (using data for 1911), its capital amounted to three million rubles. The company supplied electric lighting and operated tramways in Sevastopol, Yekaterinodar, Kremenchug, and Yaroslavl, ranking second in this industrial sector only to the Society for Electric Lighting of 1886, which served St Petersburg, Moscow, and Łódź and possessed capital of approximately thirty million rubles³⁶.

There is no direct evidence that Maksimov's removal from office in May 1908, ostensibly on grounds of political unreliability, was in reality motivated by the conflict surrounding the interests of the Belgian company. One can speak only of circumstantial evidence.

The principal sources for this episode are the reports published in Krymsky Vestnik during the spring and summer of 1908, together with the archival file entitled *On the Installation of Electric Lighting in the City of Sevastopol (Belgian Anonymous Company)*³⁷ preserved in the records of the Main Administration for Local Economy – the very institution that, beginning in the latter half of June 1908, insisted upon Maksimov's final removal from office.

The inventory records of the Main Administration's archive testify to its sustained interest in the issue of urban electric lighting. These include files on the "installation of electric lighting" in various cities of the Russian Empire – between 1906 and 1908 alone there were approximately fifty such cases – as well as files concerning technical matters (for example, a 1908 case entitled *On the Drafting of New Regulations for Low-Voltage Electrical Installations*), and files relating to private electric lighting and tramway companies (for example, a 1908 case entitled *On Granting Permission to the Belgian Anonymous Company Kursk Tramway to Increase Its Reserve Capital by Two Million Francs*). This file contains correspondence between representatives of the Belgian company, the Governor of Kursk, and the Main Administration for Local Economy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs concerning the terms under which the company was to operate. The Belgian representatives complained to the Main Administration about

³⁶ Оль П.В. Статистика акционерных обществ и паевых товариществ, обязанных публичной отчетностью, за 1911/12 год. Пг., 1915.

³⁷ РГИА. Ф. 1288. Оп. 9. 1909. Д. 16.



Tram on Nakhimov Avenue, Sevastopol. *Early twentieth-century photograph.*
Notes of a Boring Man: <https://humus.livejournal.com>

the conditions imposed by the Governor of Kursk in agreement with the Municipal Duma and requested that the Administration “press” the Governor to accept their own position. The correspondence also makes it clear that the principal representative of the central government in these tripartite negotiations was A. Nemirovsky, Head of the Urban Economy Department of the Main Administration, who met repeatedly with representatives of the Belgian company.

It was Nemirovsky who corresponded with the Police Department regarding Maksimov in June 1908, and his signature appears immediately below that of the Head of the Administration, S.N. Gerbel, on the *Memorandum on the Removal of A.A. Maksimov*, dated 4 July 1908.

A picture that emerges from the Main Administration’s file *On the Installation of Electric Lighting in the City of Sevastopol (Belgian Anonymous Company)*, opened in February 1909, was different from the case in Kursk. By early 1909, not only were there no disagreements between the Belgian company and the Sevastopol municipal duma over electric lighting, but both parties were urging the Ministry of Internal Affairs to approve as quickly as possible the mutually agreed text of the *Agreement for the Installation and Operation of Electric Lighting and the Supply of Power in Sevastopol, Revised in Accordance with the Minutes of the Municipal Finance and Construction Commission*.

Since 1905, the Finance and Construction Commission of the Sevastopol Municipal Duma had been chaired by N.F. Ergopulo, who until May 1908 also served as *Deputy Mayor*, and who, following Viren's removal of Maksimov from office on 5 May, became *Acting Mayor*. The file includes Ergopulo's report to the Municipal Duma of 17 December 1908³⁸, outlining the history of drafting the agreement with the Belgian company. At that meeting, the Duma approved the agreement by a vote of twenty-one in favor and four against.

Without dwelling on the details of the Duma's relations with the Belgians since 1896 – changes of ownership, changes of corporate names, and revisions of contractual terms, all described in Ergopulo's report – I shall focus on three points.

First, the question of constructing a municipal power station had interested Maksimov since 1903, and he kept the work of the Finance and Construction Commission (that is, Ergopulo's commission) under constant supervision. Thus, in 1905, when the Commission submitted another draft agreement with the Belgian company to the Duma, the Mayor devoted a *special report* to the proposal, as a result of which the Duma rejected the agreement.

Second, Maksimov opposed concluding a long-term contract with the Belgian company for Sevastopol's electric lighting. The company proposed either a twelve-year term or a thirty-year term to coincide with the tramway concession. This appears to have been one of the principal causes of his disagreement with Ergopulo, although the latter expressed it only in very cautious terms in his report to the Duma in December 1908, after Maksimov's death: "As early as 1905, the Commission considering the draft of a new agreement with the Belgian Anonymous Company for the electric lighting of the city regarded it as possible to align the term of the lighting agreement with that of the tramway concession. However, the Municipal Duma did not then consider it possible to approve the draft agreement proposed by the Belgian Anonymous Company".

Third, Maksimov believed that Sevastopol should possess its own municipal power station, which, in his view, would generate substantial revenue for the city, thereby making it independent of subsidies from

³⁸ Ibid. A. 14–17.

the central government. From his perspective, an agreement with the Belgian company was acceptable only because it imposed no restrictions on the construction of a municipal power station or on the conclusion of agreements with other private entrepreneurs.

By March 1908, the city administration had prepared a draft agreement, approved by the Finance and Construction Commission, and forwarded it to the Belgian company. It appears that this draft became, in broad outline, the basis of the agreement on Sevastopol's electric lighting that was presented to the Duma after Maksimov's removal, in December 1908. The proposed contract was to last thirty years and introduced an indirect but nevertheless significant restriction on the entry of other participants – whether private or municipal – into the city's electricity market:

“Should the municipal administration wish to exercise the right granted under paragraph (b) of Article 5 of the present agreement, namely to grant another entrepreneur the right to establish a central power station for the supply of electric power for lighting and other industrial purposes, excluding tramways, the terms offered to the new entrepreneur must, before permission is granted, be communicated to the Company. Within three months of receiving notice of those terms, the Company shall have the right to declare that it itself will undertake the enterprise on the conditions proposed by the new entrepreneur, in which case the municipal administration shall grant the Company priority in carrying out the project. If the municipal administration itself undertakes the enterprise, or if it is entrusted to another entrepreneur... the Company shall have the right, within the same three-month period, to declare that it will terminate, two years after such declaration, its lighting and power-supply operations. In such a case, if the permission is granted more than five years before the expiration of the present agreement, all machinery and equipment necessary for the proper functioning of the tramway shall become the property of the Company”³⁹.

By March 1908, the differing attitudes toward the Belgian company within the Municipal Duma had become quite pronounced. While Ergopulo's commission was drafting a new agreement with the

³⁹ Ibid. A. 10.

Belgian company, Maksimov published a pamphlet entitled *Memorandum on the Question of Electric Lighting in Sevastopol*. In his December 1908 report to the Duma, Ergopulo described the pamphlet as follows: “The principal aim of this pamphlet is to demonstrate the complete unprofitability for the city of concluding a long-term agreement with the Belgian Anonymous Company and the exceptional advantages of constructing a municipal power station according to the estimates prepared by its author”.

Ergopulo went on to report that the city administration instructed the municipal engineer to recalculate Maksimov’s proposal. Numerous errors were allegedly discovered, prompting the Finance and Construction Commission to establish yet another commission composed of engineers and electrical specialists. Rather than conducting an independent assessment, however, this commission turned to the Belgian company itself for assistance in calculating the profitability of constructing a municipal power station. The outcome of this joint work was the conclusion that such a project would be highly unprofitable, yielding an annual income of only about 1,000 rubles, whereas Maksimov’s calculations had, according to Ergopulo, mistakenly estimated an annual profit of 4,000 rubles. At the same time, the Belgian company agreed to pay the city precisely 4,000 rubles per year out of its own profits from operating Sevastopol’s electric lighting system.

Another highly advantageous concession for the city, agreed to by the Belgians sometime between March and December 1908, was a 30 percent discount on electricity supplied to municipal institutions compared with the standard tariff.

What is noteworthy, however, is not only that the Belgian company immediately made certain concessions following the appearance of Maksimov’s proposal – and concessions directed specifically at the municipal administration rather than at Sevastopol as a whole – but also that, beginning in March 1908, the city administration, including Ergopulo, undertook a detailed critical analysis of Maksimov’s pamphlet. At any rate, this is precisely what Ergopulo’s December report to the Municipal Duma suggests.

Yet only six months earlier, in May 1908, when already serving as Acting Mayor, Ergopulo told the newspaper *Krymsky Vestnik* quite the opposite: namely, that the city’s municipal officials had no idea what



Tomb of A.A. Maksimov in Sevastopol.
Photograph by inkerman777, 2019. From open sources

Maksimov's proposal for constructing a municipal power station actually entailed.

On 7 May 1908, *Krymsky Vestnik* published a brief notice announcing Maksimov's removal from the office of mayor by order of the temporary Governor-General of Sevastopol, R.N. Viren. In the same issue, on another page, the newspaper carried a lengthy article entitled *A New Sevastopol Project*. It dealt with the proposal for constructing a municipal power station that had been commissioned by Maksimov. Of interest were not only the projected financial figures – which estimated an annual return of approximately 16 percent – but also the newspaper's report that, by the end of April, the agreement with the Belgian company had already been approved by the commission chaired by Ergopulo and was expected to be submitted to the Duma for ratification.

Instead of presenting the agreement for consideration by the Duma, however, Maksimov apparently proposed – most likely in late April, only a few days before the search of his premises – to postpone discussion of the matter for three months in order to use that time to identify sources of financing for the construction of the municipal power station.

On 21 May, *Krymsky Vestnik* published an extensive interview with N.F. Ergopulo in his capacity as Acting Mayor. The interview was devoted

to criticizing Maksimov's proposal as fundamentally flawed because of numerous errors, the absence of any indication of who had prepared the calculations, and the secretive manner in which the project had been developed⁴⁰. In Ergopulo's opinion, Maksimov should instead have discussed the issue of constructing a municipal power station within the appropriate commission of the municipal дума, which was likewise concerned with the matter but regarded such a project as economically disadvantageous. The interview concluded with an editorial note stating that other "competent persons" would subsequently express their views on Maksimov's proposal in the newspaper, but no such articles ever appeared in *Krymsky Vestnik*.

Toward the end of May, however, the newspaper reported the arrival in Sevastopol of the Director of the Belgian company, Cesare Del Proposto⁴¹, and on 8 June it covered Viren's visit to the central power station, accompanied by Del Proposto and Bernar-Bormann⁴², the engineer in charge of the Sevastopol branch of the company. A few days later, on 12 June, Viren sent a telegram to the Ministry of Internal Affairs requesting Maksimov's permanent removal from office.

These chronological coincidences may, of course, be nothing more than coincidences. Equally, it may simply be coincidental that the Main Administration for Local Economy, which sought Maksimov's dismissal, was simultaneously engaged in overseeing urban electrification projects and supervising the contractual relationship in Sevastopol with the very Belgian company with which Mayor Maksimov steadfastly refused to conclude an agreement.

It is by no means obvious that Viren, a career military officer through and through, had any knowledge of the disagreements between Maksimov and Ergopulo over the agreement with the Belgian company, or that he himself had any connection with that company.

Viren and Seidlitz in Sevastopol, as well as Gerbel in St Petersburg, were all men of right-wing political convictions, and to them Maksimov genuinely appeared to be "politically unreliable". Nevertheless, in his lengthy letter to Viren of 6 May 1908, in which he explained why he did

⁴⁰ КРЫМСКИЙ ВЕСТНИК. 1908. 21 мая. С. 1.

⁴¹ КРЫМСКИЙ ВЕСТНИК. 1908. 28 мая. С. 1.

⁴² КРЫМСКИЙ ВЕСТНИК. 1908. 8 июня. С. 1.

not consider his actions during the October 1905 events to constitute political unreliability, Maksimov hinted that the real reasons for his dismissal were economic rather than political. He concluded the letter with the following observation: “I sincerely regret having to part with a cause so dear to me and to relinquish the highly flattering confidence placed in me by my electors, precisely at the moment when the most important issues of the city’s economy – the city’s financial position, the question of electric lighting, the question of the port, and the allocation of land to the city – are approaching their desired resolution... Though perhaps such a resolution is not desirable to everyone”⁴³.

In July 1908, Viren ceased serving as temporary Governor-General of Sevastopol following the abolition of the office that he held in conjunction with his position in the Naval Ministry as Commander-in-Chief of the Black Sea Fleet and Ports. The newly established post of Commander of the Naval Forces of the Black Sea was filled by Rear Admiral I.F. Boström, who had previously served as Assistant Minister of the Navy. At that very time, the Naval Ministry was already discussing the large-scale naval construction programmes that would be launched a year and a half later, in 1910. Another year later, Boström resigned from command of the Black Sea Fleet and joined the boards of two companies that received government shipbuilding contracts and were closely associated with major banks: the Nikolaev Shipyards and Dockyards Company and the Russian Shipbuilding Company. Alongside Boström on the boards of both companies sat a representative of the General Electric Company, a major electrical enterprise linked during the 1900s to German and American capital and, from 1909 onward, increasingly brought under the control of the St Petersburg International Bank. These developments have received virtually no scholarly attention to date⁴⁴. One may cautiously hypothesize that, just as Boström was connected with the General Electric, Viren may likewise have had connections with the Belgian company, and that, more broadly, in 1907–1908 Sevastopol and the Black Sea Fleet were becoming the focus of major state-financed projects

⁴³ Quoted in: Чикин А.М. Две жизни прожить не дано. С. 32.

⁴⁴ This issue is mentioned in passing in: Бовыкин В.И. Финансовый капитал в России накануне Первой мировой войны. М.: РОССПЭН, 2001. С. 250–253.

benefiting large business interests. Maksimov's plans to establish an independent municipal power station could well have obstructed this "larger game", the investigation of which still awaits historians.

It cannot be claimed that the author has succeeded in establishing with certainty the motives of all those involved in Maksimov's removal from office. This is due not only to the destruction of part of the documentary record during the Soviet period. Most importantly, it concerns the file *On the Removal from Office of the Honorary Citizen Maksimov*, formerly held in the Russian State Historical Archive in St Petersburg, which, according to the Archive's response to my inquiry, was destroyed in 1950 because Soviet archivists considered its contents to be of insufficient historical significance. Equally problematic are the numerous contradictions and inconsistencies that remain in the surviving documents.

To conclude this analysis of the "Maksimov case" within the broader context of the political police system in the Russian Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century, it should be noted that this local episode demonstrates the existence within that system of officials holding fundamentally different views regarding the boundaries of legitimate public political activity. While at the local level right-wing, Black Hundred conceptions could predominate, the Police Department – the central institution of the political police system – as well as the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs generally proceeded, first, from a considerably narrower definition of "political unreliability" (for example, members of the Constitutional Democratic Party, or Kadets, were not regarded as politically unreliable), and, second, considered any restrictions imposed on individuals solely because of their political views to be unacceptable.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.



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Received
08.04.2026

Revised
08.05.2026

Accepted
08.06.2026