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Research Article

Two sides of the coin: "Asiatic other" Russians vs. "supreme European" Germans?

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Abstract: Russians and Germans have a long history of interactions with each other in which the reforms carried out during the reign of Peter the Great (1672–1725) – the first Russian Tsar – can be regarded as an important turning point. The adoption of a Western understanding in many fields under the reign of Peter the Great led to the emergence of a new type of Russia that grew to become a significant player between the eastern and western parts of Eurasia. It is obvious that, starting in the era of Peter the Great and continuing under the subsequent Tsars and Tsarinas, in the light of the continuing intimate relations with the European world, German culture and German philosophy have maintained a considerable position in the Russian state and society. Have all these reforms, however, made Russia a true member of the European family in the eyes of the "supreme" Western leaders? While keeping this question in mind, the intention in this article is to focus on the other side of the coin in terms of the relationships between Germans and Russians. To this end, taking the Euro-centrist line as the main catalyst, the approach to Russia here is not based on its well-known aggressive and expansionist identity, but rather its status as a target and victim of the enmity of a "European" power, predominantly the German political and intellectual elite of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Keywords: Russia, Germany, Eurocentrism, 19th century, Asiatic other

Madalyonun iki yüzü: "Asyalı öteki" Ruslara karşı "üstün Avrupalı" Almanlar?

Öz: Ruslar ve Almanlar, tarih boyunca birbirleri arasında geniş bir etkileşim içinde olmuşlardır. Rusya'daki ilk Çar olan Büyük Petro döneminde (1672-1725) yapılan reformlar, bu etkileşimin tarihi için bir dönüm noktası olarak kabul edilebilir. Petro'nun hükümdarlığı döneminde, birçok alanda Batı anlayışının benimsenmesi, Avrasya'nın doğu ve batı kısımları arasında önemli bir oyuncu olmaya başlayan yeni bir Rusya'nın doğuşuna da zemin hazırlamıştır. Avrupa dünyası ile devam eden yakın ilişkileri ışığında, Petro ve onun halefi Çar ve Çariçalar dönemi boyunca, Rus devleti ve toplumu için, Alman kültürü ve Alman düşünce tarzının hatırı sayılır bir yere sahip olduğu aşikardır. Ancak, tüm bu reformlar Rusya'yı Batı'nın "üstün" liderlerinin gözünde Avrupa ailesinin gerçek bir üyesi yapmış mıdır? Bu ana soruyu akılda tutarak, bu makalede amacım Almanlar ve Ruslar arasındaki ilişkiler için madalyonun diğer yüzüne odaklanmaktır. Bu bağlamda, Avrupa-merkezci çizgiyi ana katalizör olarak alarak, İmparatorluk Rusya'sını, çokça bilinen saldırgan ve yayılmacı kimliğiyle değil, bu çalışmada 19. ve 20. yüzyılın başlarında Alman siyasi ve entelektüel seçkinleri tarafından temsil edilen "Avrupalı" bir gücün düşmanlığının hedef ve kurbanı olarak görmeye çalışacağım.

Anahtar kelimeler: Rusya, Almanya, Avrupa-merkezcilik, 19. yüzyıl, Asyalı öteki

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> No opportunity must be lost in taking part in the affairs of Europe, especially in those of Germany, which from its vicinity, is of the most direct interest to us (Lehovich 1948, 111-112).
>
> Peter the Great

> Of all Prussia's neighbours the Russian Empire is the most dangerous, both from its power and its geographical position, and those who rule Prussia after me should cultivate the friendship of those barbarians, because they are able to ruin Prussia altogether through the immense number of their mounted troops (Kulski 1941, 225).
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> Frederick the Great

Introduction

Throughout history, the Russian state and society have been subjected to different attitudes, some of which are nurtured by the legacy of Russophobia associated with the expansionist imperial and Soviet eras. Despite the German contribution to this general sense of anti-Russianness, for a certain period, up until World War I, it cannot be denied that Russian intellectual life and society was highly influenced by the Germans. Determining the attitude of Germans toward Russians and the Russian Empire, especially in the period from the mid-19th century up until the beginning of the October Revolution in 1917, will help clarify how the traditional relations and mutual bindings deteriorated. In this regard, this work sheds light on the rising hostility toward Russians through the clarification of arguments in the elites' level for a stronger Germany under the effect of the rising Eurocentric and hegemonic views witnessed during the 19th and early-20th centuries. To this end, the paper makes a comparative analysis of the different perceptions of Russia based on the views of various political and intellectual groups in Germany.

In the first part of the article, a brief historical sketch of the bilateral relations will be provided before focus turns to the developments during the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries. These periods are considered crucial in grasping the rise of the new German state and Eurocentric German nationalism at a time when Russians and their Empire were securing their position as a growing threat in the eyes of several Western powers. In the following sections, the views of the governing elite, intellectuals and members of the press/writers, from Baltic Germans to ultra-nationalists, are deliberated to gain an understanding of the pioneering ideas that were emerging at the time in German society. The works and secondary sources of prominent writers on these subjects in both English and German literature will be the main sources from which this article benefits.

German-Russian relations from a historical perspective

The traditional linkages between the German and Russian communities were greatly stimulated during and after the period of Peter the Great. As William Henry Chamberlin points out: "Peter established a regular German-state bureaucracy, with a table of ranks, for the former administrative system, with its privileges of rank" (1960, 311). From the period of Peter the Great onward, we can talk about a German influence in the Russian Empire in political, cultural and intellectual activities, and this influence found also a powerful base on the ongoing relations between the Russian rulers and German statesmen. It is known that the Romanov dynasty attributed special importance to the establishment of

links between the German and Russian governing elites through the "binding of marriages" (Lobanov-Rostovsky 1943, 30).[1]

The German influence can be felt not only in the dynastic marriages, but also within the bureaucratic structures of Russian politics. Laqueur claims that Nicholas I trusted only two men: "One was Benckendorff, head of famous Third Department [a secret investigatory department in Imperial Russia], the other was the Prussian envoy at his court, to whom he told things that even his own foreign minister did not know" (Laqueur 1990, 28). Indeed, it is possible to provide more examples of the impacts of German army officers and bureaucrats on Russia, however the cultural and intellectual effects of the strong German tradition also merit attention. Among these, the German romantic influence on Russian intellectual life can be mentioned, in particular the considerable effects of Schiller or Hegel on Russian thought, the consequences of which are clearly apparent on the scholarly developments in Russian philosophy, especially during the 19th century. It can thus be said that the interaction that started based on Peter's attitude toward the West reached one of its zeniths in the first half of the 19th century, making contributions that changed the way of thinking among many Russians.

As Florinsky points out, another considerable impact came from the idealistic and romantic philosophy of Schelling, who attracted many "ardent" followers in Russia. Furthermore, Kant, Fichte and Hegel were the cornerstones in the restructuring of the ideas of the Russian intelligentsia throughout the first half of the 19th century (Florinsky 1953, 807). This Russian admiration for German philosophers would nurture two different ways of thinking in Russia, being "Westernism" and "Slavophilism". Laqueur suggests that Germans were regarded as the "masters, teachers or the ideal to be imitated by successive generations of young Russian intellectuals" (1990), which is particularly apparent when reading famous Russian literary works by such authors as Pushkin.

The fact that the interaction has two sides, however, must not be ignored, as a line of interest exists in modern German thought and politics from the Russian side in the traditional sense of the relations during the 18th and 19th centuries. Herder (1744–1803) can be regarded as a precursor of this, promoting a positive attitude toward Russians Germany, and defining Russia as a "cultural tabula

[1] The Russian imperial family, both male and female, married into German princely or royal families. Alexander I married a princess of Baden; Nicholas I married the daughter of the King of Prussia; Alexander II married Mary, princess of German duchy of Hesse-Darmstadt, and Nicholas II another princess of Hesse-Darmstadt, Aleksandra. For further information on Russo-German dynastic marriages see, Lobanov-Rostovsky 1943, 30-35.

rasa", which was accolade agreed upon by Leibniz –another important name in German intellectual history (Hansen-Löve 2021, 136–137). Certainly, German intellectuals like Herder or Leibniz recognised the position of Germany as the "master", yet in their eyes, Russians and their nation should be considered skilful imitators who were to be fostered through education.

Herder saw a sense of peace in Russians, and made a connection between this peaceful character and tranquillity of Russia with the aggressiveness of Germans in their acts. He developed a sense of Slavophilism, despite it is also claimed that Herder's line of thinking has remained as a part of the German nationalist legacy (Gesemann 1965, 424–430). In the years that followed, Herder's views on Russia would find support from other prominent actors, including Nietzsche (1844–1900), despite his representation of a different political tradition. It is interesting to see the similarity in Herder's and Nietzsche's conceptions. While Russia was designed differently from the German and European traditions, but through this difference, the two philosophers considered Russia would fill the gaps of Europe and Germany, the fault lines of which have been revealed in their aggressive particularism and nervousness throughout history. It was for this reason that Nietzsche believed a German-Slavic alliance might be a most desirable outcome (Laqueur 1990, 26).

In the 18th and 19th centuries, we can look also at the relations linked to the increasing diplomatic interactions between the Russian and German rulers, for which the international context, the rise of *Realpolitik* and the principle of the "balance of power" during the 19th century need to be underlined. Russia and the Russian Empire were the subjects of positive German diplomacy for a certain period, for which the effect of the Napoleonic era and Napoleon's famous plans to create a unified Europe under the French rule need to be taken into account. In such an atmosphere, Russia's struggle against Napoleon, and its alliance with Austria and Prussia that would be known as the "Holy Alliance", starting in 1815, would lead to Russian rulers being seen as saviours among Germans against external threats, primarily from France.

Bismarck was a prominent figure in the creation of an appropriate environment for the establishment of positive bilateral relations. His era in Prussia can be considered an indicator of the strength of realist arguments in state policies. In accordance with the aim to prevent a Franco-Russian alliance, Bismarck always followed a careful line in his relations with Russia, assigning the country a prominent position among the allies of Prussia (Florinsky 1953).[2]

[2] Florinsky made a detailed analysis of the Bismarckian attitude toward the Russian Empire. See Florinsky 1958, 970–1135 (for the types of Bismarck's policies during and after the reigns of Alexander II and III in Russia.)

Consequently, the political moderation and agreements stimulated a collaborative environment, paving the way for a novel term of "*Ostorientierung*" in the German political agenda (Hildebrand 2017, 454–466; Laqueur 1990, 26). Highlighting the cooperation between Germans and Russians, and satisfying different political groups in both Germany and Russia, this cooperation was a significant platform for the expression of ideas and propaganda. For example, representatives of the right and extreme-right in Germany underlined the similarity of the problems related to Jews on both the Russian and German territories at the time. To understand the effect of political events on public opinion, we can refer, for instance, to the headline of an article in the influential nationalist German newspaper "*Kreuzzeitung*" following the death of Nicholas I, announcing "Our Emperor is dead…" (Laqueur 1990, 26).

Among the German elite, it is obvious that the interest in Russia continued into the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Indeed, these points to a lack of German knowledge of Russia, and some simple generalisations about Russian society and culture opened a path for hostile schools of thought against Russia. It is true that until the first decades of the 20th century, the unknown side of Russian culture and society was regarded as the reason for the pro-Russian attitudes. The translation of 19th-century classical Russian literature works into German certainly increased the curiosity about Russia. For a considerable proportion of the German middle class, Russia was considered an Eastern territory that was "untouched, primitive, natural, religious and wise", in direct contrast to the "organized, civilized, repressed and mechanized" Western world (Williams 1966, 127). Beneath this positive setting, during the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, Germans always maintained their secure position with Eurocentric hegemonic self-esteem against its newly-developed Eastern neighbours.

In addition, many of the German governing elite had in their minds the possibility of a German-Slavic alliance in political and intellectual life. In various fields, like the economy, Germans and Slavs had long demonstrated how to cooperate. The influence of trade and economy between the German and Slavic people was first proven in the old "commercial lines of the Novgorodian people" (Riasanovsky 2000, 83–86).

Despite the belief in collaboration, there were antagonistic or hesitant circles towards Russia in the German traditional political and intellectual groups. In order to explain the reasons of this antagonism some historical reasons are given by Walter Schlesinger (1970, 203–221). These reasons are mainly based on the contradiction between "*Slawische Westbewegung*/Slavic Movement" into the West and "*Deutsche Ostbewegung*/German Movement" into the East:

The Slav movement, which started to take shape in the 6th century, and the German movement, which reached its zenith during the 12th century with the *Ostsiedlung*[3] policy, provide the historical background of the reasons for worry in the minds of both the German and Slavic people against each other. Lobanov-Rostovsky raised two important indicators of the origin of the mutual territorial-based doubts, which turned into a source of conflict between Russia and Germany during the late-19th and early-20th centuries: "… firstly the eastern half of Germany following the line where Elbe cuts Germany in two, including Prussia, Pomerania and Silesia, and even a portion of Saxony was originally Slavic; secondly, throughout the Middle Ages the Germans colonised these areas, by destroying the Slavic populations or by forcing them to emigrate eastward and southward" (Lobanov-Rostovsky 1943, 28). In this territorial clash, certain events acquired symbolic meaning in the Russian or German historiographies. For instance, the historical events surrounding the Teutonic knights and Russian forces under the command of Alexander Nevskii are a well-known example explaining the clash between eastward-oriented Germans and Slavic people. Nevskii became a cult personality, and holds a symbolic position in Russian history, with tales of his victories continuing to be told during both Imperial and Soviet Russian times as evidence of the courage of the Russian people against Germans. Riasanovsky asserts that the German attacks at that time were an attempt at the "Germanisation" of eastern territories. The Germans had already "Germanised" many Baltic States and western Lithuanian tribes, while Nevskii secured a respectful place in Russian history as the commander who defeated the German forces (Riasanovsky 2000, 78–80).

In the following periods, Russia started to turn into the great representative of the Slavic world, retaining its position as the scapegoat of German imperialists. This position is crucial in understanding the consolidation of the negative opinions of Russia in various German political circles. To give an example, the Russian movement towards Livonia in the 16th century led to significant claims being made against Russian rule. Thus, from the region of the Baltic Germans in particular, the opposition to the "despotic rule" of the Russian Tsar became louder and louder (Laqueur 1990, 28-39). Indeed, this despotic-violent character of the Russians in the eyes of ethnic-Germans in Eurasia was to become a general argument raised by the opponents of Russia.

[3] A German term referring to the policy of settling in the Eastern territories. For more information, see Schlesinger, *Der Osten* (1970), 209-218.

Russia as "the Asiatic other" in the German press

In the light of this historical legacy, in his analysis of the growing anti-Russian sentiment, especially after 1900, Williams makes some important points that can aid in the evaluation of the various voices in German society. Williams firstly argues that: "the mass migration of disaffected political refugees from Russia into Germany after 1900 led to the widespread fear of Russia among Germans" (Williams 1966, 121). In particular, the dynamics in Russia after 1881 during the reign of Alexander III can provide some clues to the pressure applied by Russia to dissident political activities. After the 1890s, Russia lost its status as a desired immigration destination, becoming instead a country from where large numbers of *"émigré"* departed for other destinations. Between 1860 and 1889, 2,147,000 foreigners settled in Russia, while 1,129,000 left the country, and between 1890 and 1915, 1,786,000 settled in Russia, while 3,348,000 departed (Williams 1966, 122). The *émigrés* from the Russian Empire were predominantly Jewish, and the leading destination was the United States. For the left-wing and Jewish political circles, however, Europe and Germany were also attractive political destinations. Obviously, the Baltic Germans were another group who opted for Germany while continuing with their anti-Russian political agendas. Under these conditions, it is not hard to conclude that German public opinion had, more or less, developed a new perspective of Russia and the Russian people that emerged first in the last decades of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries.

Accordingly, the function of the press after 1890, particularly under the reign of Wilhelm in Germany, must be taken into account when measuring the public pulse as regards to the Russian people and state policies. Actually, one of the most noteworthy observations from that time was that a certain lack of knowledge existed about Russia, not only among members of the German intellectual elite, but also among ordinary people. The elite started to learn about Russia from the translated works of famous Russian writers, and in such an atmosphere, the attitudes of the leading newspapers were clearly significant. From the late-19th century up to the 1900s, leading newspapers more often than not nurtured the growing anti-Russian sentiment in their pages. Each newspaper had its own grievance with the Russians and Russian rule, and did not hesitate in imposing their Russophobia on their readers (Paddock 1998, 358–376). For example, *Kölnische Volkszeitung*, a Catholic-oriented daily, followed a national-liberal line, emphasising mainly the "Polish question", turning it into the problems of the oppressed Catholics living under the rule of Orthodox Russians. The famous *Kreuzzeitung*, as the leading Conservative mouthpiece, considered as mirroring the thoughts of the ruling elite and Junkers, attributed importance to another factor in the Russian territory, being the Baltic region and the Baltic

Germans, and the Russification of these provinces. The more liberal organs, such as *Frankfurter Zeitung* or *Berliner Tageblatt*, voiced the problem of anti-Semitism as a main reason their opposition to Russia. In short, there was a general provocative attitude among several members of the German press. In fact, whether for one reason to another, for the sake of the holy *Deutschtum*, a common opposition to the "barbaric or Asiatic Slavs" was apparent in the criticisms voiced by the press (Paddock 1998, 358–376). This is more less the same as the general idea of "Inventing Europe" in the modern sense (Delanty 1995). For instance, commenting on the potential for a Russo-Japanese war, *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten* put forward some interesting arguments in 1903, in which Russians were depicted as representative of the "Asiatic and Mongolian legacy". The newspaper, referring to Nicholas II's use of the term "We Asians" during a visit to India, put forward the argument that the Russo-Japanese War was a conflict between two Asiatic nations rather than a conflict between white and yellow races (Paddock 1998, 363–364).

Unquestionably, the problem lies not in the geographical meaning of Asia or Europe, or any other region, but rather in the meaning behind being an Asiatic country, and being viewed as backward and insufficient in the eyes of the European people at the time. Consequently, the defeat of Russia by Japan was evaluated as the defeat of one Asiatic force by another, and was blamed on the insufficiency of the Russian reform attempts to fill the gaps in its politics and army, which had been already proven to be a problem in Crimea. A similar bias against Russia can be observed at the outset and in the lead up to World War I (Paddock 1998, 363–364). This time, the German press used more aggressive tones, with the reason being the growing Russian anger, as it turned its face from the Asiatic countries to its western border – being the door to the European and German territories. Henry Meyer notes that Russia was still "a terra incognita" to most Germans before 1914 (1955, 260–261). The coming war and the propaganda voiced by the press against Russia consolidated negative ideas on Russia. Naturally, under the pressure of the approaching war, the image of Russia could not be equated with the "soft" or milder parts of the Russian culture and society, as the "barbaric" Tsars and their "violent" Russian foreign policy acts became more famous. A number of intellectuals, including those with left-wing, communist or ultra-nationalist ideological leanings, began producing more on the issues of Russia and the Russians, and thus had an increasing effect upon the general opinion of Russia among the German public. For instance, Theodor Schiemann, a Baltic German, launched his East European seminars in 1902 in the University of Berlin, and these were followed by a Russian Studies program in 1906 in Vienna, and a series of seminars in Hamburg in 1911.

Although these research activities and opinions included those following moderate and objective lines of thinking, the coming war and the certain German claims over eastern territories started to lead to unbridgeable gaps between the Russian and German images, and would contribute to a high sense of Russophobia in these academic and intellectual programs for the years to come.

In the following sections, the aim is to detail some other influential groups in Germany that contributed to the consolidation of Russophobia. It can be said that the emergence of different radical circles, including democrats and socialists, followers of Marx and Engel, nationalists and extreme rightists, together formed a colourful but complicated accumulation of thought, both in Germany and in other European countries. The effects of this would be felt heavily also in Russia, and the road to the Bolshevik Revolution would seem to have taken shape in this way (Plamenatz 1954). In such an atmosphere, it was hence possible and indeed natural to hear a wide range of arguments related to Russia among diverse intellectual circles.

German leftist tradition against the Russian presence

It is clear that the German leftist tradition had a considerable effect on Russian leftist intellectuals. The periods up to and during the Bolshevik Revolution showed that the key socialist personalities in Russia were nurtured by German sources, both in a material and intellectual sense. Both the German leftist circle of intellectuals and the Russian supporters of the socialist understanding found a common enemy in the Russian system of administration, and the presence of despotic Tsars at the head of the state. Before the Bolsheviks brought their plans to life in 1917, socialist and democrat circles in Germany had already made their decision concerning the fate of imperial Russia. In the period from the first quarter of the 19th century through to the end of the century in particular the alliance between Russia and Prussia was obvious in an international context. Russia was subjected to criticism of some of the more negative features of its administration by both leftist and democratic German intellectuals (Plamenatz 1954). Russia was seen as one main locomotive behind the suppression of the leftist reform attempts, and played the role of gendarme of the status quo in Europe. As an example of the despotism in the Russian rule, some dissident groups presented the events of 1848 as proof. The use of Russian troops against the Hungarian revolutionaries showed how Russia made use of its counter-revolutionary forces (Laqueur 1990, 40). These thoughts against Russia nurtured another form of generalisation in which Russia was depicted as a "barbarian" character against the spirit of reformation. On the other hand, for a more

nationalist line, there were warnings of the increasing danger of a Slav invasion of the whole of Europe, starting from German soil.

On this point, one can refer to the ideas of Marx and Engels. Throughout their lives, these two significant Germans were key opponents of the Russian state and order (Borowska 2002, 87–103). An interesting aspect of the Russophobia within this socialist line was the general failure to be able to distinguish between the Russian rule and the ordinary Russian people. While the main arguments were directed at the despotic Russian rule, in the end, they primarily had overgeneralisations in which all Russians were depicted as invaders. The history of Russia and the Tatar-Mongol background were underlined in Marxian writings, therefore forming a connection with the past. This line of opposition found considerable support among the liberal and democrat groups in Germany, and a common opposition to Russia was maintained along those lines throughout the 1850s and 1860s. The problem of Poland was the main issue decreasing the prestige and credibility of the Russian actions during and after this period. In the eyes of radical leftist and democrat groups in Germany after the 1850s, The Russian pressures on the "Polish freedom-seekers" was a devilish act, and part of the effort to spread Russian influence through such policies as Panslavism in the 1870s consolidated the position of this imperial entity as an autocratic power against all revolutionary senses (Borowska 2002, 87-100).

Coming to the 1890s, German leftist movements continued to criticise the Russian rule strongly. A revolutionary war was seen as a necessity against Russia in the eyes of several leftist political groups. This war had considerable meaning, especially for the socialists, including Plekhanov, who welcomed the idea as the leader of the Russian Social Democrats in 1893, and stated that the German army would be "the liberator of Russia" (Laqueur 1990, 38–39). The 1905 events against the Russian rule inside the country and the defeat against Japan provided a temporary hope for German socialists about the possibility of the overthrow of the Tsarist regime. Nevertheless, while the 1905 spirit was beginning to fade in their eyes, the next big event, World War I, represented an opportunity to fight against the oppressive Russian rule in the name of protecting the freedoms of the oppressed peoples.

Hence, while evaluating German socialist criticisms of the Russian order, we must also emphasise the contribution of Russian socialists to the German critics. It is known that from 1900 up until 1905, Germany developed as an important centre of political activity for Russian liberal and socialist circles. Many of the most significant desires of the Russian left-wing representatives found

considerable support from the German socialist circles.[4] Regardless of whether it was leftist, liberal or nationalist, Russia could not be taken seriously as an actor on the political scene, which was in line with the prejudices in the German territory, and all Russians were lumped together under the same category. This category was more or less the same as that noted by Williams: "Russian, radical and eastern Jew became linked together after 1905 as a single type of undesirable" (Williams 1966, 145).

Baltic German intellectuals' role in the problems between Russians and Germans

German people of Baltic origin had another considerable place in the anti-Russian attitude in German political and intellectual life. As already mentioned, the Baltic region was a crossroads for the eastward movement of Germans and the westward movements of Slavs. In this region, since the historical period dated to the 12th and 13th centuries of the Teutonic order, there was a certain legacy of German ethnicity and culture. The Baltic people preserved their origin through the ages, and were known as representatives of conservative "landholding aristocracy". They had also held an important place in government since the time of Peter the Great. The 19th century, especially the end of this period, during and after the reign of Alexander III, was remarkable to grasp the claims of the Baltic Germans against Russians and the Russian state, and intellectually they were successful in having crucial positions like as writers or journalists who may possess adequate power to intensify the hostility against Russia inside German society.

Starting in the 1870s, at a time when the Russian Empire did not hesitate to use Panslavic arguments in the diplomatic field, the Baltic Germans had faced the challenge of the "Russification" process, in parallel with the expansionist Panslavism agenda. According to the form of the Panslavic ideals, which were transformed into an offensive strategy of the Russian state by such theorists as Danielevskii and Fadieev, there would be a vast Panslavic Union region, and the non-Slavic subjects, including the Baltic people in the Union were given the

[4] In the late-19th and early-20th centuries, Russian socialists was inspired and motivated by the German social democratic tradition. Although there were critics of the reformist and trade unionist line of German socialism, German tradition created a sense of inspiration in the works of such *émigré* writers as Plekhanov, Rosa Luxembourg or Alexander Helpland. The relations led to the intensification of Russian socialist movements in Germany, including Lenin's Russian Social Democratic Party after 1900. For more details of the links between Russian-German socialist groups, see Williams (1966, 121-149).

opportunity to share the same destiny as their Slavic neighbours (Florinsky 1953, 241–282).

The natural outcome of this period was the intensification of the mutual hostility between the Baltic German and Russian people. Some of the most important writers who emigrated from Russia's territory to Germany were well-known contributors to this enmity. Among these personalities was Victor Hehn, who authored "*De Moribus Ruthenorum: Zur Charakteristik der russischen Volkseele*" ("Ruthenian Customs: Characteristics of the Russian People's Soul"), and claimed that Russians lacked idealism, conscience and honour. The "oriental despotism of Russians" can be civilized only with the presence of others, as clear evidence of the "terrible inability of the Russian people" (cited in Laqueur 1990, 44). The insults continue throughout the entire book *De Moribus*, and the hostility towards Russians continue with a racialist perspective in this work, although Hehn was considered a liberal at the beginning of his intellectual life, and rejected the claims of racism levelled against him. This period also saw Russians such as Chernyshevsky levelling criticism against the German people, although different from most of intellectuals, whether German or Russian, Hehn – a Baltic German – claimed the Russians were on a one-way road, and saw no possible opportunity for reconciliation between the German and Slavic people.

Another noteworthy name among the Baltic German intellectuals who spoke out against Russia was Theodor Schiemann, an historian who was known for his considerable influence upon over German emperor Wilhelm II. In a powerful letter to Wilhelm in 1906, Schiemann made the following accusation against Russian Tsar Nicholas: "Berlin was full of noble families who have fled from the Baltic provinces, people who find themselves in a particularly sorry state, for they have lost everything: their castles have been burned, their property destroyed and their forests plundered" (cited in Williams 1966, 144).[5] It was obvious that the Baltic lobby against Russia in Germany was a leading case of the aggressiveness and irredentism among Germans, who would not hesitate to voice these feelings from World War I onwards. Theodor Schiemann had been one of the most influential members of the anti-Russian Baltic German group. We know that the Schiemann school of thought was espoused by members of governing and military elite in Germany before and during World War I, and a comparison of the ideas of Schiemann and Hehn reveals a more strategic and realist attitude adopted by Schiemann's line. Yet, although the general Eurocentric critics' despisal of the "Russian primitive order" was similar to that of Schiemann, he had a certain belief in the reformation of Russia in favour of

[5] For the original source on Wilhelm's letters see, Goetz (1920).

German interests. Peter the Great had launched an artificial Westernisation process, however, Germans were required to go beyond this "artificiality" and help bring about real change within the Russian administration and the public to facilitate the creation of a real "*Rechtstaat*", or a government based on law (Williams 1966, 137–138). Such a key act would have guaranteed the rights of many of the non-Russian groups within the Russian Empire, including the Baltic Germans.

German expansionism and anti-Russian *émigré* intellectuals: the case of Paul Rohrbach

During World War I, the ideas of some Baltic German thinkers continued to be influential among the German anti-Russian dissidents, among which Paul Rohrbach is a name that is often mentioned. Rohrbach's significance is based on his understanding of the aggressive German strategy towards Russia, and its negative contributions to German intellectual life espoused by some commentators that paved the way for the development of the Nazi imperialist ideology (Baranowski 2011). In fact, Rohrbach was a typical example of strong sense of *Baltikum* with an anti-Russian sentiment (Meyer 1942, 60). We must not, however, underestimate the effect of the internal political atmosphere in Germany at that time. Different plans started to appear connected to the German future, and Rohrbach found a place among the theorists, who would contribute to the expansionist dreams, being defined in this context as a theorist who wanted to create an integrated ideology from the elements of two important ideologies: *Weltpolitik*[6] and *Lebensraum*[7]. He conceptualised his own imperialism and sought to strengthen his ideologically imperialistic ambitions. Accordingly,

[6] *Weltpolitik,* or World policy, emerged as one of the most popular political and economic programmes of Germany after the 1890s. The term was first defined by Bernhard von Bülow (German Foreign Secretary between 1897 and 1900 and Chancellor between 1900 and 1909). This theory was explained by Bülow as a vehicle for the protection of German vital interests, but after a short time, it was applied as a serious form of German imperialism. In this imperialism, economic aims on the base of neo-mercantilism played a key role. For a detailed analysis of *Weltpolitik*, see Smith (1986, 52-83).

[7] Just as economic imperialism played the key role, or was the core of *Weltpolitik*, migrationist colonialism was defined as the essence of the theory of *Lebensraum* in the name of the creation of a prosperous living-space for the German nation. Like *Weltpolitik*, this theory became more popular after 1890, having first been suggested by geographer Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904). To understand the expansionary political aims of Germans during both World War I and World War II *Lebensraum* had a considerable place. It had a great deal of support in various political circles. However, the conservatives or conservative imperialists remained Customs Ruthenia ardent followers of *Lebensraum* ideal. For a detailed analysis of the concept, see Smith (1986, 83-112).

the ideal of *Mitteleuropa*,[8] or the building of an economic free realm for the development of Germany, constituted the other main pillar in Rohrbachs's thinking. Expanding beyond the original meaning of *Mitteleuropa*, however, this policy acquired a more aggressive character for Rohrbach, who referred to a kind of imperialism in which the full exploitation of the areas under German control would be desirable (Kettler 2020).

In the light of the main aspects of Rohrbach's opinions, we can derive some prominent conclusions regarding Russia. First, Rohrbach could be as rude and as prejudiced as such extreme right-wing groups as Pan Germans. In his eyes, like in the arguments of the socialists or those on the extreme right, the history of Russia was divided by the Tatar period. He truly saw Ivan the Terrible as an important symbol of the Russian Tatars, being barbaric and cruel in character (Rohrbach 1915). The Europeanisation process was, however, an artificial struggle that led to a failure inside Russia, with the most clearly apparent characteristic of the Russian soul being the will of the Tatars for destruction, preventing the linkage of Russians with the European world. Despite the simplicity of these generalisations about Russia, Rohrbach was sometimes successful in making important predictions about the country. For example, after the events of 1905 and the application of temporary liberal solutions in the Russian Empire, Rohrbach claimed in 1908, nine years before the Bolshevik Revolution, that "a few liberal reforms would not suffice to maintain Russia; it was indeed a question whether or not the Tsarist Empire could make all the necessary reforms without experiencing a violent revolution" (cited in Meyer 1942, 62).[9]

Despite his avoidance of using military force by putting a distance to the idea of war in the first years of his intellectual activity, in 1913, Rohrbach started seeing the possibility of war between Russia and Germany as inevitable. He and his friend Ernst Jackh[10] founded the famous wartime periodical "*Das Grössere Deutschland*" (Mogk 1972), and the impact of such intellectual circles on German

[8] The concept of *Mitteleuropa* was used by Friedrich Naumann (1860–1919, evangelical theologian-politician) in one of the first detailed explanations of this term. According to Naumann, a cooperative economic and cultural unity between Germany-Austria, Hungary and Poland would be established, along with close commercial ties with the Turks and Balkans. Following Naumann, different interpretations of *Mitteleuropa* were made and adopted by different political groups, like the *Lebensraum* or *Weltpolitik* versions of *Mitteleuropa*. For details, see Meyer (1955).

[9] For the original source, see Rohrbach (1908).

[10] Ernst Jackh was another important name in the Baltic-German tradition, favouring an expansionist and imperialist Germany. Yet, there were some differences between his ideas and those of Rohrbach's. For instance, Jackh followed a pro-Turkish line, while Rohrbach defended the idea of establishing a protectorate in place of the Ottoman Empire.

public opinion should not be underestimated. When war broke out, the arguments of Rohrbach took on a more violent and aggressive character. After German troops started to invade the Baltic lands of Russian Empire, Rohrbach was motivated to declare his famous plans regarding the Russian future. In fact, in the initial stages of the war, the conflict and the imperialist meaning of *Mitteleuropa* did not cross the boundaries of the Russian Empire, but as Russian resistance weakened toward the end of its Empire, the scope of German geographical aims was extended in the minds of the German intellectuals, and for them the future of Russia, its territory and society might be easily left to the decisions of "victorious" and modern German armies (Meyer 1946, 187).

In his work "*Russland and Wir"* published in 1915, Rohrbach finally declared the main features of his ideas for the future of Russia, presenting his famous theory likening the Russian Empire to an orange (Rohrbach 1915), stating that the Russian territory may be cut into pieces like an orange, after which the core or central part (which was supposed to be as Moscow and its vicinity) would be the only remaining side from the big Russian Empire (Meyer 1942). The Ukrainian territory rather than his own Baltic lands was the focal point of Rohrbach's strategy for Germany in World War I, with suggestions that Ukraine be seen as an important source of economic activity the loss of which would bring about the rapid downfall of Russia.

Another interesting point in Rohrbach's thinking was his attribution of a "liberator" mission to the German forces in the case of Russia, and the resurgence of the traditional Orientalist evaluations of Russians by the Eurocentric masters as "uncivilised or barbaric". Thus, the eradication of Russian imperialism was considered the primary objective of such thinkers like Rohrbach, who behaved like a kind of "protector" of some oppressed people (Kettler 2020). In his opinion, the "Russian Menace" characteristic was applicable to Russian society as a whole, and the defeat of the Russians would be tantamount to the liberation of the people suffering from Russian oppression (Meyer 1942, 64-66). However, it is obvious that Rohrbach's aggressiveness and desire for war overshadowed this so-called "humanitarian" goals, but made him more an aggressive nationalist about the Russian future.

In this sense, at the point at which we have arrived, the collaboration of different political circles in Germany, whether socialist/leftist, or liberal-nationalist of the Rohrbach ilk, against the common enemy (primarily Russia), was no exaggeration, especially in the period before and during World War I, and extending even towards World War II.

Russia in pan-German expansionist plans

The right-wing circle of German intellectuals was known for their practical aims to see expansion towards the Eastern territories, in which the bulk of their hostility was aimed at the Slavic and Russian presence. In the late-19th century, particularly after the beginning of the reign of Wilhelm II, the territorial claims became more aggressive. In right-wing circles, Constantin Frantz[11] and Paul de Lagarde[12] were two names that attracted considerable attention for their belief in the great mission of Germany to move into the East and to enter into a war with Russia, thus consolidating German superiority in the region. Their effects on political decisions at that time are open to discussion, while there is little doubt that they were able to steer public opinion, and to find support from various circles of society. In the late 1890s and in the first years of the 20th century, the effects of this provocation could be seen clearly. The formation of the Pan-German League [13] brought organisational support to the imperialist and chauvinistic German claims, and as a consequence, the expansionist aims against the Russian territory and ideas based on the "cultural superiority" of the German race above the Slavic presence started to be given with a louder voice by right-wing idealists.

In the minds of such new Pan-German representatives as Tannenberg or Heinrich Class, who was the head of the League, there was a plan to evacuate the local Slav population from the east after the German conquest. Under the leadership of Heinrich Class (starting from 1908), and after, the Pan-German League developed its expansionist plans in which the annexationism and Central European integration within the context of Lebensraum were very strong elements (Smith 1986, 110–111). Looking from one point of view, it could be said that the Pan-German attitude contained no particular or unique enmity towards Russia. The main aim was to consolidate power and to provide a colonial solution to reality through a required war. As a consequence, attacking the neighbours, while at the same time expanding one's territory on various sides appealed to

[11] Constantin Frantz (1817–1891) was a political writer and Secretary in the German Office who advocated a great Central European Federation and a German global policy. For examples of his speeches, see Kulski 1941 (226–27, 258–259).

[12] Paul de Lagarde (1832–1891) was an Orientalist, philologist and politician. Professor of Oriental Languages at Halle and Göttingen Universities, he advocated a Greater Germany, demanding first a national religion. He had an important meaning during the time of Nazi rule and was referred to as an "advance guard of the Third Reich by the Nazis" For more on his thoughts, see Kulski 1941 (62, 239, 255-256, 350-351).

[13] The Pan German League or *Alldeutscher Verband,* which launched its activities in 1894, is regarded as a direct outcome of the growing desire in Germany for colonial expansion. For a detailed analysis of the organisation, see Wertheimer (1971).

many of the theorists in the Pan-German League. This differentiation from the times of the Realpolitik of Bismarck, who mostly preferred to play according the rules of the "balance of power", showed that Germans had acquired full self-esteem, but lacked rationality and were more aggressive. Maybe most destructively, they would learn from the experience of Hitler and Nazi Germany that having only hostile neighbours can bring about a rapid downfall for a country.

The connection between the Pan-German League and Baltic Germans is highly visible, being a combined Eurocentric source of anti-Russian sentiment. Although from the beginning of their intellectual life in the second half of the 19th century, Baltic Germans such as Rohrbach would criticise the policies and racist line of Pan-German theorists, it is apparent that in 1904 and 1905 a connection was established against the common enemy: Russia. Some groups among the Baltic Germans sought support in highlighting the Russian pressure upon the Baltic people at that time. Williams claims that in the first years of the 20th century Pan-Germans remained indifferent to the grievances of the Baltics about the Russian danger, while in 1905, following the successful lobbying of Baltic émigrés, a major campaign started to be conducted in which Pan-Germans travelled to several cities in Germany and gave speeches in favour of the Baltic Germans, and against the growing Russian threat (Williams 1966, 140–143).

Conclusion

This article sheds light on the different sides and the root causes that were behind the growing Russophobia in German political and intellectual life towards the darker years of the first half of the 20th century. As can be understood from the presented data, in the brief period from the 1850s up until World War I, German political and intellectual figures struggled to acquire a dominant place in global politics and among the world-nations, and simultaneously, many states and nations emerged as victims of the German experience both in intellectual and real life, among which Russia can be included.

It is certain that there was little knowledge or understanding of Russia and Russian society in Europe, and naturally, in German society, and these unknowns were nurtured by a Euro-centric hierarchical attitude that went hand-in-hand with the Orientalist outlook that existed up until contemporary era. For Robert Williams, following remarkable factors continued to nurture anti-Russian feeling in Germany, and they retained their significance, even into the beginning of the 20th century: "Rising numbers of Jewish people, students and intellectuals coming from Russia, Pan-German sentiments and the acts of Baltic émigrés in Germany" (Williams 1966, 142–143). Consequently, while analysing the German

anti-Russian sentiment, one must take into account all of the elements, groups and individuals who played key roles in German understanding during the late-19th and early-20th centuries. In this context, for further studies, it would not be wrong also to argue that the intellectually rationalist, expansionist and maybe more naïve form of Euro-centric Orientalism against some countries, one of which is Russia throughout this study, continued with more violent and devastating experiences for Germany, Russia and many other nations, as seen during World War II.

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