

(This is background discussion done in Feb., 2003 which incorporates much material which was not included in my later article on The Growth of Anti-Germanism in Tsarist Russia : the Velicyn Incident).

Changing Attitudes Toward the German Colonists in Tsarist Russia,
The Historical Context for the Velicyn Debate in 1890.

by

Roland M. Wagner, Ph.D.
San Jose State University

Introduction

In the late 1880s a series of slanderous attacks on the ethnic Germans in the Russian empire appeared in Russki Westnik and other Russian language newspapers, marking the onset of a growing wave of animosity against this national minority which peaked at various points during the remainder of the tsarist era throughout the remainder of the Tsarist era. The attacks in the 1880s coincided with legislative campaigns to restrict the ownership of farming lands by the German colonists. These slanderous attacks also laid the ideological groundwork for more extremist attacks during the First World War, when the anti-German backlash escalated out of control, pogroms erupted in the major cities, and eventually the Germans residing along the western border regions were exiled en masse to Siberia. The Germans in Volhynia and nearby western provinces of the Russian empire were the first to bear the brunt of this assault, but soon the scale of the operation grew to the point where it affected all the German colonist population, as well as ethnic Germans in urban areas throughout the country. This turn of events also set the groundwork for the eventual mass destruction the German ethnic minority during the Soviet era.

The German colonists were once courted by the tsars and touted as role models of productivity in the Russian empire. What was the historical background to this sea-change in attitudes toward them? In the words of the historian James Long, how did they go from being “privileged” immigrants to despised and “dispossessed” scarcely within one century? In the words of Ingeborg Fleischhauer, how were the colonists transformed from being a critically important and “active factor” in the economy of tsarist Russia to a “mere object” targeted for ethnic cleansing? How could such a tragic reversal of fortunes take place?

This case study explores the historical background to an infamous series of attacks launched against the German colonists in 1890 by A. A. Paltov, a contemporary Russian author who wrote under the pseudonym of “A. A. Velicyn.”¹ Velicyn’s slanderous attacks greatly alarmed the German colonists, and responses to him appeared in various German newspapers. One of the most detailed rebuttals was written by an unknown author, who signed his columns simply as “A. R” (which may simply stand for “editor,” *Redakteur*). The series was published in the Odessaer Zeitung, beginning with issue no. 39 on March 15, 1890, and it continued through issues

¹ Velicyn’s name was transcribed in German as “Welizyn.”

no. 41, 45 - 50. The entire rebuttal is translated in this study, along with a discussion of the broader historical context for Velicyn's assault.

Part A: the Early Image of Germans in Tsarist Russia

Germans were not newcomers to the Russian empire, and they had long played a crucial role in the evolution and development of the country. Russia's intellectuals and social planners had long viewed the West, especially the German speaking realms, with a mix of admiration and respect as a source of modernization for Russia. The process of centralization of resources via land grants to the nobility had accelerated from the latter 15th century on, and by the 16th century the majority of the peasantry were renters of lands that were now owned by private proprietors. In other parts of Central Europe the rural population lived under the provisions of the so-called 'German law,' enjoying rights to land tenure that were unheard of in the East.

These privileges had been restricted originally to the Germans who poured eastward in the great colonization movement that began in the twelfth century, in order to encourage them to leave their old homes west of the Elbe river. But they were soon extended to most of the indigeneous population in the lands in which the Germans settled.²

Germans had been especially welcome since the time of Peter the Great (1682 - 1725), who ushered in a era of accelerated modernization of the economy and introduction of new technology in an attempt to rapidly catch upwith the West. Peter's successors continued these open-door policies, luring many foreign artisans and craftsmen to settle in Russia's cities and countryside.

One of the most important tsarist policies, which had great import for the growing presence of ethnic Germans in the Russian empire, was their experiment with large-scale colonization of the borderlands by foreigners. This was a natural solution to the pressing problem created by the runaway growth of the empire. Since the collapse of the Mongol hegemony and the emergence of a united Russian state under the leadership of Moscow, there was a seemingly limitless opportunity for territorial acquisition. The Russian empire had grown rapidly as a conquest state since the mid 16th century. Ivan IV expanded the frontiers south to the shores of the Caspian and east into the Volga basin and the Urals. By the mid 17th century Russian settlers had reached the Pacific. By the time the Romanovs ascended the throne in 1613, their empire encompassed 3.3 million square miles, and by the time Peter I began his reign in 1682, it covered 5.6 million square miles.³ The expansion of the borders had quite simply outpaced the natural reproduction rate of the native Russian population. Vast portions of the borderlands were sparsely settled, defended by only a few scattered frontier garrisons. Donald Mackenzie Wallace, who wrote a well-known travelogue of Russia near the turn of the nineteenth century, noted:

² Jerome Blum, *Lord and Peasant in Russia from the Ninth to the Nineteenth Century* (Princdton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 97.

³ Blum, 1961, p. 120.

So long as the southern frontier was pushed forward slowly, the acquired territory was regularly filled up by Russian peasants from the central provinces who were anxious to obtain more land and more liberty than they enjoyed in their native villages; but during "the glorious age of Catherine" the frontier was pushed forward so rapidly that the old method of spontaneous emigration no longer sufficed to people the annexed territory. The Empress had recourse, therefore, to organised emigration from foreign countries.⁴

(from internet, translation of: Gedenktag an die Deportation der Russlanddeutschen, by T. Fefyolova, in Rundschau, August 28, 2001, Number 34 (431))

Then and now, there have been Germans in Russia. Early Russian Tsars demonstrated great interest in German technicians, scientists, military people, merchants, and so on. But the wave of settlers, well-planned and directed from the highest levels, did not take materialize until the reign of Katharina II (1762 - 1796). After her first manifesto of Dec. 4, 1762, by which she formally invited immigration to Russia, failed to elicit a real response -- it should be remembered that the Seven-Year War (1756 - 1763) was still raging in Germany -- she issued a second, detailed manifesto that met with great success. On March 19 further regulations were promulgated that dealt with ownership of land, named specific areas for settlement, and designated the amount of land to be allocated to each immigrant farmer. The most significant regulations read as follows:

1. The right to unrestricted exercise of religious freedom
2. Temporary exemption from taxes, set for 10 - 30 years in rural areas, for 30 years in the cities
3. Interest-free loans for any and all acquisitions
4. Exemption from military service "in perpetuity"
5. Self-government at the community and school level
6. 30 - 80 desyatins of land granted gratis by the Crown to every family

Under Katharina II, the hold of the Turks was finally broken as they were being driven out of the Black Sea region. In 1763 Russia acquired the Crimean Peninsula. In 1788 the fortress of Ochakov was captured, and in the 1792 the "Peace of Jassy" forced the Turks to cede to Russia the area stretching from Ochakov to the Dnyestr River. And via the "Peace Bucharest" in 1812, Russia was awarded Bessarabia.

⁴ Donald Mackenzie Wallace, Russia, published in 1905, chapter 16. Passages downloaded from internet, www.worldwideschool.org/library/books/hst/European/Russia/toc.html, September, 2000.

This constituted the very onset of the development of the region, demonstrated especially in the actions of the war's hero, Potyomkin. He founded the cities of Cherson, Mariupol, Sevastopol, Yekaterinoslav, Nikolayev, Tiraspol, and Odessa, the "Queen of all Black Sea Cities."

All of these cities would later be of great importance to the colonists, who played a substantial role in their development. Since the new areas were only sparsely populated, and the new lands were yet to be opened up, there was a great need for able and diligent workers, especially farmers.

Following the invitation by the Tsarina, around 8,000 families (or about 27,000 persons) emigrated to the Volga region between 1763 and 1767. On the mountainous as well as the grassy shore of the river, families such as the Kleins and the Bauers, the Heckmanns and the Eurichs began, from about 1764, established colonies such as Anton, Fischer, Schilling, Rosenhein or Hussaren, and also places that commemorated the names of the colonists' origins, such as Schaffhausen, Zurich, and Holstein. The first colonists had come from Hesse. In the Marian Church at Buedingen, about 400 new couples were registered in the period 1764/65 alone. At their weddings, they were already being called "Russian Colonists."

Rapidly, the Hessians were followed by families from Alsace, the Palatinate, Switzerland, Bavaria-Schwabia, Northern Germany, and Western Prussia.

The immensity of the geographical expansion of Russia that stemmed from lands taken from Turks and Crimean Tatars was equaled by the extensiveness of the wave of immigration to the East.

Lands that had been allocated to the colonist families would turn into untouchable and hereditary possessions in the colonist communities. Furthermore, the colonists had been granted the right to communal self-government without interference in their internal affairs from any Russian authorities. They were even allowed to acquire servants and subject any "member of Muslim peoples" to their service. Finally, also of great significance was the fact that the colonists were allowed to leave the Tsarist Empire at any time, without impediment.

These were the privileges that formed the impetus for a powerful wave of immigration that lasted around 100 years. They attracted German colonists not only to the Volga, but also to South Ukraine, to Crimea, to Bessarabia and even to the Caucasus.

There was a long standing precedent by other regimes in eastern Europe for luring foreign colonists into their vulnerable border regions in order to create buffer zones. Germans had been settling in eastern Europe since the Middle Ages, expanding primarily along the shore of the Baltic and along the Danube valley. It is a widespread misconception that all these settlements were the result of a military drive into the Slavic realms, the so-called *Drang nach Osten*. In reality, most of the German settlements were the result of an orderly process of colonization at the invitation of local rulers who wanted to develop their territories. Duke Heinrich of Breslau launched an intensive campaign to lure German settlers into Silesia in the 13th century, and similar invitations were extended for settlers in Pomerania during the 14th century. King Ottokar II (1253-1278) established numerous German settlements in the Czech regions, especially in Bohemia, Moravia, and the Sudetenland. A large nucleus of German colonies was also established in Hungary, beginning with the invitation of king Bela IV in 1241. Following the defeat of the Ottoman Turks by the Austro-Hungarian monarchy at Vienna in 1683, a period of vigorous economic and military expansion into the Balkans ensued for over 200 years, marked by the further growth of German settlements. Germans were settled in the Hungarian lowlands in 1689, which had been newly seized from the Turks. Most of these settlements were concentrated in the Banat river valley, and their descendants came to be known over time as the "Donau Swabians." During the 1700s about 400,000 Germans were invited to settle throughout the greater Danube basin and they established a broad arc of colonies, from Slavonia in the west to the Banat, Siebenbürgen, and Transylvania in the east.⁵

Russian monarchs viewed this as a viable model to emulate as they sought to lure foreigners to found settlements along their frontiers. In the 1750s a series of Serbian military colonies was established along the Black Sea. In 1763 Catherine II of Russia, (known as "the Great," reigned 1762 - 1796), herself of German origin, issued her famous invitation for foreign colonists. It was disseminated in several foreign countries, but the greatest response came the German speaking realms. Under her careful supervision, a series of agricultural colonies were established along the Volga river valley, from 1764 onward.

There were several strategic considerations behind Catherine's decree. It was hoped that the German colonists would stimulate the general agricultural development of the country. The immediate motivation was that the Volga colonies would serve as a buffer zone, using the same strategy as Austria-Hungary a century earlier when it had established the German settlements in the Banat region. Russia's armies needed stable source of supplies in the border regions. These new German settlements would anchor the eastern fringe of the empire against the Cossacks, Kirghiz and other nomadic tribesmen from the steppes of central Asia, whose raids had plagued the empire for centuries. By turning the steppes into productive farmlands, the German colonies would create an ecological barrier, eliminating a large swathe of the open grazing lands that were essential for the nomadic lifestyle. This naturally fostered inter-ethnic hostility between the colonists and their nomadic neighbors. In the early years the German

⁵ Robert A. Selig, "Ungarland ist's Reichste Land," *German Life*, February/March, 1999, pp. 21 - 25). See also Roger Bartlett's suggestively titled work, *Human Capital, the Settlement of Foreigners in Russia, 1762-1804* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), which surveys the immigration policies in effect during these early years.

colonies became targets of lightning raids and guerrilla attacks, greatly adding to their problems of security and viability during the crucial founding years.

Within four years of Catherine's invitation, 27,000 Germans had settled in the Volga region, founding 104 villages on both sides of the river. Many Mennonites also emigrated to Russia at this time from the Danzig region, accompanied by Lutherans who established villages in adjacent areas in the Jekaterinoslav (modern Dnepropetrovsk) and Taurida districts near the Sea of Azov. The early years were difficult for the German settlers. Besides freezing Russian winters, they had to endure the frequent raids of the Cossacks.

The treaty of Kutchuk-Kainardschi with the Ottoman Turks in 1774 granted Russia the territory between the Bug and Dnieper rivers and the right for commercial navigation on the Black Sea. The Crimea was incorporated into the Russian empire in 1783. In 1789 the area along the north shore of the sea was absorbed, including Odessa. Wide stretches of the steppelands along the north shore of the Black Sea were virtually uninhabited and it was imperative that it be settled as quickly as possible in order to solidify Russia's claim to the area. The use of Russian peasants was not feasible because most of them were serfs at that point, bound to the estates of the nobility. In 1789 Catherine extended an invitation once again for German colonists, attracting large numbers of Mennonites, who settled in the Chortitza, near Jekaterinoslav.

In 1804 Catherine's grandson, Tsar Alexander II, continued her policies and authorized the creation of German colonies along the north shore of the Black Sea and in the Crimea, which was recently acquired from the Ottoman empire. Like the earlier Volga colonies, those in the Black Sea region were intended to serve as a buffer zone, in this case against Turkish resurgence into the area, and as an anchor for his claim to the Black Sea trade.⁶ However, Alexander departed somewhat from previous open door policies. The number of colonists was restricted to 200 families per year, only skilled artisans and farmers were admitted, they had to have at least 300 gulden, and the amount of state support given them was reduced.

Finally, in 1819 the period of large scale recruitment of foreign colonists drew to a close. There were a few cases of group immigration in the following years, but special permission had to be given to each group. By that point approximately 100,000 German farmers and craftsmen had accepted the invitations from the Russian crown. They had founded some 300 agricultural colonies, extending in a broad fan around the fringes of the empire, from Bessarabia in the west, across the northern shore of the Black Sea to the Caucasus, and along the Volga in the east. By mid-century the German colonist population had grown to one-half million. The original colonies began to blossom into numerous daughter-colonies to accommodate their burgeoning population. There was a dramatic increase in their purchase of private farmlands from the local Russian nobility, especially in the Black Sea region. By century's end their population stood at 1.3 million, and by the early Soviet era it peaked at about 2 million.⁷

⁶ The name of the territory, "Ukraine," originated from the Slavic word, *ukraina*, which meant "to separate," or "to cut," and which over time acquired the meaning of "borderland," then later "country" (*krai*) in modern Ukrainian (<http://www.ukrainnet.org/Ukrainefact/Ukraine.html>, September, 2000).

⁷ The 1897 census figures showed 1,790,489 German-speaking subjects in the Russian empire, 1.3 million of whom lived in agricultural villages. By the onset of the Soviet era

Early Tsarist Policies on Assimilation of Foreign Colonists

Wallace provides a graphic portrait of the ethnic diversity that was characteristic of the Russian empire in the early nineteenth century:

This policy [of inviting foreign colonists from diverse lands] was adopted by succeeding sovereigns, and the consequence of it has been that Southern Russia now contains a variety of races such as is to be found, perhaps, nowhere else in Europe. The official statistics of New Russia alone--that is to say, the provinces of Ekaterinoslaf, Tauride, Kherson, and Bessarabia--enumerate the following nationalities: Great Russians, Little Russians, Poles, Servians, Montenegrins, Bulgarians, Moldavians, Germans, English, Swedes, Swiss, French, Italians, Greeks, Armenians, Tartars, Mordwa, Jews, and Gypsies. The religions are almost equally numerous. The statistics speak of Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Gregorians, Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans, Mennonites, Separatists, Pietists, Karaim Jews, Talmudists, Mahometans, and numerous Russian sects, such as the Molokanye and the Skoptsi or Eunuchs. America herself could scarcely show a more motley list in her statistics of population.⁸

Of the many foreign colonists, the Germans were by far the most numerous. Initially the presence of so many foreigners was not regarded as a "problem" by the Russian crown, but rather as a strategic resource. Russia had inherited a legacy of unassimilated ethnic minorities as a result of its rapid expansion as a conquest state. The empire had absorbed White Russia (Byelorussia), Bessarabia, Polish Volhynia, and eventually by 1815 it had absorbed the Grand Duchy of Warsaw itself, pushing its western boundary all the way to the Vistula. The Russian empire was a patchwork quilt of ethnic minorities, as was also characteristic of other old regimes in Eastern Europe (most notably the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, which maintained hegemony in the Balkans).

The concept of "citizenship" in these pluralistic old regimes was not grounded on the assumption of an eventual "melting pot," as became so characteristic in the USA. Most of the ethnic minorities in the Tsarist empire, such as the Poles, Finns, Ukrainians, and Armenians, had been absorbed in situ as large territorial entities, via conquest or shifting of political boundaries. A few, such as the ethnic Germans, were "diaspora" immigrant populations that had settled in concentrated pockets throughout eastern Europe, interspersed with other ethnic groups. Before the rise of ethnic nationalism in the latter decades of the 19th century, the territorial integrity of these pluralistic conquest states was not perceived to rest upon ethnic uniformity. There was no demand that all these subject peoples abandon their indigenous folk traditions and

the number of ethnic Germans had grown to about 2,000,000, and they had established more than 10,000 villages (Fleischhauer, 1986, p. 13). They were the fourteenth largest among the approximately 125 ethnic groups in the Soviet Union (Gerd Stricker, "Preface," p. xxv in Sinner, 2000).

⁸ Wallace, 1905, chapter 16.

dialects and become “ethnically” Russian, as we understand this term today. Ukrainians, Greeks, Turks, Germans, and others rubbed elbows in the bazaars of this rich polyglot and pluralistic empire. Indeed, it was commonly believed at that time that ethnicity was an inherent and immutable trait, as much a part of a person’s being as his biology and physical appearance. Imperial administrators expected little more than that citizens be loyal and productive subjects of the crown. Later, with the rise of the concept of the “nation state” in the 19th century, emphasis came to be placed on the need for a close fit between political boundaries and the ethnicity of its inhabitants. Nationalistic rhetoric heated throughout eastern and western Europe and it increasingly targeted ethnic minorities for maintaining linguistic and cultural differences from the dominant cultural mainstream. In Tsarist Russia ethnic Russians actually comprised a minority of the empire’s population, although they were the single largest group. As late as 1914, Andreas Widmer, an ethnic German in South Russia, observed that Germans, Bulgarians, Moldavians, Russians, and other groups lived largely in ethnically segregated settlements and did not assimilate to each other’s ways -- “each nation lives its own life and holds fast to its customs.”⁹

Long points out that the colonists remained “relative strangers in the Russian empire primarily because government policy generally fostered their physical and cultural isolation...”¹⁰ It was strategically important for the foreign colonists to help anchor the vulnerable borderlands, which required them to remain intact, in situ, along the borders. Assimilation among the neighboring populations was also not a viable option given the current social conditions of the native Russians in the rural areas at that time, most of whom were still locked into serfdom. Tsarist policy during the early decades did not promote assimilation of the foreign colonists, but rather it promoted them as agrarian and cultural role models, which was one of the original purpose for founding the colonies. Imperial policy in the early nineteenth century was intent on reinforcing the viability of the colonies, keeping them intact until they could become self-sustaining and eventually make a positive contribution to their local economies, as was the initial plan. Rather than pursuing policies fostering the transformation of foreign colonists into Russian peasants, the intended flow of cultural influence early in the 19th century was in the opposite direction.¹¹

Extraordinary guarantees were made for the rights of the “foreign colonists” (as they were so referred) to preserve their own language, customs, and religious freedom, under the careful supervision of the Chancellery for the Guardianship of Foreign Colonists. Colonies were established in accordance with the religious denomination of the members (Lutheran, Catholic, Mennonite, Reformed). Agricultural and grazing lands were granted to each village as a corporate unit, and the right to use these lands were restricted to the families that were members of the local community (the *Gemeinde*). The Chancellery carefully controlled the movements of the colonists, making it difficult for outsiders (especially non-Germans) to become members of the

⁹ Widmer, 2000p. 18.

¹⁰ James Long, The German-Russians, a bibliography of Russian Materials with Introductory Essay, Annotations, and Locations of Materials in Major American and Soviet Libraries, Santa Barbara, CA: Clio Books, 1978, p. 3.

¹¹ Msgr. George P. Aberle, From the Steppes to the Prairies, (Bismarck, N.D.: Bismarck Tribune Co., 1963) p. 15.

local communities. Newcomers had to be accepted by a majority vote of the *Gemeinde*, which was carefully documented by the village mayor's office, then reported to the district office, and forwarded to the Guardianship office for final approval. There was a tight and nearly seamless functional integration between the major cultural institutions of the villages -- the elected village council, the local church, and the parochial school. The schoolmaster was appointed by the town council, and he often also doubled as the choir-master, as well as the sexton (*Küster*). Over time these early conditions fostered an enclave mentality in the German colonists. Each community developed distinctive dialects, costumes, nicknames, folk-songs, and other such local markers of identity.

Schmid also emphasized these same points in his early study of the German colonies, written in 1919:

The individual farmstead ["Wirtschaft"] was not so much property of the Wirt, but rather only available for his utilization. Personal property consisted only of the building which he erected on his farmstead ["Hofplatz"]. The Wirt didn't have the right to sell his Wirtschaft or to loan out money on it [i.e., use it for collateral]. However, the Wirtschaft was inherited through the male line, in a descending direction. If there were no other sons or brothers available, it returned to the community. Wives and daughters had no claim to the community land. In the course of the years, there developed a customary right to sell out, but it was strictly limited by the community. Ownership in the community could be sold, but only to another community member, and only with the consent of the community. The necessary consequence of these conditions and customs was that the colonists remained purely German, and that no other foreign elements were able to make headway there.¹²

Wallace also noted that the intended civilizing influence of the German colonists on the Russian peasantry proved to be a failure, largely because of the ethnic insularity of these rural settlements, their conservative inertia, and their tendency to fall back onto tradition.

A Russian village, situated in the midst of German colonies, shows generally, so far as I could observe, no signs of German influence. Each nationality lives "more majorum," and holds as little communication as possible with the other. The muzhik observes carefully -- for he is very curious--the mode of life of his more advanced neighbours, but he never thinks of adopting it. He looks upon Germans almost as beings of a different world-- as a wonderfully cunning and ingenious people, who have been endowed by Providence with peculiar qualities not possessed by ordinary Orthodox humanity. To him it seems in the nature of things that Germans should live in large, clean, well-built houses, in the same way as it is in the nature of things that birds should build nests; and as it has probably never occurred to a human being to build a nest for himself and his family, so it never occurs to a Russian peasant to

¹² Edmund Schmid, *Die deutschen Kolonien im Schwarzmeergebiet Südrusslands*, Berlin: Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland, 1919, pp. 4-5.

build a house on the German model. Germans are Germans, and Russians are Russians--and there is nothing more to be said on the subject. ... The Russian, it is said, changes his nationality as easily as he changes his coat, and derives great satisfaction from wearing some nationality that does not belong to him; but here we have an important fact which appears to prove the contrary.¹³

Such attitudes of ethnic exclusivity were, of course, typically mutual, a two-street. The relative degree of ethnic, linguistic, and religious dissimilarity between the immigrant people and the host population also typically affects assimilation under such circumstances:

National peculiarities are not obliterated so rapidly in Russia as in America or in British colonies. Among the German colonists in Russia the process of assimilation is hardly perceptible. Though their fathers and grandfathers may have been born in the new country, they would consider it an insult to be called Russians. They look down upon the Russian peasantry as poor, ignorant, lazy, and dishonest, fear the officials on account of their tyranny and extortion, preserve jealously their own language and customs, rarely speak Russian well – sometimes not at all--and never intermarry with those from whom they are separated by nationality and religion. The Russian influence acts, however, more rapidly on the Slavonic colonists--Servians, Bulgarians, Montenegrins--who profess the Greek Orthodox faith, learn more easily the Russian language, which is closely allied to their own, have no consciousness of belonging to a *Culturvolk*, and in general possess a nature much more pliable than the Teutonic.¹⁴

The extent to which the German colonists preserved a specifically “German” ethnic identity has been characterized in different ways in the literature and there have been political undertones to some of these discussions. Schmid, writing in 1919, stated above that the colonists remained “purely German.” During the Nazi era it was emphasized that the “*Volksdeutsche*” had maintained firm cultural and racial bonds with the Fatherland and their scattered settlements throughout eastern Europe were portrayed as “islands” of *Deutschtum*, “bulwarks of Western civilization.”¹⁵ While the general outlines of this model are correct (the extent of intermarriage with non-Germans was minimal in the colonies until late in the 19th century, and the colonists undeniably did preserve their German mother and folk traditions), these facts are sometimes clouded by reactions against the chauvinism of the Nazi era with its extreme emphasis on preservation of ethnic purity. To balance the over-emphasis on the notion of preservation of “cultural purity,” it should be noted that there were undeniable and essential accommodations by the German colonists in clothing, diet, housing, etc., otherwise they couldn’t have survived in their new environments. Over time there were also accommodations in the non-material arena as well, such as the adoption of

¹³ Wallace, 1905, chapter 16.

¹⁴ Wallace, 1905, chapter 16

¹⁵ See, for example, Georg Leibbrandt, *Deutschland und der Osten*.

linguistic loanwords into their local dialects (especially for new items and artifacts, new foods, government terminology, etc.). Stricker cites the following passage from a German traveller to Russia in 1862, emphasizing that while the Volksdeutsche may have preserved a general sense of their ethnic identity and origins, "The majority of the German colonists 'know nothing about Germany, and they also don't want to know anything more about it'"¹⁶

Generalizations to either extreme should not be carried too far. The colonists obviously did adapt to their new geographic and cultural environment, as any immigrant population eventually must, but this did not preclude their maintenance of significant ethnic ties with the old homeland as a source for cultural, linguistic, and religious objects and products. Koch, for example, notes that there were "active cultural ties" to the German homeland that persisted late into the 19th century. For example, he cites a letter written by a colonist, Jacob Fritz, to relatives in Germany in 1888:

I wish you could send me an issue of a good old Catholic folk songbook that also provides the keys for a harmonium (harmonica) organ accompaniment." In another letter he writes: "Due to the fact that I like to sing, I would like to please ask you for a songbook with words that also provides the keys for a harmonium. My children (the 32 year old Jacob F. has with his wife, Katharina, the daughters Juliane, 9 yrs, Adelheid, 8 months and the 5 year-old son Franz) always want to sing and I don't have any song books."¹⁷

Joseph Schnurr also notes that linkage with the old country were preserved through religious artifacts that were venerated as late as the 1920s:

The German Catholics of the Black Sea region stemmed from various parts of Germany, and they brought their song books with them to Russia and preserved them from generation to generation. Especially beloved was the songbook of the diocese of Speier, that was venerated like a relic, examples of the first edition from the year 1768 could still be found in the first quarter of our century.¹⁸

Indeed, these bonds with the old homeland were quite natural because the religious faith of the German colonists marked them as perpetual outsiders in the Tsarist empire. During the early years there was a shortage of priests and ministers (especially those who were German speaking) to serve the needs of the colonists, so for several years they were served by visiting non-Russian clerics. When the colonists built churches and prayer-houses, they often purchased organs, statues, and stained glass windows from the old realms. The cultural insularity of the colonists was promoted by

¹⁶ Gerd Stricker, Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas, Russland, Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1997, p. 101

¹⁷ Leopold Koch, Geschichte des Dorf Voelkersbach, Karlsruhe, Germany, 1982, pp. 245-46.

¹⁸ Joseph Schnurr, die Kirchen und das religioese Leben der Russlanddeutschen, Katholischer Teil, self-published, 1980, p. 65.

the restrictive policies of the Tsars, designed to protect the Orthodox church. Schnurr¹⁹ notes that Catherine II's manifest of 1763 prohibited the German colonists from establishing monasteries. Also, the right to missionize was restricted to the Orthodox church. Consequently, the church authorities of the Tiraspol diocese lacked an adequate number of helpers for the various charity organizations. Fr. Jakob Scherr, who established the well-known orphanage in Karlsruhe in 1888, had to find a way around this shortage. He introduced the lay-order of St. Francis (the so-called "Third Order," or "Terzianerinnen"), under the directorship of Sister Gertrud Keller (the sibling of Fr. Konrad Keller). Schnurr describes this lay order as consisting of men and women who were married and who were residing with their families and pursuing their trades, but they also wanted to become more deeply involved in charity activities and in other lay piety activities.

Schnurr also notes that the Russian authorities often raised bureaucratic barriers and restrictions against the repair and expansion of churches. Churches, chapels and prayer-houses could be constructed only where an already extant "Gotteshaus" existed. New religious structures required a special dispensation from the Ministry of the Interior (according to the Ukase of Dec. 31, 1830). The difficulties raised by the regime against the construction of new religious facilities were rather high, according to Schnurr. In the second half of the 19th century under Alex II, Alex III, and Nicholas II, dispensations for such construction were made only in special cases. "The construction and the repair of a church depended totally on the judgment of the Administration, which had ties with the Orthodox 'Eparchial' authorities"²⁰

"While the enlightened classes regarded the French Revolution with interest, the Czars, such as the brutal Paul I, Catherine's successor, severely repressed any intellectual or social manifestations. Under Alexand I tensions increased and Russia was invaded by the armies of Napoleon. Following the victory over the invader, Russia imposed her will on Poland and annexed Finland and Bessarabia. Alexander's brother, Nicholas I, wrested a large part of Armenia from Persia and instigated a policy of even greater government centralisation. His reign saw the beginning of another reactionary period. In the middle of the 19th century social tensions were very great and the political and intellectual scene was dominated by liberals, who had adopted some of the French ideas and ideals, as well as, conservatives. Insurrection partly organised by non-Russian people, as well as demonstrations and revolt by Poles, Ukrainians, Belorussians and even Russians were ruthlessly suppressed." (p. 7 in *Russia, a Photographic Portrait*, by Ted Smart and David Gibbon, New York: Crescent Books, 1984).

Nicholas I and the Slavophile Reaction

Most of the foreign colonies had been founded by 1820 and, with the exception of a few later Mennonite settlements, the great experiment in colonization of the Russian empire had largely drawn to a close by that date. Nicholas I (1825 - 1855) affirmed the

¹⁹ Schnurr, 1980, p. 72.

²⁰ Schnurr, 1980, p. 74.

rights and privileges of the German colonists on Nov.9, 1838, and in 1842 he conferred citizenship on all the colonists throughout the empire.²¹ Given the fact that the colonies had already existed for several decades by that point, this rather belated confirmation of citizenship emphasizes their special legal status and distinctiveness within the general population.

However, other developments were also taking place which began to undermine the *laissez faire* attitudes to ethnic pluralism in the Russian empire. The steady growth of the native Russian population had made colonization less necessary as a tool for economically developing the borderlands. As the population grew, there was a demographic shift from the “core” Russian regions to the peripheries. By the end of the 18th century the proportion of ethnic Russians in those regions had already more than doubled, from 9 percent to more than 20 percent.²² As the demographic center of the empire shifted to the expanding peripheries, the overall population became more ethnically mixed. Russians comprised 71 percent of the empire’s population in 1678, but their proportion had steadily declined until by 1897 they stood at 43.5 percent.²³ The empire had grown into a multi-ethnic, religiously pluralistic, polyglot state. Increasingly there was a continuous struggle for the imperial center to hold as it grappled with the desires of the subordinated ethnic groups for autonomy.

As Bartlett notes, the tsar’s advisors had become aware that the financial expenditures were no longer warranted to recruit foreigners and to support them until they acquired the skills and adaptations to become productive citizens.²⁴ It was far cheaper and easier to relocate indigenous Slavic peoples within the empire whose farming methods and lifestyles were already preadapted to local environmental conditions. This also had the additional advantage of relieving the growing internal pressure for land.

During Nicholas’s reign, Russia’s intellectuals became increasingly preoccupied with the question, “what are we?” The debate revolved around the meaning of two key concepts – *narod* (“the people”) and *narodnost* (“nationality”). Traditionally the primary emphasis for citizenship in the Tsarist empire had been on being a law abiding subject of the tsar, and not on race or even on ethnicity. The cultural markers of “Russianness” had been one’s knowledge of the Russian language and conversion to the Orthodox faith.²⁵ During Nicholas I’s reign debate shifted to whether the Russian empire would continue as a pluralistic state or whether the ethnicity of the subjects should assume greater importance.

There was a broad spectrum of opinion. At one end were the “Westernizers,” such as Botkin, who continued to follow the course set by Peter the Great. They drew

²¹ Johann Schwind, *Die Auswanderung von Duetschen in das Schwarzmeergebiet im 17. Und 18. Jahrhundert*, privately published by the author, 2001, p. 55. He probably derived these dates from Stumpp.

²² Jeff Chinn and Robert Kaiser, *Russians as the New Minority, Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Soviet Successor States*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996, p. 44.

²³ Chinn and Kaiser, 1996, p. 51.

²⁴ Bartlett, 1979, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

²⁵ John W Slocum, “Who, and When, Were the *Inorodtsy*? The Evolution of the Category of ‘Aliens’ in Imperial Russia.” *The Russian Review* 57 (April 1998), p. 175..

their inspiration for Russia's economic, political, and cultural development from France, England, and the German realms. The Russian nobility were much more international and eclectic in their lifestyles and identity than the peasantry. The nobles were more prone to adopt foreign manners, customs, and institutions; the peasants, in contrast, were decidedly conservative.

At the opposite extreme from the Westernizers were the "Slavophiles," such as Aksakov, who rejected the pro-Western notions that had been in vogue for so long. In their quest for "true Russianness," they turned to the peasantry for inspiration. Russia's major writers and intellectuals (Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Gogol, Turgenev, etc.) were arrayed at various points in the middle of this spectrum.²⁶ Allensworth feels that the Slavophile-Westernizer debate was the fundamental dividing line in Russian history which defined issues that have persisted over the last two centuries.

The Slavophile *Weltanschauung* "...developed as a result of a deliberate attempt to define Russianness and Russia in opposition to the West."²⁷ Rather than fawnishly imitating the West, the Slavophiles regarded it as decadent and felt that Russia should follow its own path to a unique spiritual destiny. "True Russianness," they felt, had a deep ethnic basis, although in these early stages of the national debate race or biology was not emphasized. Poliakov feels that Russian nationalist rhetoric tended to focus on cultural or ethnic identity, and on more mystical concepts such as a Russian "national soul," rather than on race because Russians were "well aware that they were a mixed population."²⁸ This may be true to some extent, but it should be kept in mind that the concept was in its nascent form everywhere in Europe at that point. The Enlightenment concept of "race" was not identical with the fully developed concept that had developed by the end of the 19th century, as exemplified by the Pan-German League. Russian nationalists were by no means immune to the racist notions that became so prevalent in other European countries late in the century and over time Slavophile beliefs increasingly took on racial overtones.

Slavophilism was a confused blend of ideals and wishful thinking, woven around a few fragments of ethnographic fact. An idealized emphasis was placed on the communal *mir* system which was characteristic of land ownership in rural villages. Supposedly the *mir* system, by which village lands were periodically equally distributed to all male "souls" within a village, reflected the inherent "democratic communalism" in the Slavic "national soul," in contrast to the ego-centricity and lust for private property of the West. In fact, as a later generation of scholars demonstrated, the *mir* system was neither ancient nor "inherent" in the Slavic soul. Rather, it was an historical carryover of feudal serfdom, when estates owned by nobility were collectively tilled by the tenants.

In their quest for ethnic pride, Slavophile authors (following the example of other nations at this time) also began indiscriminantly to lay claim to famous predecessors in

²⁶ Peter Christoff, *K. S. Aksakov, A Study in Ideas*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982, p. 275.

²⁷ Wayne Allensworth, *The Russian Question: Nationalism, Modernization, and Post-Communist Russia*, Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998, p. 44.

²⁸ Poliakov, 1996, p. 125

history, such as the ancient Trojans, the Anglo-Saxons, and even Siegfried, all of whom allegedly were of "Slavic" descent.²⁹

Tsar Nicholas regarded the excesses of Slavophilism with suspicion. Their somewhat contradictory blend of doctrines mixed freedom of conscience, communal egalitarianism, and traditional loyalty to tsar and the Orthodox faith – with the proviso that the state should not interfere in local affairs.³⁰

One effect of Slavophilism was that it drove an ideological wedge between the Russians and the ethnic minorities in the empire. Before the advent of Slavophilism, non-Russians were simply "different" members of a pluralistic empire. Now the notion had come into vogue that they did not share in a unique and special Russian national "soul."

The cleavage became especially pronounced in the attitudes toward Germans. Germans had enjoyed great prestige in the Russian empire since Peter the Great and they had become veritable personifications of "Westernness." There was an ancient mystique about how the Russian dynasties were supposedly of "Germanic origin," with roots extending back to the Varangians. The Romanovs had made several strategic marriages with German princesses and it was well-known that German blood flowed in their veins. Most Russian nobility ("Boyars") also took pride in being of non-Russian descent.³¹ Slavophilism had even drawn much its inspiration for Slavic nationalist rhetoric from the folkish notions of German Romantic authors, such as Herder. The influence of German "rationalism" Hegel etc. Slavophilism stood these notions on their head, and turned them against their Western sources.

This same extraordinary influence of Germans also led to their becoming targets of reactionism, precisely because they had become almost synonymous with "foreign influence" in the country. In his 1871 publication, "Russia and Europe," Danilevsky, one of the leading advocates of Slavophilism, drew a fundamental contrast between the "Romano-German" cultural type, which personified "aggression," and the "Slav" cultural type, which represented genuine Christian humanism.³² Danilevsky listed the various ethnic groups entitled to participate in a Pan-Slavic union. He specifically excluded those who were not "homogeneous in spirit and blood" with the Russians, and he advocated a relentless struggle against "Italianization, Magyarization, and Germanization" of the empire.³³

The third ideological current, "pan-Slavic federalism," was broader in its political ambitions, advocating a loose federation of autonomous Slavic peoples throughout Eastern Europe under the tutelage of Russia, with its spiritual center based in Constantinople. Peter the Great had already voiced such an idea, and since then the peoples of the Balkans had looked upon "mother Russia" as an ally in their quest for liberation from Ottoman control. Nicholas's grandmother, Catherine II, had also

²⁹ Poliakov, 1996, p. 125.

³⁰ Basil Dmytryshyn (ed.), *Imperial Russia, a Source book, 1700-1917*, second edition, Hinsdale, Illinois: The Dryden Press, 1974, p. 229. See also Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974, pp. 266-274.

³¹ Leon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth*, New York: Barnes & Noble, 1996, p. 115.

³² Poliakov, 1996, p. 126.

³³ Dmytryshyn, 1974, pp. 329-330.

dreamed of expanding into the Dardanelles and reconstituting the Byzantine Empire, under Russian leadership. However, the Pan-Slavs of tsar Nicholas's time were also critical of serfdom, tsarist autocracy, and imperialism, which naturally was not tolerated. The leaders of the "Society of Sts. Cyril and Methodius," the secret Pan-Slavic brotherhood, were arrested in 1847.³⁴

The seeds of Russian nationalistic reactionism were planted at this time. Across the political spectrum, including liberals as well as revolutionaries, it was increasingly emphasized that the true history of Russia was not just of the state, but also of the Russian "people" and the "homeland."³⁵ Officials implemented Russification policies in schools in non-Russian areas of the empire, pressured non-Orthodox religious groups to convert, and enacted restrictive measures to suppress non-Russian ethnic groups. These forces came to clearest focus during the Slavophile movement, which reached its zenith in the 1840s and 1850s.

Early in his reign Nicholas faced a challenge from a group of reformist officers, known as the "Decembrists," who called for the abolition of serfdom and tried to impose constitutional limits on the monarchy modeled after those of Western nations. Interestingly, despite their embrace of Western ideals, anti-foreigner attitudes were already apparent among the Decembrists. For example, the "Union of Welfare" that they advocated was to be restricted to "...Russian citizens, those who were born in Russia and who speak Russian. Foreigners who left their country to serve ... [Russia] do not deserve confidence by this act, and consequently cannot be considered Russian citizens. The Union considers worthy of this honor only those foreigners who have rendered important services to our country and who are passionately attached to it." A second (and apparently more liberal) draft of their proposed constitution specified that "twenty years after the promulgation of this Constitution of the Russian Empire no person who has not become literate in the Russian language may be recognized as a citizen."³⁶ These words were undoubtedly written with ethnic minorities like the German colonists in mind, the great majority of whom had little, if any, knowledge of the Russian language until relatively late in the nineteenth century and remained as cultural islands within the empire.

Nicholas quelled the Decembrist constitutional challenge, but reformist agitation continued to grow. His intolerance of ethnic diversity also escalated as a result of the challenge he faced from the Poles and Ukrainians, who chafed under Russian suzerainty. A rebellion by the Poles was crushed in 1831. Nicholas reacted by increasing suppression, imposing censorship, promoting Russian culture, language, and the Orthodox faith in the border regions as a common bond to hold the empire together.

³⁴ Basil Dmytryshyn (ed.), *Imperial Russia, a Source book, 1700-1917*, second edition, Hinsdale, Illinois: The Dryden Press, 1974, p. 229.

³⁵ Petrovich, 1968, p. 195. The reader might note a similarity with German Romantic authors who also focused on the "people" (*Volk*) and the land during this same time period. It should also be noted that the mystical fervor of the Slavophiles alienated serious Russian intellectuals, such as Leo Tolstoy.

³⁶ Dmytryshyn, 1974, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

The doctrine of “Official Nationality” was proclaimed in 1833. Count Uvarov, the author of the policy, described it as a “political religion” based on a threefold platform: absolute obedience to tsarist autocracy, adherence to the Orthodox faith, and nationality.³⁷

Since the days of the late Byzantine empire, the Orthodox faith had been the religion of choice for Russia’s rulers since (who? King Igor? Who selected it as the religion of choice above Roman Catholicism, Islam, and Judaism). Conversion to the Orthodox faith had historically served as a common bond welding together the diverse ethnic groups in the Russian empire.

The term *narodnost* (derived from the root word *narod*, meaning “people”) was rather vague in its meaning. Petrovich notes that *narodnost* is “untranslatable,” but he defines it as having roughly the same “cultural sense” as the German term *Volkstümlichkeit*.³⁸ Riasanovsky comments further: “*narodnost*...referred to the particular nature of the Russian people, which, so the official doctrine asserted, made the people a mighty and dedicated supporter of its dynasty and government.”³⁹ A crucial shift had taken place: the tsarist doctrine of “nationality” had declared that there was a link between Russian ethnicity and loyalty as a citizen, which implied an expectation that the empire’s ethnic minorities must eventually assimilate to the Russian mainstream. This doctrine continued to be emphasized thereafter by succeeding tsars through the century.

Although Nicholas repressed the cries for political liberties and abolition of serfdom, he was drawn by the vision of assisting Russia’s “little brethren” Slavs to achieve national autonomy from the Turks, under the banner of the Orthodox faith. He pursued these ambitions with greater determination than his predecessors. Between 1828 and 1856 Nicholas launched a series of military ventures to dislodge Ottoman control of the Balkans and of the Straits, culminating in the ill-fated Crimean War (1853 – 1856). Despite the fact that most of the fighting took place close to Russian home bases, the war ended in failure for Russia because of the intervention of Western powers (Britain and France).⁴⁰ Another result of this conflict was that it contributed to the developing rivalry between Russia and Austria (heretofore one of Russia's chief allies) for dominance in the Slavic-populated Balkans.

Alexander II’s Reforms

The Crimean War made it painfully clear to Nicholas’s successor, Alexander II (1855–1881), that there was a need to modernize Russia. Despite her enormous resources and manpower, Russia was serf-ridden and medieval in its social infrastructure, no match for the industrialized West. Alexander launched a series of

³⁷ Nicholas Riasanovsky, “Afterword: The Problem of the Peasant,” in Wayne Vucinich (ed.) *The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, California: Stanford University Press, 1968, p. 274.

³⁸ Michael Petrovich, “the Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Historiography,” in Wayne Vucinich (ed.) *The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, California: Stanford University Press, 1968, p. 194.

³⁹ Riasanovsky, 1969, p. 359.

⁴⁰ Clarkson, 1969, *op. cit.*, p. 290-291.

“Great Reforms” designed to address long overdue issues that had been plaguing his vast empire. These included the introduction of uniform standards of administration, modernization of the military, judiciary, and educational systems, and most importantly, the emancipation of the serfs, who comprised about 90 percent of the population.

Emancipation was a delicate political issue. The expectations and demands of those at the bottom of society had become increasingly explosive during the Crimean war, yet at the same time the nobility was anxious to retain its prerogatives. After much debate, an unsatisfactory compromise plan was reached. The serfs were legally freed in 1861, but they were not given free title to the lands they tilled, as they had hoped and expected. They remained anchored to the estates as members of a commune, which had to repay redemption fees for the land to the state over a period of 49 years.⁴¹ Peasants were also not allowed to leave the commune for nine years, after which their departure required payment of a fee to the commune, which most could not afford. Peasant unrest erupted on an unprecedented scale for a few years after the emancipation. They had expected that they would be granted free land, and “many understood freedom in the sense of freebooters.”⁴² Many of the freed serfs gravitated into the cities, where it was difficult to absorb them into the local economy.

Uniform standards of administration were introduced in 1864 when a broader organ of local government was created known as the *zemstvo*,⁴³ which brought together all the disparate social classes and ethnic groups under the same umbrella. Alexander was not willing to transform the empire into a limited constitutional monarchy, but he made concessions in the sphere of local self-government. The locally elected *zemstvo* officials were restricted to purely economic affairs and they played a merely consultative role, with no legislative power at broader administrative roles, other than “being permitted to submit to the Tsar humble petitions regarding anything which it considered worthy of attention.” The advocates for constitutionalism nevertheless hoped that these new institutions, such as the *zemstvo*, might gradually acquire greater political influence.⁴⁴

In 1871 the “colonist” status of the ethnic Germans was terminated (although the term continued to be used informally for many decades). The special Chancellery for the colonists was dissolved, and they were absorbed into the local district *zemstvo* administrations. An independent judiciary was established in 1864, following Western models. According to the judicial reform, petty crimes would be adjudicated by “justices of the peace,” chosen by the local *zemstvo*, and more serious crimes by a regional courts. A system of elementary schools was also established in 1864, with

⁴¹ Aston, 1990, p. 170.

⁴² Terence Emmons, “The Peasant and the Emancipation,” in Wayne S. Vucinich, *The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, California: Stanford Univ. Press, 1968, p. 52.

⁴³ The *zemstvo* were elected assemblies that functioned at the provincial (*guberniia*) and county (*uezd*) levels. They had jurisdiction over schools, public health, food supply, roads, insurance, relief for the poor, maintenance of prisons, and other district concerns. The *zemstvo* existed from 1864 until the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. The *volosti* were rural village districts that elected representatives to serve on the *uezd zemstvo*. The nobles also had their own separate electoral college for the *uezd zemstvo*.

⁴⁴ Wallace, 1905, ch. 39.

instruction in Russian, supplementing the parochial schools that existed in most colonies. A permanent board was appointed by the government to oversee teachers, doctors, and chairmen of the provincial and district *zemstvo*. Complaints began to mount of interference in local affairs by the Russian *zemstvo* officials. There were many informal reports from those years of an escalating level of thievery by former serfs in the German colonies, with minimal interference from Russian police or prosecution by the district judges.⁴⁵

The colonists generally perceived all these reforms with alarm, as the first step in an official campaign aimed at their forced assimilation. Part of their concern derived from their accurate insight into the impact that these changes would have on their very tightly integrated social systems, in which all institutions interlocked into a socially functional whole. As anthropologists have long pointed out, change in such tightly integrated systems is not just incremental, since one institution reflects all the others. For the first time in their history, the autonomy of the local German village community was being undermined in many important ways. Since the founding of the colonies, the village council had appointed teachers, and there had been a close link between village council, school, and religious denomination, since the schools were essentially parochial institutions that passed on cultural and religious values. Undermining the schools, introducing Russian as a language of instruction, taking the appointment of teachers out of the hands of the local community and placing it into the control of Russian bureaucrats, all such changes were, at their bottom line, attacks on the ethnic cultural integrity of the village and attempts to drive a wedge into the colonist sociocultural system in order to forcibly open it up and to Russianize it. Taking control of the schools meant taking control of the primary socialization institution of youth out of the hands of the colonists, and placing it under control of Russian bureaucrats. This happened concurrently with the undermining of local control of the courts, and gerrymandering of Volost boundaries which in many cases made the colonists political minorities. The colonists rightly perceived what was behind this, as also did the Moslems in the east, the Poles in the west, and all the other ethnic minorities, who protested these forced Russianization measures for much the same reason.

Of even greater concern to the German colonists, Alexander II attempted to modernize the military by adopting a Prussian model of universal military service. Their exemption from military duty, which had been initially promised by the tsars, was revoked in 1874. This had a special impact on the Mennonites, who were religiously opposed to participation in any form of military activity.

The reforms of Alexander II have stirred some discussion in the historical literature on the German-Russian experience. Msgr. Aberle, for example, represents a more traditional position which lays heavy blame on tsar Alexander II for revoking long-standing policies and changing the status of the German colonists. Aberle (himself born in the Black Sea region) represents the subjective perspective of the German

⁴⁵ Long, 1978, p. 4 and Aberle, 1963, p. 63. It should be acknowledged that many of these anecdotal reports were highly selective. According to Fleischhauer (1986) and Long (1988), ethnic Germans came to play increasingly important roles in the *zemstvo* and in the courts over time. Neutatz (1993, pp. 53-55) also points out that while there were some complaints about incompetent *zemstvo* officials in the *Odessaer Zeitung* in 1878, the frequency was low.

colonists. He views 1876 as a watershed year marking a crucial change in the status of the Germans in Russia, because up to that year the colonists were allowed to maintain their own courts and to deal with all crimes, except the most serious, such as murder, which was judged by the district court. In 1876, "Russian judges were appointed in every district." This undermined the autonomy of the German colonies at a crucial juncture in their history. In 1861, the serfs were freed but not offered free land as the German colonists had. Aberle notes that the German colonists came to be regarded as aliens and intruders, and the Russians, who had seen themselves as neighbors, became convinced that whatever the Germans possessed belonged rightly to them. An escalating level of thievery, especially at the hands of the former Russian employees, became quite common without interference by law enforcement or condemnation by the judges. Bad feelings grew and hiring stopped.

Msgr Aberle is quite correct when he notes that the relationship between the ethnic Germans and the Russian government deteriorated as a result of tsar Alexander's reforms and where once there was cooperation there was increasing distrust. They felt betrayed by the nullification of promises that made to their ancestors. As noted by Hattie Plum Williams, an early sociologist who studied the first generation of German-Russian immigrants, one of the most commonly cited reasons for their leaving the Russian empire was avoidance of having to serve in the Russian military. Later scholars have pointed out that conditions in the Russian military were not as onerous as they were in the past, but nevertheless there seems to be a rather clear ethnographic reality of perception, which does not have to match political reality. Social scientists have referred to such circumstances under the phrase of "relative deprivation," which denotes a condition of deteriorating conditions relative to prior standards (give a definition from David Aberle's studies).

Despite the charges that have often been leveled against Alexander, his reforms were not motivated by anti-Germanism.⁴⁶ He in fact had several ethnic Germans in his cabinet, and his reforms were sincere, pragmatic attempts to address long-overdue problems of the empire. The *zemstvo* legislation had initially excluded the foreign colonists, out of deference for their cultural distinctiveness, and they were the last group to be absorbed in 1871.⁴⁷ During these years the German colonists remained highly respected (at the official level) for their diligence and economic success. When many Mennonites began emigrating to the USA, Canada, and elsewhere in response to the 1874 military service decree, tsar Alexander became concerned about losing his most highly productive subjects, so he commissioned negotiations with them to allow them to fulfill their service obligations in alternative ways. There was even discussion of using the system of property-ownership in the Black Sea colonies as a model for organizing the newly freed serfs in their communes.⁴⁸ The premise was that productivity would be

⁴⁶ See Neutatz, 1993, for a detailed discussion of this issue. Williams, 1975, also concurs in this assessment of Alexander II's motivations.

⁴⁷ Neutatz, 1993, p. 42.

⁴⁸ The Volga colonists had been organized in the corporate *mir* system, which tended to reduce the size of family holdings over time as their population increased. In the Black Sea region, in contrast, the colonists practiced impartible inheritance, which kept their farms intact, and they were much more successful in purchasing new land and establishing daughter colonies.

enhanced by allowing impartible inheritance of the same parcels of land, rather than periodically reshuffling them under the communal *mir* system. As would be expected, Slavophile nationalists attacked the notion of using a German model for organizing the peasantry, since they regarded communal land tenure as “deeply rooted in the character of the Great Russian race.”⁴⁹

Russian Expansionism during Alexander II’s Reign

As Robinson has noted, during Alexander II’s reign “the growth of nationalism in the borderlands was to some extent paralleled and counterbalanced by the growth of a Great Russian nationalism...”⁵⁰ The vast Russian empire continued to grapple with centrifugal forces that threatened to pull it apart, as Poles, Ukrainians, and other subject peoples tried to shrug off Russian suzerainty. The Poles launched another insurrection in 1863, which soon spread to the Lithuanians and White Russians as well. After it was crushed, increasingly drastic measures were implemented to suppress their nationalist aspirations. Even the use of the Polish language was forbidden, as well as the “little Russian dialect” (Ukrainian) in 1876.⁵¹

Tsar Alexander also clung to old dream of Russian expansionism against the Ottoman empire, which been a recurrent theme in tsarist foreign policy since Catherine the Great. It was also a recurrent theme that had echoed in Slavophile writings. Danielevskii, for example, wrote in 1871:

[Constantinople has been] the aim of the aspirations of the Russian people from the dawn of our statehood, the ideal of our enlightenment; the glory, splendor and greatness of our ancestors, the center of Orthodoxy, and the bone of contention between Europe and ourselves. What historical significance Constantinople would have for us if we could wrest her away from the Turks regardless of Europe! What delight would our hearts feel from the radiance of the cross that we would raise atop the dome of St. Sophia...

But Constantinople should not become Russia’s captial...Moscow alone has the exclusive prerogative on that. Tsargrad, in a word, should not be the capital of Russia, but the capital of a Pan-Slav Union...”⁵²

While the Western powers were preoccupied during the Franco-Prussian war (1870-71), Alexander II seized the opportunity to refortify the northern shores of the Black Sea. The insurrections of the Serbs and Bulgars against the Turks in 1875-76 provided the pretext for coming to the aid of Russia’s “Slavic brethren,” culminating in the Russo-Turkish war (1877-78). Early in the Turkish campaign the Russian armies

⁴⁹ Roger P. Bartlett, “Colonists, *Gastarbeiter*, and the Problems of Agriculture in Post-Emancipation Russia,” *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 60, no. 4, October, 1982, p. 563.

⁵⁰ Geroid Tanquary Robinson, *Rural Russia Under the Old Regime*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967, p. 149.

⁵¹ Riasanovsky, 1969, p. 421; Neutatz, 1993, p. 63.

⁵² Cited in Dmytryshyn, 1974, p. 329.

were repulsed in Bulgaria and Asia Minor, and the ensuing national frustration turned increasingly against the tsar. Towards the end of the war the tide had turned in favor of Russia, and their armies were encamped under the walls of Constantinople. Although Russia emerged the victor and seized much territory, national ambitions were again frustrated when they had to yield the fruits of victory at the Congress of Berlin in 1878 as a result of threats from England and Austria-Hungary, who feared Russian expansionism. The Congress was deftly presided over by Bismarck, an “honest broker” who had no direct vested interest in the Balkans. This time Russian national outrage was directed outward against the Western powers and anti-German rhetoric soon swelled to a strident level in the Russian media. Bismarck was targeted because of his “betrayal.” It also spilled over onto the colonists, who were accused of profiteering during the war. Similar charges had been made against them during the Crimean war.

Pan-Slavism, an intensely nationalistic and messianic movement which viewed Russia as the heir apparent of the Byzantine empire and the preordained unifier of Russia’s “little brethren Slavs” throughout Eastern Europe, had steadily grown in popularity since the 1840s. A turning point was the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78, in which Russia intervened as a self-proclaimed “protector” of Slavdom in Serbia and Bulgaria. Pan-Slavic rhetoric and xenophobia reached a strident level.

The patriotism stirred by the Russo-Turkish war, and the frustrations of its aftermath, led to explosive growth of the Pan-Slavic movement. This also reflected Russia’s on-going preoccupation with its western border regions, and its unresolved efforts to define a national vision of a unified Slavdom. The tsar, of course, would not embrace the notion of a loose Pan-Slavic federation, least of all while Poland and the Ukraine were trying to break loose from tsarist control. The more radical members of the movement, the *narodniki*, grew in their revolutionary fervor, took to the countryside to promote communism among the peasantry, and eventually they became subject to mass arrests in 1877.⁵³ A major shift took place when Tsar Alexander II was assassinated in 1881.

Alexander III and the Rising Tide of Russianization

Alexander III (1881-1894) took quick action against the growing revolutionary violence after he came to the throne. The national shock at the assassination of his father allowed him to quickly reassert autocratic control. Soon after his accession he made it clearly known that he would permit no limitations of the autocratic powers of regime. He established a network of secret police agents and informers throughout the country, and rolled back many of the basic rights and freedoms that had been granted by his father. Russia was effectively reduced to a police-state.⁵⁴ Those with Liberal aspirations realized that demonstrations on behalf of constitutionalism would merely confirm Alexander’s reactionary tendencies, and accordingly remained quiet and waited for better times.

After the accession of Alexander III the die was cast and attitudes toward Russia’s ethnic minorities hardened. Of even more ominous import to the German

⁵³ Clarkson, 1969, p. 328.

⁵⁴ Richard Pipes, Russia Under the Old Regime (NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1974). See chapter 11, “Towards the Police State.”

colonists, a sea-change in attitudes toward the ethnic Germans in the empire set in, emanating not just from disgruntled intellectuals and bureaucrats, but this time from the highest echelons of power. Alexander III's campaign of enforced Russianization became increasingly strident and reactionary towards all minorities in the empire. The German colonists were caught in the middle of his efforts to promote "nationality" and Orthodoxy, which alienated Moslems, Lutherans, Catholics, Jews, and other religious and ethnic minorities.⁵⁵

Strangely, a few in the Ger-Rus community in the USA have retained a defensive attitude in favor of Alexander III's policies of enforced assimilation. This likely reflects current concerns about recent immigrants to the USA, projected onto Tsarist Russia in the 1880a. This was an exchange on internet in 2001:

Beljakova wrote:

- > Alexander III decided that the time has come
- > to whield the Russian Empire and its disperse people into "One nation,
- > One Language" and started to russify minorities, by introducing the
- > Russian language into schools... Like America likes to americanise its
- > immigrants and minorities by teaching English in schools. Ditto British
- > Empire, French Empire, Portugues Empire.
- > Some GRs never did get the hang of the Russian language, which hindered
- > their progress in Russia, and made the Russian neighbours suspicious of
- > them...etc....
- > Also, universal army call was to be introduced and officers were
- > complaining that they were being sent soldiers/conscripts who could not
- > understand Russian orders.
- > As in the USA, American officers do not give orders in half a dozen
- > immigrant languages, but in the lingua franca of USA, being English.

Russification involved much more than just reasonable efforts to teach the Russian language and to introduce universal military conscription. Suspicion of ethnic minorities also involved much more than just their ability to speak Russian. Probably the most sympathetic analysis by any modern historian has been offered by Theodore R. Weeks in the book *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frotier, 1863-1914* (Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1996). He has presented a more condensed analysis in an article entitled "National Minorities in the Russian Empire, 1897-1917" (in Anna Geifman, ed., *Russia Under the Last Tsar, Opposition and Subversion, 1894-1917*, Blackwell press, 1999). I will present some extracts from that article:

"And it was generally accepted that a 'real' Russian was of the Orthodox faith. The tsar and his wife had to be Orthodox (foreign princesses were obliged to convert if they wished to marry into the Romanov family), and the Orthodox church enjoyed a special, privileged status

⁵⁵ Riasanovsky, 1969, p. 433.

within the state. To be sure, by 1900 this rather clear identity of Orthodoxy and 'Russian-ness' came increasingly under attack from various sides...Still, there was an almost overwhelming tendency for the administration to equate 'Orthodox' with 'Russian'" (p. 113-114).

"Russification was less a cultural weapon than an administrative and political imperative. From its early days, the Russian Empire embraced the form of a centralized state, epitomized by the figure of the tsar, ruling autocratically over all subjects, whatever their ethnicity and religion...Russification could also be used as punishment. The most obvious example of this kind of policy is to be found in the Kingdom of Poland...that had been annexed by the Russian Empire at the Congress of Vienna. After the abortive insurrection of 1863 these provinces were administered by Russian bureaucrats, education (particularly at secondary and higher level, but even in some elementary schools) became Russified, and even shop signs had to be written in both Russian and Polish (furthermore, the Russian inscription could not be smaller or set below the Polish!)." (p. 115-116). "Poles could not receive higher education in their native tongue, faced restrictions on land purchases in the Western provinces (and various other disabilities), and were governed in a highly bureaucratic manner by imported Russian administrators. These contradictions were only to be 'solved' after the massive blood-letting of World War I." (p. 126).

"[S]ome nationalities were under more onerous restrictions than others. Ukrainians, for example, were forbidden to publish either books or periodicals in their native tongue...until after 1905. Similarly, Lithuanians could only publish using Cyrillic letters until 1904, which amounted in practice to a ban on printed Lithuanian." (p. 117).

"The Finns were in a class of their own within the Russian Empire. Since incorporation into the Russian Empire in 1808, the Grand Duchy of Finland had enjoyed a great deal of autonomy, having its own currency, postal service, army, legislature, and civil service...The genuine push toward a greater level of unification of Finland with Russia is usually associated with ...N.I. Bobrikov. From his arrival in Helsinki in 1898, Bobrikov did all he could...to anger Finns and offend their sensibilities. He made it clear that he considered himself, as the tsar's viceroy, the highest power in the land. An imperial manifesto of 3/15 Feb. 1899 set down new guidelines on applying imperial laws to the Grand Duchy...the manifesto was published without proper consultation with the Finnish authorities and Diet, which was widely seen as a violation of Finnish autonomy...Worse was to come. Bobrikov referred to the Russian language as the 'spiritual banner of Empire' and demanded that all subjects be able to use Russian in the official, government sphere....The measure most offensive to Finns and to Finnish autonomy that Bobrikov pushed through was a new conscription law...abolishing Finland's army [in 1901]." (p. 122-23).

Weeks also presents analyses of the situation of the Armenians and the "Tatars," but unfortunately touches upon ethnic Germans only in

passing -- and even then he acknowledges only the Baltic Germans and their privileged ties with the tsarist regime, which were not representative of the circumstances for the German colonists.

The point here is not to demonize the Russification policies of tsarist Russia...nor should those policies be sugar-coated. The often arrogant attempts of the tsarist regime to maintain autocratic control (see above for Poland, Finland, and other areas) were deeply resented by the ethnic minorities. It should be acknowledged that the late 19th century was the highpoint of imperialism throughout the world and such arrogance was not uncommon. Weeks points out that Theodore Roosevelt at this same time period was denouncing immigrants who spoke "foreign" languages, Germany was trying to weaken Polish and Catholic culture in the eastern regions, and Magyars were attempting to spread their language throughout their half of the Dual Monarchy.

-- Roland

The Role of Foreign Policy

This reactionary turn of events during Alexander III's reign coincided with other trends, some of which reflected internal stresses within the empire, while others mirrored broader forces in Europe.

Fleischhauer⁵⁶ points out that Alexander's fear was heightened by the emergence of a unified Germany as a major continental power, and thus his xenophobia inevitably came to target the many ethnic Germans within the empire. However, this notion should not be over-emphasized. The Hohenzollerns had been on friendly terms with the Romanovs through most of the century.⁵⁷ Prussia made special efforts to remain on cordial terms with the tsar during the 1860s, as a strategic necessity given its plans to unify Germany in the face of growing tension with France.⁵⁸ After German unification, Bismarck continued to skillfully assuage Russia's fears. In 1872 he succeeded in forming the *Dreikaiserbund* alliance between Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. Bismarck scrupulously avoided mixing into the affairs of the German-Russian colonists, regarding that as an internal political matter for Russia. He repeatedly expressed his disinterest in these *Volksdeutsche* emigrants to the east, regarding them as more beneficial to Russia than to Germany.⁵⁹ It is true that Russian hostility against Germany was heightened after the disappointment of the Congress of Berlin, but when Alexander's advisors convinced him that Russia could not win a confrontation against an alliance of Germany and Austria-Hungary, he swallowed his pride over the humiliation at the Congress of Berlin and pursued a delicately balanced foreign policy. Bismarck even managed to restore some of the cooperation of the former *Dreikaiserbund* in 1881, when they

⁵⁶ Ingeborg Fleischhauer, *Die Deutschen im Zarenreich*, 2nd edition, Stuttgart, 1991. See also her "Zur Entstehung der deutschen Frage im Zarenreich," pp. 40 -41 in Andreas Kappeler, Boris Meissner and Gerhard Simon (eds.), *Die Deutschen im Russischen Reich und im Sowjetstaat*, Cologne: 1987.

⁵⁷ Riasanovsky, 1969, p. 428.

⁵⁸ Williams, 1975, p. 167.

⁵⁹ Neutatz, 1993, p. 24.

formally agreed to remain neutral in each other's conflicts. He also expressed sympathy for Russia's aims in the Dardanelles in hopes that this would divert rivalry with Russia onto Britain. Russia, in turn, took care to avoid confrontations with Austria-Hungary in the Balkans.

Neutatz⁶⁰ attributes the rising hostility against the ethnic Germans during Alexander III's reign not so much to foreign policy fears, but rather to unresolved political-economic tensions within the Russian empire which inevitably led to the colonists becoming "scapegoats." This interpretation is supported by the fact that during this same time period restrictions and repression also intensified against Jews. Anti-Jewish pogroms broke out in 1881 and continued sporadically thereafter, often with minimal interference from government officials, and sometimes even with their encouragement.⁶¹ This suggests that broader forces were in play which scapegoated the internal ethnic minorities, those who were "different," which could be interpreted as an effort to divert popular discontent away from the crown. Neutatz feels that the "German question" became a national priority at that time not as a simple knee-jerk reaction to fears of the newly unified German Reich, but rather in response to varying local conditions and circumstances that came to focus on the ethnic Germans.

(This quote is taken from the speech by Otto Schily, Minister of Interior, at the 27th Bundestreffen der Deutschen aus Russland, June 2, 2001. He seems to be citing ideas from Neutatz about Bismarck's disregard for the colonists:

After the establishment of the German Reich in 1871, the relationship of leading sections of the Czarist Empire, and thereby of the Russian government, with the German colonists in Russia changed fundamentally. Among other factors, this was due to the political distance toward the new German Reich and, especially, due to the Pan-Slavic Movement. Mistrust and dislike began to gain the upper hand. Rights that had presumably been guaranteed "until eternity" by Catherine the Great in the 18th century were being gradually rescinded as of 1871. The result was the massive emigration by German colonists to North and South America. Return to the German Reich appeared to be obstructed, since returnees to the Reich usually were met with obvious dislike.

Then, too, the attitude of the government of the German Reich toward the Germans in Russia appeared to be conflicting.

Otto von Bismarck had quite a distant relationship toward the Germans in Russia. During the '70s of the 19th century there arose tensions between the German Reich and the Czarist Empire. As these tensions escalated during the '80s, the German envoy in St. Petersburg, von Schweinitz, was asked for a detailed report on the situation of the German settlements in

⁶⁰ I wish to acknowledge several stimulating discussions with Richard Benert, who initially pointed out Neutatz's detailed analysis of "the German Question" in Russia.

⁶¹ Riasanovsky, 1969, p. 437.

Russia. The envoy von Schweinitz wrote that he was of the opinion that the German Reich "need not bother itself to maintain contacts with these colonies." Bismarck's own annotation on the margin reads "I won't, either."

The report continues: "Those who leave their fatherland should not demand that it make any effort to protect them." Bismarck made the note "Right" on the margin and added double exclamation marks.

The Baltic Germans

There was a large and highly influential German population in the Baltic region, with historic roots extending back for centuries. The German nobility in that region had long been isolated in the furthest eastern extreme of the German settlement region of the Baltic. They struck a voluntary agreement with Peter the Great, consenting to become his vassals in return for his guarantee of protection and the preservation of their estates and privileges. The German nobility, with their large estates of Latvian and Estonian serfs, had forged close ties with the Russian crown. They were noted for their loyalty to the tsar and over time many had become influential ministers and advisors. The Baltic Germans proudly retained their German language and ethnicity, with tsarist consent and promotion. They had been allowed to establish a German university at Dorpat, which became a leading cultural center in the Baltic region.

With the rising tide of Pan-Slavism, this ancient and rich heartland of German influence became a target of nationalist resentment. Hints of growing resentment against the Baltic Germans were apparent by 1843, when Baron von Haxthausen made his well-known travels through the Russian empire. He commented that the "so-called Pan-Slavists" were expressing resentment and hatred of foreigners, particularly targeting ethnic Germans who were residing within the Baltic region. The charge was that they had "forced their way into military and civilian positions, crowded out the Russians, and offended them by their insolence and arrogance."⁶² Haxthausen denied that Germans were being favored over equally qualified Russians. His perception was that there was a shortage of similarly qualified Russians and that the Russian empire benefited from the presence of experienced German public servants. Pintner⁶³ has confirmed this conclusion and has documented that the Baltic Germans actually played a relatively minor role in the Russian civil service in the early nineteenth century. Nevertheless, it is clear that the perception of a "foreigner problem" had already developed well before the mid-century mark, targeting the Germans who resided in the larger cities, many of whom were in more visible public positions. In the 1880s the privileges of the Baltic nobility were revoked. Russianization efforts intensified, including even the center of intellectual life in the German Baltic community, the grand old German university in Dorpat, which was renamed "Yuriev."

⁶² Haxthausen 1972, p. 235.

⁶³ Pintner, 1970.

Henriksson emphasizes that the Baltic Germans became caught in the middle, targeted by both extremes of the Russian political spectrum:

The late imperial political climate fostered German alienation from the Russian mainstream. Conservative Russian nationalists saw the powerful German minority as a threat to Russian cultural identity and the neighboring German Empire as a dangerous rival. The autocracy, which once welcomed German influence and which still counted many Germans among its most senior officials, had come to share these views...the last two tsars presided over the destruction of German institutions and the harassment of Protestant churches in the Baltic provinces and other German-inhabited areas. The left was no less hostile. Aristocratic Baltic-German resistance to reform and the prominence of German-surnamed officials among the most diligent servants of autocracy encouraged liberals and radicals to view Germans as allies of despotism.⁶⁴

Fleischhauer points out that the reaction against the Baltic Germans may also have been stimulated by the activities of the *Alldeutscher Verband*, an organization which sought to foster German ethnic identity among *Volksdeutsche* emigrants. Neutatz,⁶⁵ however, points out that the *Alldeutscher Verband* was organized in 1891, well after Russian anti-foreigner measures had already been implemented. The major focus of activity of the *Verband* had been in Alsace and other western areas. Nor was there much cause for alarm by its predecessor organizations, such as the *Schulverein*, which pursued rather mundane goals such as the promotion of German language and literature. There were some "wild" German nationalist authors advocating expansionism to the east, but Neutatz notes that they were criticized by *Alldeutsche* leaders; furthermore, these authors were reacting to equally strident Pan-Slavic demands.

According to Neutatz, the escalating anti-Germanism at this time should be viewed within the context of the widespread anti-foreignerism and nationalism, which reached shrill proportions in response to internal stresses threatening fragmentation of the empire. Henriksson⁶⁶ seems to support this interpretation. He points out that the large German population in St. Petersburg didn't become significantly involved in *Alldeutsche* activities until 1905, and even at that late date they advocated for the ethnic rights not only of Germans, but also for other non-German minorities. Inter-marriage with Russians in St. Petersburg was quite high, and in fact many Germans tried to conceal their ethnicity during the height of the anti-foreigner backlash.

⁶⁴ Anders Henriksson, "Nationalism, Assimilation and Identity in Late Imperial Russia: the St. Petersburg Germans, 1906-1914," *The Russian Review*, vol. 52, July 1993, p. 341-342.

⁶⁵ Neutatz, 1993, p. 208.

⁶⁶ Henriksson, 1993, p. 349.

The Western Border Provinces

The impetus for anti-Germanism was different in the western border provinces of Volhynia, Kiev, and Podolia. There the alarmism was over a supposed national security threat poised by the tremendous influx of German settlers from Russian and Prussian-held Polish territory that had taken place since the 1860s. This influx had largely been at the invitation of Russian estate-owners, who were suffering from a labor shortage after the emancipation of the serfs.⁶⁷ On their part, the German farmers were eager to escape over-population and soil exhaustion, as well as the turmoil of the Polish rebellion which had often turned bitterly against the Germans because they had remained loyal to the tsar. They had a reputation for diligence and their law-abiding nature, and – perhaps above all else -- they were willing to clear marginal forest lands and turn them into productive acreage. Sensing a mutually lucrative opportunity, the Russian gentry leased their lands to the Germans to increase its value, then later sold it to them.⁶⁸ Attacks against the German settlers increased in the nationalist Russian press during the 1870s. They were labeled “spies” and “fifth columnists” for Bismarck. These fears were exacerbated by the fact that many of the German settlers had not taken out Russian citizenship, and theoretically remained subject to German military duty.

The Black Sea Colonies

The concern of Russian administrators in the Black Sea region was not as much with supposed “national security,” but more with economic complications associated with the growing prosperity of the German colonies. The German colonists had been resident in the country for at least two generations by that point and heretofore had been valued as productive citizens. They were extraordinarily successful in their farming ventures and there was a skyrocketing growth in their acquisition of farmlands from the local Russian gentry. The Black Sea colonists owned a large percentage of the arable land in the region, with figures ranging from 11 percent in Bessarabia, 20 percent in Cherson, 38 percent in Taurida (Crimea), and 25 percent in Jekaterinoslav.⁶⁹

Inevitably they became embroiled in the unresolved crisis that Russia had faced since the emancipation of the serfs, who had been freed without adequate provision of farmlands. Jakob Stach,⁷⁰ a Lutheran minister who became a major spokesperson for the German colonists around the turn of the 19th century, presented an insightful analysis of the historical genesis of this problem, showing how the growing land shortage and rising land prices became intertwined with ethnic and class issues.

According to Stach, when the German colonies in South Russia were initially founded, the villagers were overwhelmed by the vast amounts of land available to them.

⁶⁷ Roger P. Bartlett, 1982, p. 556.

⁶⁸ By the 1890s Germans owned about 5 percent of Volhynia’s private land. By 1914 there were about 200,000 Germans and also some 25,000 Czechs in the total Volhynian population of two million (Bartlett, 1982, p. 555).

⁶⁹ Karl Stumpp, The German-Russians, Bonn: Edition Atlantic-Forum, 1971, second edition, p. 25.

⁷⁰ Jakob Stach, *Die deutschen Kolonien in Suedrussland*, Prischib: Gottlieb Schaad Verlag, 1904. The following discussion is based on his comments on page. 199.

Coming in from various parts of Germany, they were accustomed to smaller farm tracts, which were carefully and methodically tended. They thought that the land allocations in Russia were much more than they needed. Some folks sneaked into the fields at night and moved the boundary markers inwards a bit so that they wouldn't be responsible for having to plow so much land. After 50 - 60 years, as the population expanded, the circumstances radically changed. There was a drive to till ever larger pieces of land, which reached the point of mania (Stach describes it as a "Sucht"). He states that many of the colonists were no longer practicing good agriculture techniques -- such as the 3 field fallow system, and the use of manure as fertilizer. The strategy that many followed was to lease ever larger quantities of land, plow it and seed an enormous crop, in hopes that they would earn a big profit from the yield. Problem was that by the 1860s some farmers were beginning to be hurt from this strategy of mass cultivation with little attention to proper land management. Stach says that much of the prosperity of the settlers ended up going into the pockets of the "Herren Verpaecheter" (the landlords who leased the land). If the harvests were poor there often wasn't anything left over. Major problems resulted from the fact that the land near the German colonies became very expensive to lease, which resulted in a veritable "Sucht" among the colonists to lease more and more land farther and farther away from the villages, from the "Herren Gutsbesitzer." Some sold their portions of the collectively owned village lands and invested the proceeds in large leaseholds. They built houses on this leased land, sowed massive amounts of grain and gambled on huge profits. Some encountered a string of bad years and lost everything -- including the houses, which remained behind for the estate owners. They then had to return to the home villages, although they had already sold their shares, and probably had to earn a living as field hands.

Stach also notes that later in the century some of the colonists in South Russia divided up their shares of the village land among all their sons (rather than passing it down impartibly to one, usually the youngest). Over time this reduced the size of the holdings to the point where it pushed them into seeking land elsewhere.

While Stach doesn't specifically state the ethnicity of the large estate owners (the "Herren Gutsbesitzer"), because the colonists were leasing land that was far away from the mother colonies, the estate owners were probably Russian nobility, although as Fleischhauer⁷¹ notes there was a growing number of former German colonists who managed to join the "Gutsbesitzer" class and to enjoy the good life in resort towns on the Black Sea.

(from my email note): Fleischhauer, in her *_die Deutschen im Zarenreich_* has some discussion of

- > the growing disparity in social classes in the late 19th century. On p. 328 she
- > mentions that some German-Russians had accumulated much wealth, and by the turn
- > of the century many had begun to enjoy the high life of the Russian nobility.
- > Many leased out their lands and used the proceeds to live in the cities,
- > spending much of their time at resorts. Some of the younger generation began
- > expanding their wants and expectations, and those who could afford to do so
- > purchased houses in the cities, where they resided during the winter. She

⁷¹ Ingeborg Fleischhauer, *Die Deutschen im Zarenreich*, p. 328.

> describes a growing "speculation fever."
 > What's interesting to me is that most sources speak of a growing land
 > shortage in the latter two decades of the century. This was the time when large
 > numbers of German-Russians emigrated in search of free land. Many landless
 > young families relocated to daughter colonies in Siberia, often financed by
 > their relatives in the mother colonies (check the Beresan Newsletters, where
 > I've translated several letters that describe this process), and many emigrated
 > to the USA, Canada, and Latin America for free homestead land. My question is,
 > was there a relationship between the growing class disparity in wealth, the
 > "speculation fever" in land purchases that Fleischhauer describes, and the
 > emigration of the landless poor families? One possibility is that a small
 > number of families were accumulating much wealth, they were buying up the land
 > that was becoming available on the market, and the poorer younger families
 > couldn't compete. These wealthy families were highly visible socially, they
 > built grand houses, and leased out their lands to the poorer families. This
 > fostered the growing stereotype among the Russians and Ukrainians that all the
 > ethnic Germans were a "wealthy, privileged class." Adding to the problem, the
 > Russian government placed restrictions on the extension of credit to
 > German-Russians, and also on their ability to purchase crown lands. The
 > representatives of the German-Russians protested, stating that not all of them
 > were rich, it was just a stereotype. This growing wealth of a small number of
 > families, combined with the growing need for land by poorer Ukrainian, Russian,
 > and younger German-Russians, may have triggered a speculation fever in land
 > (kind of like what's happening right now in California, where younger families
 > can barely afford to rent a one-room studio!). This "capitalist dynamic" may
 > well be another dimension to our understanding of how things began to sour for
 > the German-Russians in the latter two decades of the century.

On Sat, 28 Mar 1998, atacama wrote:

> It may be of interest to note that the Germans who left Russia during the
 > 1880 - 1917 period, actually left a country in boom times:
 >
 > quoting from "False Dawn" by Professor John Gray of Oxford University.
 >
 > "In the late 19th century, Russia entered a period of racing economic
 > growth comparable to that of early 19th century Britain, 1870s America, or
 > China today. In 1880-1917 Russia laid more miles of railway track than any
 > country in the world at that time; its industrial production grew at an
 > annual rate of 5.7 % over the whole period, accelerating in the four years
 > before World War I to 8%. Late Tsarism was an era not of stagnation but of
 > swiftly advancing modernization."
 >

It may well be true that Russia was in a period of rapid industrialization in the latter two decades of the 19th century, but it should be kept in mind that the majority of the Ger-Rus lived in

agricultural colonies and they were more affected by agrarian market forces. This is a quote from James Long's *_From Privileged to Dispossessed, the Volga Germans 1860-1917_* (Univ. of Nebraska, 1988):

"A prolonged agricultural depression began in the late 1870s. The two decades between 1877 and 1897 were years of ruinously low farm prices, not only in Russia but elsewhere in the world. World grain prices tumbled and a serious international agrarian crisis developed as a result of abundant grain harvests and exports, and the economic depression that hit Europe. In the United States, the decade of the 1880s was a time of growing agrarian discontent as farmers vigorously reacted to the precipitous drop of farm prices and swift accumulation of debts; wheat dropped from \$1.05 a bushel in 1870 to 49 cents in 1896. The price of Russian exported grains plummeted; between 1871 and 1875 the export price of Russian wheat reached an all-time high of 90 kopecks per pud...but by 1886 had dropped to 64 kopecks, and in 1894 reached its nadir, 46 kopecks...only after 1900 did the agricultural market rebound." (p. 95).

We have previously mentioned that there was a devastating famine in 1891-92 which particularly affected the Volga region. Putting all this together, it seems to me that the Ger-Rus wave of emigration which began on a large scale in the 1880s and continued on through the turn of the century did not take place during a "boom period," but rather just the opposite. There was a combination of forces at work: a growing population, a shortage of farm-land available in the vicinity in the colonies to provide for the many younger sons, a growing number of poor people in the colonies, a spillover of some of these young people into the cities to find employment at the same time that many newly freed Russian serfs were also searching for ways to earn a living, a recession in the agrarian market, fear of serving in the military, and an increasingly hostile political environment as Russian newspapers and intelligentsia began to lash out against "foreigners," especially targeting ethnic Germans. When you add all these together, and then open a window of opportunity for free land in the USA and Canada, little wonder that so many people leapt at the opportunity, especially many of these younger sons and their families who had nothing much to gain by staying in Russia.

At least that's the way I piece it all together.

-- Roland

Russian peasants looked with growing envy and resentment upon the prosperous German colonists, who were now regarded as "privileged intruders" in Russia. The situation was exacerbated by a population explosion in the latter half of the century (up from 74 million in 1861 to 126 million in 1897). The price of land skyrocketed, and there were growing disparities between wealthy and poor peasants in the villages.⁷² As Neutatz points out, conditions became ripe for turning the German

⁷² Edward Aston, "Russia: Tsarism and the West," in Bruce Waller (ed.) *Themes in Modern European History, 1830 - 1890*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1990, pp. 159-189. It

colonists – a highly visible national and religious minority -- into scapegoats for the unresolved problems of Russia's agrarian policies.⁷³

In the 1880s and after, the nationalist Russian press became increasingly obsessed with the "problem" of the growing land purchases of the Black Sea Germans. Matthäi, a contemporary observer, noted that by 1883 the reaction of the Russian press to the economic influence of Black Sea Germans had already become rather hysterical.⁷⁴ A spate of slanderous articles appeared on the "German question" in Russia, portraying them as a "danger" to the empire, accusing them of disloyalty and of attempting to supplant the native Russian peasantry.

The Institutionalization of Great Russian Nationalism

When Alexander III assumed the throne, he announced in his Manifesto of 1881 that "Russian patriotism has to be given satisfaction because Russia has to belong to the Russians."⁷⁵ As Seton-Watson has noted,

The Russian nationalism that developed into a dogma in these years should be seen as an equivalent of the *nationalisme integral* of Charles Maurras and of the social Darwinism that became fashionable in England and the United States. Russian imperialism in the Far East was no less ambitious than British and French imperialism in Africa, and it evoked similar emotional support...[W]e should not ignore aggressive nationalism's appeal. It attracted large numbers of highly intelligent and well-educated Russians in government service and the professions and had a potential for demagoguery when addressed to the lower strata of society.⁷⁶

During these heady days of Russian nationalism, the virulence of the attacks in the media against ethnic minorities took on a sinister edge because it became intertwined with the popular racism of the times, pervasive throughout most of Europe. The concept of "race" was becoming institutionalized and given a veneer of scientific respectability. The Racial Hygiene Society, founded in Berlin in 1905, hoped to unify "Pan-German Aryan ideologues" and "social hygienists" throughout the world. In 1911 it opened the First International Hygiene Exhibition in Dresden, which helped to popularize scientific "racism" (it attracted 5 million visitors).

should be noted that there was also a growing disparity in wealth in the German colonies as well, with many landless sons being forced to seek their fortunes elsewhere.

⁷³ Neutatz, 1993, p. 436.

⁷⁴ F. Matthäi, *Die wirtschaftlichen Hilfsquellen Russlands*, 2 vols., Dresden, 1883. Cited in Bartlett, 1982, p. 566.

⁷⁵ John Philipps, *Die Deutschen am Schwarzen Meer zwischen Bug und Dnjester*, North Dakota State University Libraries, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, 1999, p. 113.

⁷⁶ Hugh Seton-Watson, "Russian Nationalism in Historical Perspective," in Robert Conquest (ed.), *The Last Empire, Nationality and the Soviet Future*, Stanford University: Hoover Institute Press, 1986, pp. 20-21.

By the turn of the 19th century ethnic minorities in Russia had become arrogantly and collectively referred to as “aliens” (*inorodtsy*). This term, which originally had the connotation of “uncivilized,” had previously been applied to frontier nomadic peoples in the east. Later it became applied to the western ethnic groups as well, including Germans, Finns, Armenians, Jews, as well as Poles and Ukrainians. Despite the fact that Poles were “fellow Slavs,” they were *inorodtsy* because they were Roman Catholic, Western in orientation, and their disloyalty to the Russian tsar had been shown by their insurrections in 1821 and 1863. The Ukrainians were regarded as “little Russians,” who spoke a mere “peasant dialect” of Russian. As Slocum notes, by the turn of the century the term *inorodtsy* had acquired a “maximalist racial definition” and it had expanded in meaning to denote:

...a person of whole or partial non-Russian blood residing within the confines of the Russian Empire. ...The *inorodtsy* were not simply the unassimilated ‘others’ whose present way of life prevented their immediate incorporation into Russian society...The *inorodtsy* also represented a fundamental threat, real or imagined, to the security of the Russian state and the Russian people.⁷⁷

Being a “true Russian” had become a badge of honor with wide appeal, not only to right-wing nationalists but also to left-wing educators who advocated assimilation via the Russian schools.⁷⁸ Reactionism against foreign cultural influences even reached the point where famous historical personages, such as Peter the Great, became a popular figure of derision in the Russian stage and theater. A contemporary observer noted that tsar Peter was mocked as a “false Tsar,” and also as “a German, perhaps even a Jew.”⁷⁹

Policies Toward Ethnic Minorities in the Late Tsarist Empire

The hallmark of Alexander III’s reign was not only the growing chauvinistic nationalism of the times, but also his intensification of Russianization policies aimed at the ethnic minorities. It was widely believed that Russian culture was superior to all others and that the government had the right and duty to impose it on the nation’s minorities.⁸⁰ This trend reflected not only the rising nationalism of the Great Russians, but it also escalated in reaction to the growing national sentiments of the empire’s minorities.⁸¹ The efforts of Russian officialdom to control their far-flung borderlands resembled confused lashing out at times rather than a coherent policy. Russification was not blanketly imposed as a uniform set of policies; rather, it was a broad and unfocused trend with diverse regional applications to different peoples, each of which differed greatly in their level of socioeconomic development.

⁷⁷ Slocum, 1998, p. 184.

⁷⁸ Slocum, 1998, pp. 184-86.

⁷⁹ This observation was made by E. Schuyler, Peter the Great, London, 1884, cited in Poliakov, 1996, p. 117.

⁸⁰ Seton-Watson, 1986, p. 20.

⁸¹ Riasanovsky, 1969, p. 437.

The Tsarist state promoted some peoples at some times (the Baltic Germans, the Armenian merchants until the 1880s) and discriminated against others (Jews; Ukrainians; Poles, particularly after 1863; Armenians, after 1885; Finns at the turn of the century). After 1881 the ruling nationality, the Russians, increasingly conceived of social problems in ethnic terms and saw Jewish conspiracies, Armenian separatists and nationalists in general as sources of disruption and rebellion.⁸²

Membership in the Orthodox church had traditionally been a basic pillar for Russian national identity, and religion increasingly became an arena in which the struggle for ethnic identity was waged. The Orthodox hierarchy zealously sought to expand its authority in the border regions, at the expense of Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, Islam, and other faiths in the east. Children of mixed marriages, in which one partner was Orthodox, by law also had to become Orthodox. Proselytizing by non-Orthodox sects was vigorously persecuted. An active rivalry developed in the Volga region between Orthodox missionaries and the Moslem Tartars. Similar efforts were made to undercut the Armenian church and parochial schools, which resulted in widespread bitterness and resistance among a people who had heretofore been one of the most pro-Russian in the empire.⁸³

The Ukrainians and the Poles were the main targets for deliberate attempts to extinguish their indigenous cultures and to impose Russian norms. The Ukrainians were regarded as “little Russians” and their separate national character was adamantly denied. They spoke a mere “peasant dialect,” which was treated with disdain. By 1876 efforts were made to suppress the language altogether and replace it by Russian. The Poles, despite the fact that they too were “fellow Slavs,” were *inorodtsy* because they were Roman Catholic and Western in orientation. Their disloyalty to the Russian tsar had been shown by their insurrections in 1821 and 1863, and they were regarded as “incorrigibly mutinous.”

In the Baltic region the Russian regime faced a more complex challenge. Russification efforts in Finland did not target the cultural sphere, but were aimed more at reducing the powers of the Finnish parliament, imposing Russian bureaucracy and anchoring Finland as a province of the empire. Farther south there was another large and highly influential non-Slavic population, the Baltic Germans, who had historic roots in that region extending back for centuries. They were the center of local political and cultural life. The Baltic German nobility, with their Latvian and Estonian serfs, had forged close ties with the Russian crown in order to preserve their estates and privileges. They were notoriously loyal to the tsar, and many had become influential ministers and advisors. Yet they too became targeted in the 1880s. The local Estonian and Latvian peoples resented both the domination by the Baltic German nobility, as well as growing efforts to force them to adopt the Russian language and the Orthodox faith.⁸⁴

⁸² Ronald Suny, “Nationalism and Class in the Russian Revolution: A Comparative Discussion,” in Edith Rogovin Frankel, J. Frankel, & B. Knei-Paz, Revolution in Russia: Reassessments of 1917, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 220.

⁸³ Riasanovsky, 1969, p. 436. See also Seton-Watson, 1986, p. 22.

⁸⁴ Seton-Watson, 1986, p. 21.

The Jews, who had settled in large numbers in western Russia since the Middle Ages at the invitation of the Polish crown, suffered greatly during this period of aggressive expansion of Orthodoxy and Russification. Restrictions on their residence within the "Pale of Settlement" became strictly enforced, and they were excluded from residing in the countryside. In 1887 quotas were established for Jewish students in universities. In 1881 pogroms erupted in the southwestern provinces, with little interference from the authorities. These outbreaks recurred sporadically until the end of the tsarist era.⁸⁵

Theodore Weeks has recently argued that tsarist nationality policy was not motivated by the desire to turn ethnic minorities into Russians, but rather simply to "control" them. Weeks purports to "dethrone" Russification as the central purpose of government policy, and he views it simply as just a means to an end, rather than a desirable policy goal in and of itself. Focusing on the examples of how the government related to Poles and the Jews, he characterizes the Russification policies of late-imperial Russia as "confused, disparate, and uncoordinated" (p. 5). Although Russian nationalism was popular at the time, he emphasizes that the state remained an "old regime" and that the ruling elites were primarily concerned with maintaining autocratic power. Weeks acknowledges that there was a "temptation" to equate Imperial Russia with Great Russian nationality and the Orthodox church, which were the main pillars of the doctrine of "Official Nationality," but the tsars and their ministers distrusted populist enthusiasm which could easily get out of control.

It should be pointed out that while Weeks is correct that the tsars (and other rulers in the "old regimes" throughout Europe) distrusted popular social movements, this surely does not minimize the impact of Russification measures on the targeted ethnic minorities. Non-Russians in the empire would still experience these measures as chauvinistic regardless of the purportedly less malevolent motives of the tsarist administration. Weeks professes to not lose sight of this fact. As he phrases it, such policies can indeed be acknowledged as "morally repugnant," and viewing the situation from the tsarist perspective "in no way undermines a critical attitude toward the suffering caused by the restrictions themselves" (p. 16).⁸⁶

Probably the most sympathetic analysis by any modern historian has been offered by Theodore R. Weeks in the book *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1914* (Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1996). He has presented a more condensed analysis in an article entitled "National Minorities in the Russian Empire, 1897-1917" (in Anna Geifman, ed., *Russia Under the Last Tsar, Opposition and Subversion, 1894-1917*, Blackwell press, 1999). I will present some extracts from that article:

"And it was generally accepted that a 'real' Russian was of the Orthodox faith. The tsar and his wife had to be Orthodox (foreign

⁸⁵ Riasanovsky, 1969, p. 437.

⁸⁶ Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1915*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996.

princesses were obliged to convert if they wished to marry into the Romanov family), and the Orthodox church enjoyed a special, privileged status within the state. To be sure, by 1900 this rather clear identity of Orthodoxy and 'Russian-ness' came increasingly under attack from various sides...Still, there was an almost overwhelming tendency for the administration to equate 'Orthodox' with 'Russian'" (p. 113-114).

"Russification was less a cultural weapon than an administrative and political imperative. From its early days, the Russian Empire embraced the form of a centralized state, epitomized by the figure of the tsar, ruling autocratically over all subjects, whatever their ethnicity and religion...Russification could also be used as punishment. The most obvious example of this kind of policy is to be found in the Kingdom of Poland...that had been annexed by the Russian Empire at the Congress of Vienna. After the abortive insurrection of 1863 these provinces were administered by Russian bureaucrats, education (particularly at secondary and higher level, but even in some elementary schools) became Russified, and even shop signs had to be written in both Russian and Polish (furthermore, the Russian inscription could not be smaller or set below the Polish!)." (p. 115-116). "Poles could not receive higher education in their native tongue, faced restrictions on land purchases in the Western provinces (and various other disabilities), and were governed in a highly bureaucratic manner by imported Russian administrators. These contradictions were only to be 'solved' after the massive blood-letting of World War I." (p. 126).

"[S]ome nationalities were under more onerous restrictions than others. Ukrainians, for example, were forbidden to publish either books or periodicals in their native tongue...until after 1905. Similarly, Lithuanians could only publish using Cyrillic letters until 1904, which amounted in practice to a ban on printed Lithuanian." (p. 117).

"The Finns were in a class of their own within the Russian Empire. Since incorporation into the Russian Empire in 1808, the Grand Duchy of Finland had enjoyed a great deal of autonomy, having its own currency, postal service, army, legislature, and civil service...The genuine push toward a greater level of unification of Finland with Russia is usually associated with ...N.I. Bobrikov. From his arrival in Helsinki in 1898, Bobrikov did all he could...to anger Finns and offend their sensibilities. He made it clear that he considered himself, as the tsar's viceroy, the highest power in the land. An imperial manifesto of 3/15 Feb. 1899 set down new guidelines on applying imperial laws to the Grand Duchy...the manifesto was published without proper consultation with the Finnish authorities and Diet, which was widely seen as a violation of Finnish autonomy...Worse was to come. Bobrikov referred to the Russian language as the 'spiritual banner of Empire' and demanded that all subjects be able to use Russian in the official, government sphere....The measure most offensive to Finns and to Finnish autonomy that Bobrikov pushed through was a new conscription law...abolishing Finland's army [in 1901]." (p. 122-23).

Weeks also presents analyses of the situation of the Armenians and the "Tatars," but unfortunately touches upon ethnic Germans only in passing -- and even then he acknowledges only the Baltic Germans and their privileged ties with the tsarist regime, which were not representative of the circumstances for the German colonists.

The point here is not to demonize the Russification policies of tsarist Russia...nor should those policies be sugar-coated. The often arrogant attempts of the tsarist regime to maintain autocratic control (see above for Poland, Finland, and other areas) were deeply resented by the ethnic minorities. It should be acknowledged that the late 19th century was the highpoint of imperialism throughout the world and such arrogance was not uncommon. Weeks points out that Theodore Roosevelt at this same time period was denouncing immigrants who spoke "foreign" languages, Germany was trying to weaken Polish and Catholic culture in the eastern regions, and Magyars were attempting to spread their language throughout their half of the Dual Monarchy.

(This is the narrative on the tsarist era from my original article on Hermann Bachmann, summarizing Alex. II to the fall of the tsarist regime:)

The "German Question"

The ethnic Germans in Russia had generally been valued as highly productive citizens, and by mid-century they had reached their peak of prosperity. Yet they too increasingly became targeted during the rising anti-foreigner reactionary trend. A sea change in attitudes toward the Germans set in during the 1880s, emanating not just from a few extremists and nationalists as during the Slavophile movement of the 1840s, but now also from the highest echelons of power. During this first phase of national preoccupation with the "German question," a series of negative stereotypes were established which resurfaced at various points during the following decades, taking on increasingly emotional tones. Anti-German rhetoric reached near hysterical levels in nationalistic Russian newspapers, such as the Russki Vestnik. A well known contemporary Russian author, A. Velicyn,⁸⁷ published a series of slanderous articles from 1890 to 1893 in which he portrayed the growing prosperity of the German farmers in the western provinces and in the greater Black Sea region as a "peaceful conquest by foreigners of native Russian soil." He charged that the German colonists, including the Mennonites, were disloyal subjects, the spearhead of an impending assault by Bismarck's armies. They were displacing native Russian people and taking over lands that had been sanctified by "Russian blood."⁸⁸ Velicyn's rant at times reached the level of blatant racism, such as when he railed against the "plump faces, white hair, small eyes, [and] fat awkward figures" of the German colonists.

Various reasons have been offered for the growing concern with the "German question" in the 1880s and after. Anti-Germanism was part of the larger phenomenon of anti-foreignerism, which, as noted, peaked during these years of Russian nationalism, and it should not be viewed as something "unique." However, there were unique political circumstances and economic conditions in various parts of the empire, which led to the targeting of the ethnic Germans.

⁸⁷ A. A. Paltov, who wrote under the pseudonym of "A. A. Velicyn." His name was transcribed in German as "Welizyn."

⁸⁸ Neutatz, 1993, p. 142.

Fleischhauer⁸⁹ notes that the rising anti-Germanism was fueled by fear of the emergence of a unified Germany as a major continental power at that point in history. While undoubtedly true, this notion should not be over-emphasized. The Hohenzollerns had been on friendly terms with the Romanovs through most of the century.⁹⁰ Prussia made special efforts to remain cordial with the tsar during the 1860s, as a strategic necessity given its plans to unify Germany in the face of growing tension with France.⁹¹ After German unification, Bismarck continued to skillfully assuage Russia's fears. He kept a strict hands-off policy on the issue Russian treatment of their ethnic minorities, which he regarded as their internal political matter. This hands-off policy extended to Russia's German immigrants as well, whom Bismarck regarded as Germany's loss and Russia's gain.⁹²

Neutatz attributes the rising hostility to the ethnic Germans during Alexander III's reign not so much to foreign policy fears, but more to unresolved political-economic tensions within the Russian empire, which prompted tsarist efforts to divert popular discontent away from the crown onto "scapegoats."⁹³ This interpretation is supported by the fact that during this same time period restrictions and repressions also intensified against Jews, often for similar reasons in reaction to their growing economic influence. Jews and Germans were in fact often linked in the minds of Russian nationalists, given the linguistic (Yiddish-German) and economic relationships between the two peoples.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Ingeborg Fleischhauer, Die Deutschen im Zarenreich, 2nd edition, Stuttgart, 1991. See also her "Zur Entstehung der deutschen Frage im Zarenreich," pp. 40–41 in Andreas Kappeler, Boris Meissner and Gerhard Simon (eds.), Die Deutschen im Russischen Reich und im Sowjetstaat, Cologne: 1987.

⁹⁰ Riasanovsky, 1969, p. 428.

⁹¹ Williams, 1975, p. 167.

⁹² Fleischhauer, 1986, p. 335.

⁹³ Neutatz, 1993, p. 436.

⁹⁴ For example, E. Schuyler, in an 1884 work entitled Peter the Great (London, 1884, cited in Poliakov, 1996, p. 117) notes that reactionism against foreign cultural influences reached the point where famous historical personages, such as Peter the Great, became figures of derision in the Russian stage and theater. A contemporary observer noted that tsar Peter was mocked as a "false Tsar," and also as "a German, perhaps even a Jew." Between 1889-1891, when the attacks against the Germans in the Black Sea region reached a highpoint, articles in the Russian newspaper, Novoe Vremja, declared that they were the most important problem in the economic life of New Russia. "It would be dangerous to minimize the German question. Just like the Jews have spread over all of Russia, so also would the Germans grab the southwest and the south for themselves" (Neutatz, 1993, p. 106). A 1905 article in the Odessaer Zeitung expressed fear that the hatred against the Germans could spark pogroms, as had happened against the Jews. It was noted that similar charges were hurled against the two peoples: "The Jews are sucking us dry! The Jews are enemies of the Fatherland! There's nothing left for us except to carry water for the Jews! That was, and is today, the same song of complaint of the Russian farmers and of a large number of workers in the cities. By adding a simple 'and,' the Germans will also be entwined in this song: the Jews and the Germans, etc." (Neutatz, 1993, p. 165). A recurrent theme in the charges against the growing

The circumstances that led to the targeting of the ethnic Germans in the Baltic region were different than in other parts of Russia. As noted above, the Baltic Germans had long been an influential local population and they were the center of political and cultural life. They proudly retained their German language and ethnicity. As Russification efforts intensified in the 1880s, the privileges of the Baltic nobility were revoked. Even the center of intellectual life in the German Baltic community, the grand old German university in Dorpat, was renamed "Yuriev." Henriksson emphasizes that the Baltic Germans became caught in the middle, targeted by both extremes of the Russian political spectrum:

The late imperial political climate fostered German alienation from the Russian mainstream. Conservative Russian nationalists saw the powerful German minority as a threat to Russian cultural identity and the neighboring German Empire as a dangerous rival. The autocracy, which once welcomed German influence and which still counted many Germans among its most senior officials, had come to share these views...the last two tsars presided over the destruction of German institutions and the harassment of Protestant churches in the Baltic provinces and other German-inhabited areas. The left was no less hostile. Aristocratic Baltic-German resistance to reform and the prominence of German-surnamed officials among the most diligent servants of autocracy encouraged liberals and radicals to view Germans as allies of despotism.⁹⁵

Russian polemicists, such as Velicyn and Lipardi, charged that there was a covert plan by Germany to colonize Russia. This notion has even been revived in some recent historical literature. Fleischhauer,⁹⁶ for example, puts great emphasis on how the *Alldeutscher Verband*, an organization that fostered greater unity of the *Volksdeutsche* with the German *Reich*, stimulated Russian reactionism against the Germans. She notes that near the end of the century a press war developed, pitching ultra-nationalist *Alldeutsche* spokesmen against ultra-nationalist advocates for Pan-Slavism.⁹⁷ Neutatz, however, points out that one of the prime examples of German nationalist literature in the 1880s cited by Fleischhauer in fact didn't focus on Russia or on emigration, but rather on the Balkans. The *Alldeutscher Verband* was organized in 1891, well after the

purchase of farmlands by Germans was that this was a colonization effort financed by "Jewish banks" and by national organizations in Germany for political reasons (Neutatz, 1993, p. 172). Finally, during the First World War, as the German army was advancing eastward, the Russian regime turned against both its German and Jewish population. Their ability to communicate in German was one reason for the accusation that they were disloyal collaborators (see detailed discussions in Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking, Refugees in Russia During World War I*, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999).

⁹⁵ Anders Henriksson, "Nationalism, Assimilation and Identity in Late Imperial Russia: the St. Petersburg Germans, 1906-1914," *The Russian Review*, vol. 52, July 1993, p. 341-342.

⁹⁶ Fleischhauer, 1986, p. 332.

⁹⁷ Fleischhauer, 1986, p. 351.

rising tide of anti-Germanism had begun in Russia. The major focus of *Alldeutsche* activity had initially been in Alsace and other western areas. Nor was there much cause for alarm by predecessor organizations, such as the *Schulverein*, which pursued rather mundane goals such as the promotion of German language and literature. There were some “wild” German nationalist authors advocating expansionism to the east, but they were reacting to equally strident Pan-Slavic demands, and Neutatz points out that *Alldeutsche* leaders criticized them. In general, during the early years of the *Alldeutsche* movement the focus was more on defensiveness against the perceived “Slavic danger,” and there was “surprisingly little interest in the Germans in Russia.”⁹⁸

Henriksson⁹⁹ also notes that the large German population in St. Petersburg didn’t become significantly involved in *Alldeutsche* activities until as late as 1905. At that point they advocated for the ethnic rights not only of Germans, but also of other non-German minorities. The intermarriage rate with Russians in St. Petersburg was quite high, and in fact many Germans tried to conceal their ethnicity during the height of the anti-foreigner backlash. In general, the *Alldeutscher Verband* remained a marginal movement, and it drew little interest elsewhere in Russia among the German colonists.¹⁰⁰

Another focus for anti-Germanism was in the western provinces of Volhynia, Kiev, and Podolia. There the dynamics took an especially serious turn because the ethnic Germans became embroiled in the concerns of Russia’s military planners for the security of their western borders, especially after the Polish rebellion in 1863. The German population in that region were relative newcomers. There had been a huge influx of German settlers from Prussia and especially from Polish territory since the 1860s. By 1880 the population had grown to as many as 180,000.¹⁰¹ This influx had largely been at the invitation of Russian estate-owners, who were suffering from a labor shortage after the emancipation of the serfs.¹⁰² On their part, the German farmers were eager to escape over-population and soil exhaustion, as well as the turmoil of the Polish rebellion, which had often turned bitterly against the Germans because they had remained loyal to the tsar. They had a reputation for diligence and a law-abiding nature, and – perhaps above all else -- they were willing to clear marginal forest lands and turn them into productive acreage. Sensing a mutually lucrative opportunity, the Russian gentry leased their lands to the Germans to raise its value, then later sold it to them.¹⁰³

Attacks against the German settlers arose already during the 1870s in the nationalist Russian press. Germany was accused of using this uncontrolled influx as a covert tool for launching a *Drang nach Osten* to conquer new eastern territories. The settlers were viewed as a security threat and labeled as “spies” and “fifth columnists”

⁹⁸ Neutatz, 1993, pp. 207-208.

⁹⁹ Henriksson, 1993, p. 349.

¹⁰⁰ Pinkus and Fleischhauer (1987, p. 48) note that the German colonists had little interest in these nationalistic organizations, especially those directed by Baltic nobility.

¹⁰¹ Fleischhauer, 1986, p. 343.

¹⁰² Roger P. Bartlett, 1982, p. 556.

¹⁰³ By the 1890s Germans owned about 5 percent of Volhynia’s private land. By 1914 there were about 200,000 Germans and also some 25,000 Czechs in the total Volhynian population of two million (Bartlett, 1982, p. 555).

for Bismarck. These fears were exaggerated by the fact that some of the German settlers had neglected to take out Russian citizenship, and allegedly they remained subject to German military duty.

In the Black Sea region the circumstances behind anti-Germanism were yet again different. There the concerns were not so much with supposed “national security,” but more with the growing shortage of land to provide for the Russian peasantry. The German colonists had been resident in South Russia for at least three generations by that point. As a group, they had become extraordinarily successful in their farming ventures and there was a skyrocketing growth in their acquisition of farmlands from the local Russian gentry.¹⁰⁴ Inevitably they became embroiled in the unresolved crisis that Russia had faced since the emancipation of the serfs, which had been freed without adequate provision of farmlands to meet their needs. Russian peasants looked with growing envy and resentment upon the prosperous German colonists, now regarded as “privileged intruders” in Russia. The situation was exacerbated by a population explosion in Russia during the latter half of the century (up from 74 million in 1861 to 126 million in 1897). The price of land skyrocketed, and there were growing disparities between wealthy and poor peasants in the villages.¹⁰⁵ The nationalist Russian press became increasingly obsessed with the “problem” of controlling the land acquisitions of the German colonists. In the late 1880s the economic questions raised about the Germans in the Black Sea region became colored by the nationalist rhetoric about security concerns in the Southwest Provinces. Conditions became ripe for turning the German colonists – a highly visible national and religious minority -- into scapegoats for the unresolved problems of Russia’s agrarian policies, as had happened to them in other regions of the empire.¹⁰⁶

During these years the German colonists became subjected to a range of policies which undermined the autonomy of their institutions on several fronts. Until that point, the German villages had been largely closed social systems, under the supervision of a special government Foreign Colonist Welfare Committee (*Fürsorgekomitee*) that oversaw their affairs. The villages collectively owned their lands, and outsiders could not move in without special permission. At the local level, there had been a close functional linkage between the village governing council, the local church, and the village parochial school, which had enabled the German colonists to maintain and enhance their folk heritage, mother tongue, and ethnic identity for nearly one century in a foreign environment. In the 1870s various legislative wedges were driven into this closed system of governance. An especially heavy blow to the German colonists was the loss of their military exemption in 1874, a privilege that had been granted to them by earlier tsars when they first immigrated to Russia. In 1871 their special “colonist” status

¹⁰⁴ The Black Sea colonists owned a large percentage of the arable land in the region, with figures ranging from 11 percent in Bessarabia, 20 percent in Cherson, 38 percent in Taurida (Crimea), and 25 percent in Jekaterinoslav (Karl Stumpp, *The German-Russians*, Bonn: Edition Atlantic-Forum, 1971, second edition, p. 25).

¹⁰⁵ Edward Aston, “Russia: Tsarism and the West,” in Bruce Waller (ed.) *Themes in Modern European History, 1830 – 1890*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1990, pp. 159-189. It should be noted that there was also a growing disparity in wealth in the German colonies as well, with many landless sons being forced to seek their fortunes elsewhere.

¹⁰⁶ Neutatz, 1993, p. 436.

was ended and the Germans were incorporated into the local administrative *zemstvo* of the empire, along with the recently freed Russian serfs. On June 15, 1888 a law was passed targeting the Germans in the western provinces, which mandated that all persons of foreign descent had to be registered in their local *volosti* (rural districts). Various proposals were discussed by Russian planners to ensure that the Russian peasantry would predominate in the *volost* councils. One idea was to restrict the German settlers to no more than one-third of the representatives. Eventually it was decided that it would be sufficient to restrict major district office holders to native Russians.¹⁰⁷

The colonists in the Black Sea region also began to experience energetic steps toward Russification between 1891 and 1893. The boundaries of some predominantly German *volosti* were gerrymandered, some were dissolved or divided and reassigned to Ukrainian or Russian districts. In 1891 all German villages were given Russian names, and even the Protestant church records had to be kept in Russian.¹⁰⁸

In 1889 a system of district judges was introduced throughout the empire, which was perceived by the colonists as another attempt at Russification.¹⁰⁹ Complaints began to mount from Germans that they were being treated rudely by Russian officials in the *volost* courts.¹¹⁰ In an attempt to bolster the Orthodox church, restrictions were placed on all non-Orthodox faiths. A report filed by an official in the gouvernement of Cherson railed against “fanatics of Lutheranism and Germanism.”¹¹¹ Proselytizing sects, such as the German Stundist movement which had begun rapidly spreading into the Russian populace at that time, were vigorously persecuted.¹¹²

The promotion of the Russian language in the German villages was a laborious process that encountered mixed reactions, and it proceeded more slowly. Initially some German newspapers had recognized the obvious need to encourage greater knowledge of the language of their adopted country, and they promoted bilingualism as an economic advantage. Most of the German colonists regarded this with suspicion, as another step in Russification with especially ominous import for religious studies in their local parochial schools.¹¹³ In 1881 the village schools were placed under the Ministry for Public Education. It was mandated that instruction in all subjects other than religion and German in the Central Schools must be in the Russian language.¹¹⁴ In 1890 most school inspectors reported that knowledge of the Russian language still remained almost non-existent in the German village schools. At that point the Ministry for Public Education took stronger measures. In 1891 it was announced that all teachers had to pass the Russian language exam, as well as all graduates of the Central Schools.

¹⁰⁷ Neutatz, 1993, p. 78.

¹⁰⁸ Neutatz, 1993, pp. 119-120.

¹⁰⁹ Neutatz, 1993, pp. 118-120.

¹¹⁰ Neutatz, 1993, p. 78.

¹¹¹ Neutatz, 1993, p. 118.

¹¹² Fleischhauer, 1986, p. 346.

¹¹³ The fears of the colonists were not entirely unwarranted. As Neutatz (1993, p. 79) notes, the Justice Minister had advised that in addition to the laws of March 14, 1887 and June 15, 1888, “measures should also be developed for Russification of the schools.”

¹¹⁴ *Zentralschulen* were teacher’s schools, the next step above the village school (Neutatz, 1993, p. 328).

In order to retain their positions, German teachers flocked into crash Russian language courses during the summers. In the gouvernement of Cherson the director of Public Education ordered the chief of police to take measures to punish those who disobeyed, and that the schools must be placed on a “healthy pedagogical and national Russian foundation.”¹¹⁵ The colonists reacted with passive resistance, sending their children to school less regularly than before. In some villages where Russian teachers had been installed, they were boycotted and their lives made unbearable.¹¹⁶ However, by 1900 most school inspectors were reporting that the transition to Russian instruction was proceeding successfully.

More alarming for the German colonists, efforts were made to curtail the growth of their land ownership, undercutting their ability to provide for their growing families. The colonists were excluded from access to the Peasant Land Bank, established in 1882 to act as the national agency providing long-term credit in the huge transfer of gentry and state lands to peasants of Russian origin. As Long has noted, despite the fact that bank rules “...were repeatedly amended and liberalized to include other rural groups,” the German colonists remained excluded. The colonists argued – without success -- that since they had lost their special status in 1871, they should be treated equally with the rest of the peasantry.

Although they were technically excluded on the grounds of being 'settler proprietors' rather than 'peasants,' the exclusion in truth resulted from the rising xenophobia, particularly the anti-German feeling fueled by the press, the rampant nationalism, and the Russification policies of the government of Alexander III. The bank's blatantly discriminatory policy against the non-Russian peasantry reflected the opinions of the highest government circles, such as Minister of Internal Affairs D.A. Tolstoy, who in a letter to Finance Minister Bunge enthusiastically avowed that the Peasant Land Bank would counteract the expansion of [German] colonists and advance Russification by increasing peasant landholds...The government's position never wavered...¹¹⁷

This was but the beginning of even worse restrictions to follow. Policies to restrict German land ownership were implemented most persistently in the western border provinces, where the growing ethnic German population caused alarm. Relations between Russia and Germany had grown strained during these years, and Russia gravitated closer to the French orbit. In 1883-84 there was widespread discussion of the “German question” in Russian newspapers in the western provinces. A government commission was established to arrive at legislative remedies. One concern was to block new immigrants and to ensure that those already resident were Russian subjects. The Ministry of Internal Affairs wanted more than that, and pushed for laws to control their land ownership. In 1885, when Bismarck expelled about 30,000 Poles and Jews who lacked German citizenship, Count Tolstoy regarded this as a possible model for solving Russia’s own problems with the German settlers.

¹¹⁵ Neutatz, 1993, p. 338.

¹¹⁶ Neutatz, 1993, p. 343.

¹¹⁷ Long, 1988, pp. 126.

On March 14, 1887 an imperial ukase was issued forbidding people of foreign origin lacking Russian citizenship to acquire land outside urban areas in the three western border provinces of Volhynia, Podolia, and Kiev, as well as in Bessarabia and adjoining areas. Although the law was phrased broadly to restrict “foreigners,” the primary intent was to restrict the growing influx of German settlers and investments by German companies in the border regions. Diplomatic expediency prevented Germans from being singled out as a target in the language of the legislation.¹¹⁸ Bismarck responded with his *Lombardverbot*, which prohibited advance loans backed by Russian securities. Relations between Russia and Germany grew strained during these years, and Russia gravitated closer to the French orbit.¹¹⁹

The ostensible intent of the 1887 law was to encourage foreign settlers to become Russian subjects. In reaction to these restrictions, applications for citizenship by German settlers did escalate, but they were met with an increasingly rigid response from Russian officials. The hypocrisy of the 1887 law was shown by the fact that out of some 25,000 applications for citizenship filed by Germans by the end of 1889, only 454 were approved. Despite these efforts to stem the growing German presence, it soon began to backfire when Russian gentry realized that the law imposed restrictions on their own best customers, and thereby reduced their property values.¹²⁰ It also became evident that the investments by German enterprises in the region were economically essential, so numerous exceptions had to be made.¹²¹ As is always the case, the Russian government ran up against the problem that discrimination is difficult to implement when it affects the business interests of persons other than the targeted minority. This economic reality continued to plague efforts to restrict, harass, and otherwise erect bureaucratic barriers against the German minority over the next quarter century.

The provincial government of Volhynia continued to press for more restrictive legislation against the influx of German settlers. Their numbers were declared dangerous – from 1882 to 1890 they had increased from 87,731 to 200,924. The fact that most were not immigrants from Prussia, but rather re-settlers from Russian Poland who already were Russian subjects, didn’t matter; the central issue was that they preserved their German ethnic traits, and therefore they were regarded as dangerous. The War Minister concurred, declaring that Volhynia was an important strategic route and that it was risky to have a large cluster of people of German origin there. The Minister of Finance also supported discriminatory legislation, despite his concerns about the unforeseen consequences that economic restrictions could have, as had plagued them in 1887. In 1891 the Ministry of Internal Affairs proposed an extension of the previous law that would forbid settlers of foreign origin, including those who were Russian subjects, to purchase land outside urban areas in Volhynia and other western provinces. Persons

¹¹⁸ Neutatz 1993, p. 75-77.

¹¹⁹ For a detailed discussion of Russian legislation concerning Germans within the empire between 1856 and 1914, see Dietmar Neutatz, Die “deutsche Frage” im Schwarzmeergebiet und in Wolhynien, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1993.

¹²⁰ Neutatz, 1993, p. 92.

¹²¹ Fleischhauer, 1986, p. 349.

of Russian ethnic origin, or those who had embraced the Orthodox faith, were exempt from these restrictions. The tsar signed this bill into law on March 14, 1892.¹²²

After the 1892 law was enacted, local *zemstvo* officials in Jekaterinoslav and Werchneднепровск requested that a similar law be implemented in their districts, and there was talk of expanding it to include the German colonists throughout the Black Sea region. However, this again triggered debate and concern by Russian gentry about the impact it would have on their own property rights and the value of their land. The debate became heated, during which charges flew such as that the growing purchase of land by the Germans was a “sickness” afflicting the empire, they were a many-headed “hydra,” their lack of “Russian blood” was highlighted, as well as the fact that they had resided in the empire for a century yet “stubbornly” preserved their customs and beliefs. In the end, cooler heads prevailed, as well as the concerns for the property rights of the gentry. It was pointed out that the German colonists comprised only a small percentage of the population. The *zemstvo* Ministry of Internal Affairs turned down the proposed legislation, but issued a statement that the trend of growing land acquisition by the Germans would be watched.¹²³

Meanwhile, in the western provinces, the feared economic consequences of the law of 1892 began to come true. Count Ignatiev, the governor-general, informed the Ministry of Internal Affairs that the gentry were being hurt because the German settlers couldn’t renew the leases on their land. As a result, the authorities were being forced to informally tolerate lease renewals. One positive result, he reported, was that the 1892 law had been a success in that over 80 percent of the settlers were now Russian subjects. While they still retained their foreign culture, they had become closely bound with local economic interests. Ignatiev suggested that the focus of legislative efforts should be on the prevention of new immigrants of non-Russian descent from entering Volhynia, the expulsion of those who failed to take out Russian citizenship, and the incorporation of the current settlers. As a result, the Ministry proposed that the law of 1892 be repealed,

¹²² Neutatz, 1993, p. 120-121. These considerations strongly contradict the opinion by Eric Lohr (cited on GR-Heritage, May 14, 2000) that the various legislations enacted from 1887 onward were “neither specifically anti-German, nor extraordinary in world practice,” but rather simply a “reluctant response to a massive and sudden immigration wave,” and that “curbs on immigration” were common in the latter two decades of the nineteenth century. If Neutatz is correct, there is little reasonable doubt that ethnic Germans were the primary target of this legislation. Since the majority of the settlers were Russian subjects relocating within the empire, this raises serious questions about whether it is legitimate to even view the central issue as one of “immigration” rather than discrimination. The central importance of the ethnicity of the settlers is underscored by the fact that their Russian citizenship was blithely ignored in the later versions of the legislation that were implemented, as well as by the blatant exemptions that were granted for persons of Great Russian descent and members of the Orthodox faith. Lohr is quite correct that anti-foreigner sentiment was not extraordinary at that time – after all, the USA excluded the Chinese in 1882 and the Japanese in 1907, and Jews were expelled in large numbers from the Russian empire in the 1880s and 1890s by pogroms. This hardly places the legislation by the Russian government on firmer moral ground.

¹²³ Neutatz, 1993, p. 122-125.

that there be no further restrictions on land acquisition for those of foreign origin who had become citizens. At the same time, restrictions were tightened against non-citizens who had gotten around the law of 1887 by taking out informal leases on land. The tsar signed this new legislation into law on March 19, 1895.¹²⁴

On the opposite side of the empire, restrictions were also imposed on land ownership by the German colonists in the Volga region, despite the fact that they were isolated and not a credible security risk. This indicates that the anti-German mentality was not just a local phenomenon. As their population steadily increased, the Volga colonists had been suffering from a chronic land shortage. Their petitions to access the Peasant Land Bank continued to be turned down by the Ministry of Finance even as late as 1905, which "...lamely justified its decision on the grounds that approval would set a precedent that would encourage petitions from other [German] colonists." Finally, "...a little-known government land directive in 1906" dashed all their hopes.¹²⁵

[L]easing of state lands in the trans-Volga steppe had become the chief method colonists had used since the 1890s to expand crop cultivation. Until 1904 large amounts of state lands in Novouzensk District had been leased out for periods of eight to nine years to peasant and colony communes, as well as wealthy individuals. State leasing of these frontier lands ceased with the law of June 7, 1904, which designated that all state lands in Samara, Orenburg, and Ufa provinces were for sale to landless and land-short peasants for settlement. ... Judging that they qualified for the resettlement program, many of the older, land-short Volga colonies expeditiously drafted documents depicting their critical land situation...Finally, on April 12, 1906, the Ministry of Agriculture announced the crushing blow, categorically prohibiting all colonies and colonists from purchasing or settling on these lands. Even a public outcry in the chief Volga German newspaper, aimed at enlightening the government about the serious land shortage in the colonies, failed to persuade the government to reconsider its decision...Lacking funds, deprived of credit, and now prohibited from further leasing, there was no future for them in Russia.¹²⁶

Nicholas II

When Nicholas II (1894-1918), the ill-fated last tsar, ascended the throne there were great hopes initially that he would inaugurate more liberal policies. The young tsar was regarded as more humane and well-intentioned than his predecessor. However, within three months of assuming the throne he destroyed these illusions.

On 17th (29th) January, 1895, when receiving deputies from the Nobles, the Zemstvo, and the municipalities, who had come to St. Petersburg to congratulate him on his marriage, he declared his confidence in the sincerity of the loyal feelings which the delegates expressed; and then, to the

¹²⁴ Neutatz, 1993, p. 125-127.

¹²⁵ Long, 1988, pp. 126.

¹²⁶ Long, 1988, pp. 126-128.

astonishment of all present, he added: "It is known to me that recently, in some Zemstvo assemblies, were heard the voices of people who had let themselves be carried away by absurd dreams of the Zemstvo representatives taking part in the affairs of internal administration; let them know that I, devoting all my efforts to the prosperity of the nation, will preserve the principles of autocracy as firmly and unswervingly as my late father of imperishable memory."¹²⁷

These words triggered great disappointment and dissatisfaction in all sections of the educated classes, and the imperative for constitutional reform began to be displayed more openly than before. During the early years of Nicholas II's reign he also clearly demonstrated his intent to retain control in the borderlands. In 1899 he forcibly reduced the powers of the Finnish parliament and converted Finland into a military district of the empire.

For a brief period, from 1895 to 1900, there was a lull in Russian national preoccupation with the "German question." Due to the difficulties of acquiring land, a strong out-migration of ethnic Germans began to take place from Volhynia, which removed them from national attention as a target of xenophobia and as a scapegoat for Russian foreign policy fears. Some local Russian newspapers bizarrely began to change their tune, now worrying about the negative effect that this rapid departure of ethnic Germans might have on the local economy and land prices. However, during the Russo-Japanese war (1904-5) anti-foreigner rhetoric soon heated up once again. D.N. Wegun, a Pan-Slavic author, laid the foundations for a renewed campaign of press-hatred against the German colonists through his continuing obsessions with a supposed German *Drang nach Osten*.¹²⁸

Ignatiev, the governor-general of Volhynia, notorious for his anti-German sentiments, was replaced by Dragomirov. Efforts to replace German teachers with Russians were brought to a halt, and it was reported that German teachers were enrolling in Russian language courses in satisfactory numbers. However, at the local level discrimination still persisted. Dragomirov took an even harsher interpretation of the 1895 law, deciding that the German colonists who were Russian subjects could acquire only those lands they had previously leased before the 1885 law was implemented. The colonists complained, but to no avail, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Kiev supported his decision.¹²⁹ In 1897 the governor of Cherson also renewed his concerns about the growth of German land acquisitions in the Black Sea region. Nicholas II concurred, announced that the influx should be halted and launched further inquiry into the problem. The results were unexpected, showing that due to the high price of land the growth of German land ownership in Bessarabia, Taurien, and Cherson had actually declined from 1890 to 1902, as was also the case in Volhynia. As a result, the Ministry of Internal Affairs withdrew its proposed legislative restrictions.¹³⁰

During the revolutionary outbreaks in 1905, the pent-up resentment of the non-Russians in the empire erupted once again and armed rebellion broke out in Poland,

¹²⁷ Wallace, 1905, ch. 39.

¹²⁸ Neutatz, 1993, p. 148-149.

¹²⁹ Neutatz, 1993, p. 151-153.

¹³⁰ Neutatz, 1993, p. 152-153.

Latvia, Georgia and the Far East. The Baltic-German landlords bore the brunt of much hostility from their Latvian tenants, who attempted to seize their estates. To restore order, the tsar agreed to convene a Duma and made promises of religious and cultural freedom. The brief period of quasi-parliamentary rule in 1905 – 1906 brought large blocks of ethnic minorities into national political life for the first time, and a broad spectrum of parties began vying for their support. These included the leftist Social Democrats (Mensheviks, Bolsheviks), the Socialist Revolutionaries, and the “liberal bourgeoisie” centrist parties, the Constitutional Democrats (Kadets) and Progressives, in opposition to the tsarist government and the Russian nationalists.¹³¹

Although the German colonists in most regions didn’t actively participate in the revolution of 1905,¹³² they were encouraged by these developments and they hoped that the Duma would provide a vehicle to restore and enhance their ethnic rights. Various German elements (colonists, urban workers, as well as those in the Baltic region, and especially German academics in the Volga region) formed political associations promoting a variety of agendas in 1905.¹³³ Most German colonists rejected the Leftist parties because of their platforms advocating the confiscation of land. The majority of

¹³¹ Riasanovsky, 1969, provides a good summary of the political shifts that took place in the fortunes of the various parties during the Duma period. He notes that the Kadets and Octobrists were generally “centrist” in their platform, and both parties were strong advocates for constitutional democracy and minority rights. The Octobrists generally stood to the Right of the Kadets. The two parties split because the Octobrists considered the October Manifesto to be a proper basis for the Russian constitution, whereas the Kadets regarded it as only the first step. The First Duma convened in 1906, with the Kadets as the strongest political party. The Socialist Revolutionaries and Social Democrats largely boycotted the election. The Kadets “over-played their hand: they demanded a constituent assembly, they considered the first Duma to be, in a sense, the Estates-General of 1789” (p. 455). After Nicholas II dissolved the First Duma in 1906, the Leftists and Kadets rallied and participated actively in elections for the Second Duma in 1907. As a result, the Socialist Revolutionaries and Social Democrats gained seats. The Second Duma was dissolved within three months because they remained at an impasse with the government, and an attempt was even made to arrest the SR delegates for “treason.” After 1907 the Octobrists emerged as the most prominent party in the Duma, and the Kadets were relegated to the “loudest voice of the Duma opposition.” The Octobrists consolidated their power by forming strategic alliances, either with the nationalists on the Right, or the Kadets on the Left, as circumstances dictated. The Socialist Revolutionaries boycotted the Third and Fourth Dumas. Along with this gradual shift in balance of power to the Right, there was also a decline in representation by ethnic minorities. Non Great Russians composed almost half the representatives on the First Duma, but by the Third Duma their numbers had been reduced to 36 out of the total 377 (Riasanovsky, 1969, pp. 457-58; see also Clarkson, 1969, p. 407).

¹³² In the Saratov region, the Volga Germans participated in the broad-based liberation movement that swept the area (James Long, “the Volga Germans of Saratov Province Between Reform and Revolution, 1861-1905,” pp. 139-159 in Rex A Wage & S. J. Seregny, eds., *Politics and Society in Provincial Russia: saratov, 1590-1917*, Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1989).

¹³³ Fleischhauer, 1986, p. 378.

German delegates were members of the centrist Octobrist and the Kadet parties. As a result of their advocacy in the Duma, Dragomirov was forced to remove the restrictions against land acquisition by ethnic German Russian subjects who had settled in Volhynia before 1885.¹³⁴

For a brief period in 1905 the representatives of the nationalist Right withheld attacks against the Germans, in recognition of their loyalty to the government. However, Russian nationalistic attitudes continued to harden and the German representatives soon found themselves on the defensive in on-going debates about further restrictions on their land ownership.¹³⁵ Legislation targeting the ethnic Germans continued to be implemented in the western provinces, and even accelerated after 1907 when the tsarist administration reasserted power against the Duma and old policies of suppression of the ethnic minorities were renewed.¹³⁶ A "Neo-Slavism" movement sprang up in the newspapers, once again targeting the Germans for not assimilating and accusing them of being separatists, like the Finns. Charges were made that Germany had a "secret law" allowing German settlers to have "dual citizenship," although evidence for such a law could not be produced. It was also charged that they were receiving cheap credit from German and Jewish banks to finance a covert colonization plan. When Germany backed Austria-Hungary in its annexation of Serbia and Herzegovina, rhetoric flared once again about how Russia had to protect its "Serbian brethren." The German Duma representatives were attacked for being "against the national Russian people and the interests of the state."¹³⁷

In 1907 the governor-general of the western provinces requested that the 1895 restrictions be extended to include not only Volhynia, but also Podolia and Kiev. Stolypin, the Minister of Internal Affairs, requested further statistical data on the matter. The resulting report showed no alarming trends in the growth of land acquisition, but this didn't prevent him from sharpening the recommendations of his predecessor and reviving the discriminatory law of 1892 against Russian citizens of foreign ancestry. Because Stolypin didn't have the data to back up such reactionary alarmism, he decided to withhold the law for a more opportune time before presenting it to the Duma.¹³⁸

In 1909 pressure mounted for further legislation against German land acquisition in the western provinces. Nicholas II agreed that the matter merited swift attention. In 1910 Stolypin manipulated the statistical data on the growth of the German population and of their land acquisitions to justify a new law. All the government ministries approved the law, despite worries by the Ministry of Justice about its possible economic impact (it is notable that the Ministry of Justice focused on economic concerns, rather than on concerns about the morality of discriminating against people with valid Russian citizenship). The way was now clear for Stolypin to expand the law of 1895 to Kiev and Podolia. Immigration was no longer a real issue at that point, since most of the Germans had immigrated before 1895 and fulfilled the conditions of the 1895 law in order to acquire land. On Sept. 28, 1910, Stolypin presented a law to forbid persons of foreign origin, irrespective of their citizenship status, from buying or leasing land outside urban

¹³⁴ Neutatz, 1993, p. 155-156.

¹³⁵ Pinkus and Fleischhauer, 1987, p. 49.

¹³⁶ Seton-Watson, 1986, p. 23.

¹³⁷ Neutatz, 1993, p. 155-157.

¹³⁸ Neutatz, 1993, p. 155-156.

areas in the three western provinces of Volhynia, Podolia, and Kiev. Exemptions were allowed for persons of Russian or Czech ethnicity from the governments of Lublin and Siedlce.¹³⁹ Neutatz characterizes this proposed law as the harshest yet proposed by the Russian regime against the Germans. "The restrictions of the rights of the Germans, despite their Russian citizenship, were legally carried through, so that they presumably were citizens on paper only."¹⁴⁰

The proposed legislation was spurred on by anti-German articles that flared in the newspapers, accusing the settlers of being part of a secret colonization plan to undermine the country, launched in collusion with German and Jewish banks. Liprandi even charged that the Baghdad railroad was part of this grand scheme. One anonymous pamphlet urged that the Duma enact a law expropriating land owned by persons of foreign extraction in a zone 20 werst wide along the western borders.¹⁴¹ This was a portent of the infamous "liquidation laws" that sprang up four years later during World War One, when that scenario actually came to be implemented on a much larger scale.

Fortunately for the German settlers, several factors intervened on their behalf at this point. The Polish delegate demanded a specific exclusion for Poles. Kryshanowski, acting Minister of Internal Affairs, reassured him that "the project was directed not against Poles, but against the German *Drang nach Osten*," although the administration didn't want to explicitly mention Germans in the wording of the law. The Polish delegate still wasn't satisfied. A group of German Octobrists, Stolypin's political enemies, headed by Karl Lindemann, began active lobbying efforts to defeat the measure. The leadership of the Octobrist party had initially affirmed the proposed legislation, but Lindemann's "German group" submitted a position paper arguing persuasively against such reactionary treatment of Russian subjects. The Kadets also raised objections to the law on principle. In addition to the liberal opposition, the German government also passed a law removing any doubts about the so-called "dual citizenship" issue. Questions began to be raised about the doctored statistics, which undermined the rationale for the legislation. Finally, Stolypin himself was assassinated in September, 1911, which removed the driving force behind the initiative.

The Duma commission continued to support the law, but began to make compromises. Exclusions were granted for Poles, Czechs, and Galicians, even if they hadn't converted to Orthodoxy. Exemptions were also allowed for anyone who had been a Russian subject before the citizenship law of June 15, 1888. Widmer, a contemporary ethnic German who was a member of the Duma, interpreted this as some minimal recognition of the civil rights of subjects of foreign descent, provided that they had settled there sufficiently long in the past.¹⁴² Eventually, on May 8, 1912, the Duma commission withdrew the proposed law "for further study."¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Neutatz, 1993, p. 162.

¹⁴⁰ Neutatz, 1993, p. 161-162.

¹⁴¹ Neutatz, 1993, pp. 170-174.

¹⁴² Widmer, Andreas. "Memorable Events in the History of the German Colonies in Bessarabia," Journal of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, spring, 2000, (originally written in 1914), p. 15.

¹⁴³ Neutatz, 1993, p. 175; see also David G. Rempel, "The Expropriation of the German Colonists in South Russia During the Great War," Journal of Modern History, vol. 4, no. 1, March, 1932, p. 51.

This still didn't resolve the matter. Stolypin's successor, Makarov, refused to remove the issue from the agenda because he didn't agree with the decision of the Duma commission. The governor-general of the three western provinces adamantly continued to push for restrictive legislation against the Germans, with (as usual) the support of Nicholas II. Statistics were again doctored to support the case. In 1912 Makarov presented a reworked version of Stolypin's law, this time expanded to include Bessarabia. The restrictions on land ownership were to apply, irrespective of citizenship status or date of immigration. Ethnic Poles and Czechs, and persons of the Orthodox faith, were exempted from the proposed restrictions.

Andreas Widmer, a German member of the Duma, writing in 1914, characterized this version of the legislation as more deadly than its predecessor: "since the majority of the non-Russian population in Bessarabia is of German religions, not orthodox, it is evident that the proposed bill has been singly aimed at the Germans."¹⁴⁴ Widmer noted that the same stereotypic charges continued to be raised against the colonists that had plagued them since the 1880s -- they were blamed for not assimilating, for being separatist in their village government, and so on. Widmer countered these arguments by pointing out that since 1871 the administration of the German villages had been conducted in accordance with general civil regulations and they were subject to all standard Russian laws. He also pointed out that the Germans were not unique in their adherence to their ethnicity and customs, but that other nationalities in Bessarabia did so as well, including the Russians: "The Germans are exclusively surrounded on one side by Bulgarians and by Moldavians on the other side. ... Similarly assimilation does not occur among Russians. Each nation lives its own life and holds fast to its customs."¹⁴⁵

The Black Sea Germans became greatly alarmed by the legislative proposal of 1912 because they realized the Russian nationalists were no longer restricting their attacks solely to the western provinces. They were next on the hit list, despite the fact that they had been Russian subjects for a century by that point. Karl Lindemann's "German group" in the Octobrist party continued its active lobbying efforts to defeat the new proposal. As usual, they received some support from sources that had vested financial interests in the matter. The local banks worried about a potential financial crisis if all these German farmers had to default on their loans. Widmer, writing in 1914, noted:

The legal proponents have created a severe panic among the German population, and have crippled the entire economical existence. If in the future that portion regarding Bessarabia becomes law, and it is applied to full extent to the lands of existing villages, it will lead to a total depreciation of all real properties, and thereby to ruin and destruction of the entire population.¹⁴⁶

As a result of these concerns about the broader economic impact, Lindemann's group again succeeded in defeating the law when it reached the Duma in 1914. The Duma commission declined the motion, and requested more statistical data on the

¹⁴⁴ Widmer, 2000, p. 15. It should be noted that Kryshanowski's comment, cited above, underscores that the 1910 legislation was also aimed primarily at the ethnic Germans.

¹⁴⁵ Widmer, 2000, p. 18.

¹⁴⁶ Widmer, 2000, p. 19.

matter.¹⁴⁷ At that point the issue became moot since events were overtaken by the First World War.

While the Germans struggled against direct legislative efforts to restrict their land ownership during these years, they also confronted legalistic barriers of a different sort resulting from their persistent exclusion from the Peasant Land Bank. With but very few exceptions, Germans remained excluded from this important state financed source of long-term low-interest loans through the reign of Nicholas II. They had supposedly been equal with the rest of the peasantry since 1871, but double standards remained. In 1905 they hoped that they would finally achieve equal rights under the new Duma, that lawmakers would recognize the growing problem of landlessness in the colonies and reject the cliché that all German farmers were wealthy. It was especially difficult in those cases when lands that had been leased by Germans were taken over by the Land Bank, which then parceled them out and resold them to Russian peasants. The Germans were not allowed to buy the parcels they had farmed, and were forced to evacuate. When a group of colonists presented their petition to a representative on the Duma, asking for help from the Bank and enquiring if the October Manifesto of 1905 did not give them equal rights with all other farmers, they were informed that there still was no such thing as equality of rights in Russia. In 1908 Stolypin expressed the opinion that Germans should remain excluded from state sponsored programs for land acquisition. Supposedly they had their own special organizations for taking care of their landless, they were more industrious than the Russians, and besides, they were of “foreign origin.” He further argued that allowing the German colonists to have access to the state institutions would not promote their equality, but rather it would be an advantage for them and a disadvantage for the Russian peasants. A compromise recommendation was made in 1908 that German colonists might access state land funds, but they could not exceed their percentage of the local population, and they would remain excluded in the western provinces. But even this suggestion was turned down.¹⁴⁸

Concerning the charge that was frequently raised in the Russian press about how the colonists were buying land with foreign money, specifically with assistance from the German nationalist organizations, Widmer replied that this was “selfish and malevolent slander.” In Bessarabia, he noted, the government Land Bank excluded the Germans, despite the fact that they needed land as much as farmers of other ethnicities who were allowed access to the government resources. The Germans acquired land by using money inherited from their fathers, plus borrowing from local credit associations. In order to purchase land, they were forced to resort to complex subterfuge. For example, Widmer cites one common arrangement whereby the seller mortgaged his property through a private land bank for up to half of its value, with the German buyer taking over the debt. The seller would then grant the other half of the purchase price to the German buyer as a loan for 8 to 10 years, plus interest, for which he received the balance in cash.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Rempel (1932) summarizes the sequence of events around the proposed legislations of 1910 and 1912. He concurs that “[m]anifestly, the conservatives, who controlled both these dumas had opposed these proposals for purely selfish reasons” (p. 530).

¹⁴⁸ Neutatz, 1993, p. 196-198.

¹⁴⁹ Widmer, 2000, p. 18.

The main reaction of the ethnic Germans during this long period of suspicion, prejudice and discrimination was to protest repeatedly that they were loyal subjects of the tsar. They had a somewhat naïve faith in the good will of the regime, and they kept trying to figure out ways to convince the local authorities and to sway public opinion. During the celebrations for the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Beresan colonies in 1910, the colonists went to great lengths to devise demonstrations of their loyalty.

Portraits of Tsar Nicholas II and Tsarina Alexandra with the inscription 'God protect the Tsar and the Tsarina' were hanging at the entrance to the school. Patriotic speeches were held during the dinner....Hofmeister N.F. Suchomlinov said in his speech, 'I know the Germans in South Russia. They have become our neighbors many years ago. I can say they have always done their share and have become an example to us. They are honest and loyal citizens and I don't believe that they can be disloyal to our fatherland or to the tsar.' After the speech 'Hurrah' was shouted and the national anthem was sung.¹⁵⁰

Toward the Debacle: the First World War

Spark was set to this tinder when the First World War broke out in August, 1914. During the first months the Russian press remained silent about its citizens of German ancestry, and most of its venom was directed against *Reischdeutsche*. However, as the initial hopes for an easy Russian victory were dashed by early defeats on the battlefield, the nationalistic Russian press began to make strident demands for action. The "German question" in Russia quickly became viciously radicalized as the government bitterly turned against its citizens of German descent and used them as scapegoats.

On August 18, 1914, use of the German language was forbidden in public, and Germans were not allowed to gather together in groups larger than two persons. In 1915 German newspapers and publishing houses were closed. The Ministry of Internal Affairs ordered that German colonists be banned from owning hunting rifles, and in some cases efforts were made to confiscate all weapons.¹⁵¹ The German language was forbidden in schools, churches, and by soldiers in the tsar's army. Ministers who continued to preach in German were arrested and exiled to Siberia.¹⁵²

Others were dismissed from their jobs or expelled from societies and clubs. 'Germans are bad for Russian industry' became a popular wartime expression and there were many manufacturers who ordered the dismissal of every German. ...German works were removed from the repertoire of theatres, concert halls and opera houses. German place-names were Russified. St. Petersburg was renamed Petrograd...¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ John Philips, *Die Deutschen am Schwarzen Meer zwischen Bug und Dnjestr*, North Dakota State University, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, 1999, p. 59.

¹⁵¹ Eric Lohr, comments on GR-Heritage, Sept. 25, 2000.

¹⁵² Neutatz, 1993, p. 430.

¹⁵³ Orlando Figes & B. Kolonitskii, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution, the Language and Symbols of 1917*, New Have: Yale University Press, 1999, p. 159.

The reaction of the German community was, as before, to avow their loyalty and display an exaggerated patriotism. "People with German surnames applied to the Imperial Chancellery to change them. Many emphasized their Russian patriotism and identity in their new surnames: Romanov, Novorusskii ('Newrussian'), and Shmidt-Slavianskii ('Schmidt-Slavic')." ¹⁵⁴ About 250,000 German colonists served in the Russian army. Yet even they were treated with suspicion. Soldiers with German surnames were transferred to the Turkish front, and most were removed from major leadership positions. ¹⁵⁵ As defeats mounted on the battlefield, the media charged that the generals were traitors. General Rennenkampf sought to demonstrate his patriotic zeal by demanding that all his officers with German surnames swear a special loyalty oath. ¹⁵⁶

Even more ominously, the Ministry of Internal Affairs already had plans drawn up at the beginning of the war, by August, 1914, for the mass expulsion of ethnic German settlers from the entire western border region of the empire and the seizure of their property, as well as that of all citizens of enemy states. ¹⁵⁷ Public opinion greatly supported such an action. The groundwork had been laid for a drastic lashing out at the German ethnic minority. ¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Figes & Klonitskii, 1999, p. 159.

¹⁵⁵ Ingeborg Fleischhauer, *Das Dritte Reich und die Deutschen in der Sowjetunion*, Stuttgart: *Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt*, (Schriftenreihe der Vierteljahrshefte für *Zeitgeschichte*; Nr. 46, 1983, p. 25.

¹⁵⁶ Figes & Klonitskii, 199, p. 159.

¹⁵⁷ Gatrell, 1999, p. 22. See also Detlef Brandes, "From the Persecutions in the First World War Up to the Deportation," in Gerd Stricker (ed.), *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas: Rußland*, Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1997.

¹⁵⁸ The expulsion of the German settlers from Volhynia and nearby provinces, and the confiscation of their property, is usually regarded as a rash wartime act which wouldn't have happened under normal conditions. Rink (1966, p. 62), however, cites an article by Rudolf Deringer ("*Die Ausweisung der deutschen Kolonisten aus Wolhynien in den Jahren 1915 und 1916*," *Deutsches Leben in Rußland*, Berlin, August-October 1929), in which Deringer claims that "the expropriation of the German land owners in Volhynia and the uprooting of about 200,000 colonists to Siberia had already been long planned by the Tsarist government. The tragic war against Germany offered a welcomed cause to carry out their plan." Deringer does not offer documentation for this charge. There are hints that such a notion was "in the air" long before the war years. Neutatz (1993, p. 174), we have seen, cites an anonymous pamphlet that was circulating as early as 1911-1912, advocating that the Duma enact a law expropriating the land of German settlers in a zone 20 Verst wide along the western borders. There is also a report in at least one German-Russian family history chronicle, claiming that members of their family were "removed from their home in Volhynia in 1913." The quotation is as follows: "By 1912 political conditions in Europe were deteriorating and the Russian government was becoming less friendly to the Germans in their country. This was especially true for the Volhynians whose close proximity to the western border placed them in a vulnerable position. Persecution of these Germans, who were accused of espionage, intensified long before Germany declared war on Russia on August 1, 1914. In the late summer of 1913 pockets of Germans in Volhynia were forced by the Russian

In his annual report for 1914, the governor of Tula province described how 'the people have formed the view that Germans, even those who are Russian subjects, are enemies of the fatherland, that there is no place for them on Russian soil and that the land that belongs to them here should be given to Russian peasants.'¹⁵⁹

The Russian army had already begun mass expulsions of German settlers from the Baltic and Polish regions in September, 1914, and the operation was expanded to a larger scale by December. The expellees were relocated beyond the Volga. In October of that year the Council of Ministers began deliberations on a law to confiscate assets owned by German, Austrian, and Hungarian subjects in the empire. The consensus was to focus on confiscation on their land.¹⁶⁰ The commander in chief of the army pressed the ministers to also develop legislation authorizing the expropriation of all lands owned by persons of ethnic German descent throughout the border regions.¹⁶¹

The Minister of Internal Affairs submitted the proposed legislations to the council in November, 1914. Under the terms of the first law, the *volost* and village communities of the German colonists were forbidden to take out any deeds involving the acquisition of land in rural districts. The law also applied to colonists as private

authorities to leave their homes to move farther inland. Although they didn't realize it at the time, our families were more fortunate than others who in the next two years were deported under far more trying conditions...." Members of the Bucholtz, Schoenrock, Unrau, and other families were "given orders to evacuate in July of 1913, leaving behind a beautiful crop of grain, their land, and most of their possessions. No compensation was received... This group arrived near Kaluga (south of Moscow) and were to settle there." These citations are from a book entitled *Wherever You Go*, by Ruth Janssen (no publisher, date, or page numbers available, taken from a message posted on GR-Heritage, April 19, 2000).

Sinner (2000, p. 8) points out that it has also been asserted the Volhynian deportations were only a "temporary" measure, and Fleischhauer has described them as not a specifically anti-German action. To counter such notions, Sinner cites a report by Bishop Josef Kessler, in his *Die Geschichte der Diözese Tyraspol* (Dickinson, ND: 1931), claiming that "The official explanation of the *Zelski vestnik* was that the Tsarist government had intentionally prepared to strike the German colonists with a blow of extermination." Supposedly the Russian military already had standing orders that if the Tsarist government collapsed, they were to commence "starving and driving all of the German subjects out of the dominion of Russia" (cited in Sinner, 2000, p. 4). Eric Lohr has also recently rejected the notion that these were only "temporary" measures: "As the war progressed, the program took on a life of its own, and there can be little doubt that it had become a program for permanent transfer of the properties to new, non-German owners by late 1916. Even the liberals of the Provisional government did not restore property rights to expropriated Germans" (cited on GR-Heritage, May 14, 2000).

¹⁵⁹ Gatrell, 1999, p. 24.

¹⁶⁰ Rempel, 1932, p. 53.

¹⁶¹ Comments by Eric Lohr, posted on GR-Heritage internet discussion group, May 14, 2000.

landowners, but exemptions were granted to those who had given up their membership in the village community (the *Gemeinde*) and were residing on their private estates. As Rempel points out, this clause shows that the legislation targeted the villagers, who were the relatively poorer element of the ethnic German population.¹⁶² The second law established zones along the entire Russo-German and Russo-Austrian border, varying between 100 to 150 *werst* wide, extending from the northernmost tip of the Baltic sea to the Rumanian frontier, then along the Black Sea to the Caucasus, encompassing some 25 provinces. Within these zones, all persons subject to the terms of the first law would be forced to sell all their properties acquired after June 1, 1870 to the Peasant Land Bank. They would be granted a period of 10 to 16 months (depending on which zone they were in) to liquidate their property, and anything not disposed of by that deadline would be sold at public auction.¹⁶³ The governor of Tauria urged some moderation of these proposals. As a result, the Council of Ministers granted exemptions for those who had become citizens before 1880, those who had converted to the Orthodox faith prior to the legislation, those who had served in the military, or who had an ancestor who had done so. The lands that had been granted to the German "mother colonies" early in the nineteenth century were also exempted. Despite these amendments, the broader Black Sea region was especially heavily impacted by this legislation, since about three-fifths of the land subject to expropriation lay from Bessarabia to the Don.¹⁶⁴ The "liquidation laws" were passed as a special measure by the Council of Ministers (without submitting them to the Duma for approval) on February 2, 1915. The nationalistic press was elated over these measures designed to "liberate Russia from the German yoke," but regretted the exemptions and demanded that all of the ethnic Germans be included.

As military conditions continued to worsen, the mood of the populace grew darker. In early May, 1915, the armies of the Central Powers broke through into Galicia. By the end of the summer the Russian armies had been expelled from Poland, rolled back as far as Riga, and 14 of the western provinces were occupied. In May, 1915, anti-German pogroms erupted in several cities, an eerie precursor to *Kristalnacht* under the Nazis. Mobs rampaged for three days in Moscow, St. Petersburg and other areas, looting and burning some 759 German shops, murdering and injuring many people.¹⁶⁵

(material on the 1915 3-day riot)

This is Lohr's opinion as quoted by Benert

> " Actually it lasted about 3 days, and the army didn't quell it until it
> had gone on for most of that period. The police did their best, or at
> least tried, but it was just out of hand. The failure of the government
> to respond led to charges that the government was behind it, but Lohr
> strongly argues that it was a grassroots movement, fed by a variety of

¹⁶² Rempel, 1932, p. 54.

¹⁶³ Rempel, 1932, pp. 54-55.

¹⁶⁴ Detlef Brandes, "From the Persecutions in the First World War Up to the Deportation," in Gerd Stricker (ed.), *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas: Rußland*, Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1997.

¹⁶⁵ Brandes, 1997.

- > motives, including personal grudges, dislike of factory superiors who
- > happened to be German, etc., along with the political/military
- > consideration (which had been pounded into their heads by the military and
- > some government officials) that all Germans were spies. It also was not
- > limited to Moscow. Lohr says that they went on occurring throughout the
- > empire for a time afterwards, and there were smaller ones before as well.
- >
- > The reason the government did not act sooner, Lohr says, was not that it
- > favored the pogrom, but feared that trying to quell it forcefully would only
- > stir up the crowds to more violence, more revolutionary fervor. Remember,
- > the crowds were already thinking that the government was playing footsie
- > with the German enemy, so quelling the riots would appear to be pro-German.
- >
- > Also, they weren't sure the soldiers could be trusted not to side with the
- > rioters. Later, the official investigation into the riots was kept under
- > wraps, which again has led many (especially Soviet historians) to think
- > that the government was complicit in staging them. In reality, Lohr
- > argues, this was another sign of the government's weakness in the face of
- > strong popular forces. "

I think that is a fair and reasonable summary. I have read Eric Lohr's Ph.D. dissertation, entitled "Enemy Alien Politics Within the Russian Empire During World War I," and found it to be an outstanding study, one of the best, along with Peter Gattrell's "A Whole Empire Walking." Lohr's study does not ameliorate or minimize the scope or scale of anti-Germanism during those years. He clearly documents how people of "alien" descent became targets of discriminatory policies of expropriation and deportation by the government, and even worse they became targets of spontaneous robbery, assault, rape, and murder by the Russian citizenry, and often by the military who favored the pogromists. Lohr does not feel that the Russian government planned the pogroms, because it preferred to maintain a monopoly on the use of force, which otherwise might easily escalate out of control. He documents that the 3-day pogrom was not an isolated event, but rather it fit into an on-going pattern of pervasive anti-"alienism" that teetered dangerously on the brink of exploding out of control until the end of the war. Since his dissertation is still relatively difficult to access, I will post some illustrative passages:

"The official campaign against enemy aliens met an energetic response among parts of the population. In fact, the campaign, meant to be a means to unify state and society in a common patriotic effort, had a number of unintended results. One of the most dramatic was a massive anti-alien riot in Moscow from May 26-May 29, 1915. It caused roughly 70 million rubles damages, destroyed nearly 800 business and apartments, and, occurring in Moscow, at the core of the empire, left deep impressions on society with important impacts on the course of enemy alien policies." (p. 301). "Approximately eight were killed and forty seriously injured by the rioters. ...Although a few earlier Jewish pogroms had higher death tolls, the monetary damages were probably greater than in any other pogrom in Russian history..." (p. 321).

Lohr documents that throughout 1915 and 1916 the purge of aliens was quite extensive throughout Russian society. Theater and music groups expelled people of German origin. Rumors surfaced of further impending pogroms, focusing on subjects with German names in positions of power, in business, in the army, in government, and in court. There was much talk of the killing of Germans and Lutherans and the army didn't intervene because they sympathized (p. 346). "[T]he troops were on the side of the pogromists..." (p. 351). The government was "...much weaker, often reacting to public anti-alien pressures it at times could not control... While previous chapters focus on enemy alien politics as a set of official policies imposed from above, the evidence presented in this chapter has shown that enemy alien politics was also a dynamic social phenomenon with substantial input from below" (p. 335).

"While the government and army quickly began the comprehensive campaign against enemy aliens outlined in previous chapters, the government clearly claimed a monopoly on the use of violence to achieve these aims.... While the civilian authorities' stand was initially quite clear, the army's, as we have already seen, was radically different. ... the deportations and expulsions from areas near the front were accompanied by extensive pogroms, looting and rape. As early as September 1914, incidents revealed that army commanders tolerated not only the participation of soldiers in such acts, but also the local populations. Often locals gathered just outside the towns with carts, and began to loot abandoned villages along with the soldiers even as the deportees were leaving the town. The army rarely if ever intervened or punished participants in pogroms of Jews and Germans." (p. 312).

"Of course, one cannot underestimate the importance of state and army endorsement of the entire anti-alien program – deportations, the economic war, expropriations of landholdings. Their implementation and extensive publicization created a sense that the property of aliens was unprotected. The press and propaganda campaigns for vigilance against German spies and saboteurs encouraged a flurry of rumors. For example, Moscow gendarmes reported widespread rumors that 'Germans' in the army command had sold out to Germany, and that Germans in Moscow were supporting a massive sabotage campaign." (p. 332).

"On June 14, 1915, the tsar presided over a special meeting at army headquarters with the Grand Duke, all the major army commanders, and the entire Council of Ministers. It was the first such gathering of all the country's top leaders during the war, and the enemy alien issue was a major part of the agenda.... 'Russian subjects who are Austrian, Hungarian or German immigrants entering Russian subjecthood after January 1, 1880, not being all without exception suspected of spying and considered dangerous for public peace, may be deported to destinations determined by the Minister of Internal Affairs ...' These rules, adopted and signed by the leaders of the three major sources of power – the tsar, army and government – firmly established the principles of deportation even in areas far from the front, and explicitly included naturalized immigrants and foreigners in general." (p. 342).

"Was the pogrom merely an isolated incident or was anti-alienism a widespread phenomenon of longer duration and significant public support?... From the pogrom until the February Revolution and beyond, local administrators and the MVD

were deeply concerned by monthly reports from gendarmes on the mood of the population. Many of these claimed that anti-German, anti-foreign, and anti-Jewish tensions were so high that pogroms and other anti-alien violence could erupt in areas throughout the empire." (p. 345).

The scale of atrocities ratcheted upward when Russian military commanders, in cooperation with local governors and officials in the western region, seized the opportunity to ethnically cleanse the border provinces of Poles, Latvians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Jews, ethnic Germans, and others that had been targeted for their "disloyalty" and "collaborationism" with the enemy.¹⁶⁶ The collapse of the Russian army was viewed as a "betrayal." and "reprisals" had to be taken. As the army retreated, they took hundreds of civilian hostages, including the leadership of the German, Polish and Ukrainian communities who were suspected of "criminal intentions."

All Jews in Kovno and Kurland provinces who lived west of the Kaunas-Bauske line were ordered to leave their homes and move east in May, 1915. About 200,000 of them were expelled from this region.¹⁶⁷ At about the same time, mass deportations of ethnic Germans, which had already begun in September of the previous year, accelerated. The supposed 10 month grace period that was allowed by the "liquidation laws" was ignored and within a few weeks between 150,000 to 200,000 Germans in the Polish provinces, Volhynia, Kiev, and Bessarabia had been forcibly uprooted and shipped eastward. Personal anecdotes of these events are still passed down within German-Russian families. This is one example:

My grandmother and her family were living in Borowka near Friedrichsdorf Kreis Rowno during this period. In July 1915 they were "verschleppt" -

¹⁶⁶ Gatrell (1999, p. 22) notes that "[t]he sources speak menacingly of population 'cleansing' (*ochishchenie*)." Mass relocation of populations was certainly a very direct way to remove some of the ethnic thorns in the empire's borderlands that had plagued tsarist authorities since the nineteenth century. Gatrell characterizes these forced mass migrations during the war as a tool for the nation-building process, a method to promote the "crystallization of Russianness" by enhancing awareness of "otherness" from the empire's targeted ethnic minorities (p. 163). Latvian nationalists were well aware of this and charged that the forced migration of their compatriots during the war was part of a plan by tsarist authorities to extinguish their ethnic identity, that Siberia was "the graveyard of Latvian identity" (Gatrell, 1999, p. 158).

¹⁶⁷ Gatrell, 1999, p. 21-22, 31. Fleischhauer (1986, p. 511) argues that these "deportations" were not an "anti-German" act since other ethnic groups were also involved, and she characterizes the operation as necessitated by "realism." Sinner (2000, p. 8) strongly criticizes these arguments. Similar rationales have been offered in virtually all instances of genocide throughout this century (e.g., Nazi arguments that the Jews had to be eliminated because they were "dangerous partisans"). He also points out that because anti-German acts occurred in the context of acts against other targeted minorities, this does not logically preclude the reality of anti-Germanism, no more so than the reality of anti-Semitism.

transported to Siberia also - but it was near Samara not far from Chelabynsk - in the Ural Mountains. My family worked logging and the women running a laundry, apparently to make ends meet. The train took months to get them there, stopping and starting endlessly. My grandmother was 20 years old at this time so they were not memories of a child. Their family survived.

Another family that is distantly related to my father's side of the family were living in the Chelm area and they were transported to Kustanei, also in the Urals. Most did not survive. Perhaps it was harsher there or no opportunity to eke out a living.¹⁶⁸

The mass deportation operation began in secret in western Volhynia, with orders issued that all pastors, judges, and other influential German colonists were to be arrested and held as hostages to ensure there would be no resistance. Within two weeks the colonists in the eastern part of Volhynia were rounded up as well, then the operation was systematically expanded to other regions. It took place during harvest season, yet the German farmers had to leave their grain untouched. They were not allowed to sell their livestock and other property for fair market value, most had to relinquish it for whatever was offered by local Ukrainians and Russians - typically about 25 percent of its value. Initially the wives and children of those serving in the military on the front were allowed to remain on their farms (some one-third of the population), but by 1916 they too had been forcibly deported. The Germans in urban areas were evacuated eastward on trains, but the rural population left in wagons, on a trek taking as long as four months, under armed guard. The Special Council for Refugees callously denied assistance, on the grounds that they were "supported by fellow Germans, and should not be entitled to official relief."¹⁶⁹ By the time they reached their destination they were exhausted, malnourished, and ill. At least one-third, an estimated 50,000 people, died as a result of this mass violation of human rights.¹⁷⁰

It should be noted that the notion has been proposed in informal internet discussions that the story of the expulsion of the ethnic Germans from the western provinces - as well as some of the other great tragedies in the history of the German Russian people -- has been greatly distorted and exaggerated. According to this "revisionist" viewpoint, the expulsion was only a "temporary" defensive measure by the Tsarist regime. It has been asserted that Russian officials, as well as the expellees themselves, fully expected that these people would return and reclaim their farmsteads at the end of the war. No real evidence has been cited to support this view.¹⁷¹ The

¹⁶⁸ Helen Gisespie, posted on GR-Genealogy internet discussion group, August 19, 2001.

¹⁶⁹ Gatrell, 1999, p. 92.

¹⁷⁰ Rempel, 1932, pp. 49-67. See also Fr. Rink, "*die Vertreibung der Deutschen Kolonien aus Wolhynien 1915/16*," *Heimatbuch der Deutschen aus Russland*, 1966, pp. 61-65. A brief account is also available in Adam Giesinger, *From Catherine to Khrushchev*, Winnipeg, Manitoba: Marian Press, 1974, p. 272.

¹⁷¹ The only remotely tangible evidence that has been offered to bolster this revisionist viewpoint about the expulsion of the Volhynian Germans is the occurrence of the word "temporarily" (**vorübergehend**) in a Russian military memo posted in the Novograd-Volhynsk district in June, 1915 (cited on p. 508 of Fleischhauer, *Die Deutschen im Zarenreich*). On April 17, 2000, Richard Benert posted this memo to the GR-Heritage

email group and stated that the occurrence of the word “temporarily” in this memo left him deeply puzzled, and it apparently had great import to him:

“I have puzzled over how to translate it, but it sounds to me like it makes it quite incumbent upon the Galicians who were to be given the Germans' farms and houses to take good care of them, because these German owners would be brought back and expect their property to be in good shape. Maybe I translate it incorrectly. I hope some of you real Germans out there will offer your English version of these words:

“In den deutschen Siedlungen werden vorübergehend Flüchtlinge aus Galizien einquartiert, denen entsprechende Gebäude zur Verfügung gestellt werden. Sie werden auch mit der Einbringung der Ernte sowie der Aufsicht über den Besitz der Auszusiedelnden beauftragt, der aus irgendwelchen Gründen am Orte zurückgelassen werden muss. Die gesamte Bevölkerung des Kreises wird gewarnt, dass diejenigen, die sich durch eine ungesetzliche Benutzung eines von den auszusiedelnden Kolonisten vorübergehend zurückgelassenen Gegenstandes schuldig machen, in Übereinstimmung mit den Kriegsgesetzen den strengsten Strafen unterzogen werden.”

On April 20, 2000, I gave a reply to Benert and cited the broader passage from Fleischhauer in which this memo occurred, pointing out that the meaning of the word “vorübergehend” in this context did not refer to farmland, but rather to objects that had to be temporarily left behind until they could be forwarded to the deportees. Certainly the occurrence of the word “temporarily,” taken out of its broader context, does not support the assertion that the expulsion of the Volhynian Germans was only “temporary.” This was my reply, first citing Fleischhauer’s full passage, followed by an interpretative conclusion:

“On 14. June (according to Lindemann, who is inclined to dramatize these events, on 28 June 1915) the colonists in the district Novograd-Volynsk were confronted with the following proclamation:

‘All Germans, colonists, non-Orthodox residents of the district of Novograd-Volynsk, who do not reside in closed settlements [Ortschaften], are subject to resettlement [Aussiedlung]. They have until 10 July of this year to liquidate [aufloesen] their estates. Those who can remain at their dwellings are: wives of colonists who are on active duty in our army, their children, mothers and family heads. The resettled are allowed to take their property [Besitztüemer] with them. Refugees from Galica will be placed in the German settlements temporarily, and the corresponding buildings will be made available to them. They will also be ordered to bring in the harvest and to take care of the property of those who are resettled, whatever must be left behind for any reason. Legal claims by the colonists against the refugees [the Galicians], will be turned over to the judgment of the war-court. For the execution of this resettlement order...guarantors [Buerger, probably ‘hostages’ would be a better translation in this context] for the colonists will be taken. The guarantors will be subject to the death penalty for all opposition to this order by the colonist members of their congregations [Glaubensgenossen] and will be held as security until the completion of the resettlement. The entire population of the district is warned that whosoever is guilty of unlawfully using any of the items [Gegenstandes] of the resettled colonists that are temporarily left behind, is subject to the strictest penalties in accordance with the war laws.’

“Fleischhauer also notes that after the evacuation of the colonists, about 72,000 desjatines of farming land were left behind. ‘According to information by the

major reputable historians who have written about the tragedy of the Volhynian Germans agree that this was one of the largest scale instances of ethnic cleansing in the history of the 20th century, and none of them have offered support for such extremist revisionism of a tragedy that approaches epic scale.

The two most prominent historical assessments of the expulsion of the ethnic Germans from the western provinces have been offered by Eric Lohr and Peter Gatrell.¹⁷² They generally agree on the significance of this outbreak of ethnic cleansing at the hands of the Russian military and the regime, and their descriptions of horror match those provided in the more anecdotal literature on German-Russian history, as well as stories that have been passed down within many German-Russian families. In their view, the Russian regime intended to permanently redraw the ethnic map on the western borders of the empire. Some illustrative passages from Lohr will emphasize these points:

[T]he most important factor explaining why colonists were singled out was the rapid move by the government toward a major program to permanently expropriate German landholdings. These laws, which were well on the way to final drafting when the first deportations occurred, transformed mass deportations from a temporary security measure into a program to permanently transform the demography of landholdings and nationality in vast territories along the western and southern borders and extending far behind front lines. Evidence from deportated Germans' correspondence and petitions indicates that army expulsions and deportations were sometimes violent, combined with looting of the colonists' property...[T]he January 1915 conference on colonist deportations...ruled that all their lands should be sequestered by the state for later redistribution." (p. 162).

representatives of the Minister Council assembled at the State Duma on 30 March 1916, this land was distributed as follows: about 50,000 desjatines of land were turned over to 200,000 refugees from East Galicia, who had fled from the German advance to the east; a further 10,000 desjatines of land were given to the local farming population on the basis of existing lease agreements, and 12,000 desjatines were temporarily declared to be common meadowlands.' (p. 508).

"My conclusion is that the use of the word 'temporary' in the military memo did not mean that the German colonists were 'temporarily relocated,' but rather that any of their belongings or items [Gegenstandes] that may have been 'temporarily left behind' should not be looted, probably until arrangements could be made to forward it to their new location. The word 'Gegenstand' would not be used for farmland and houses, i.e., immovable property, which would more commonly be referred to as 'Grundbesitz.' Concerning their estates, the order stated that the colonists had to 'aufloesen' [liquidate, break it up], and they could take the moveable property with them. After they were forced out, their immovable property was reallocated. Taken in the broader context of the 'liquidation laws,' which mandated compulsory sales of farmlands and estates by ethnic Germans from the Baltics to the Black Sea to the Caspian, the evidence clearly indicates that the czar's government had a very permanent solution in mind for the Volhynian Germans."

¹⁷² Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking*, Univ. of Indiana, 1999.

[A]s we have seen, mass deportation was already well under way before the Great Retreat, and it would be a mistake to assume that the mass deportation projects were merely an appendage to the policy of scorched earth... (p. 165) [General] Ianushkevich turned to violent expulsion as a preferred means to clear the regions of colonists... [We] need to expel the entire German filth, and without niceties, on the contrary, drive them, like cattle. (p. 169). [T]he methodical deportation of every last Russian-subject German 'colonist' from some regions -- including families of soldiers active at the front, invalids and the blind...revealed a chilling efficiency and striving for totality. (p. 172).

Deportations of German colonists continued, both from small areas and on a mass scale right up to the February Revolution." (p. 174)

Community mobilization to provide aid to German colonist deportees was made all the more necessary by the severe limits on state provision of the most basic forms of assistance. By the end of 1915 the government had officially cut off all state aid to 'colonist' deportees. Moreover, in some regions local authorities refused to allow deportees to work, and even forced employers to fire those deportees they had hired. (p. 176).

The sheer scale of the atrocities committed against the ethnic German expellees alarmed the liberal press, which began to publicize their plight. Some Duma representatives were alarmed by reports of "hostile and insulting" treatment by the tsarist troops. Shcherbatov, the Minister of Internal Affairs, tried to camouflage the strategic planning behind these disasters by portraying them as "a purely spontaneous phenomenon," as civilians fleeing from the German advance.¹⁷³

The German colonists in other parts of Russia watched in horror as reports of the forced deportations in the western provinces surfaced in the media, and they wondered when their turn would come. Officials had already begun compiling lists of those whose property would be confiscated, including anyone who was a Lutheran, a Mennonite, or virtually anyone who had a German surname. Meanwhile, debate continued in the Duma over the February 2 liquidation decrees. The Right wing were concerned that the laws were not being implemented fast enough. The German colonists were vilified, and representatives of the Orthodox faith even joined in, accusing them of trying to undermine the Russian church.¹⁷⁴ The colonists were charged with wholesale treason, and even the imperial family was accused of pro-German sympathies.¹⁷⁵ Even more draconian measures were urged, that all German colonists be banished to Siberia. Opposition leaders such as Kerensky came to the defense of the colonists and criticized government repression and blatant disregard for property rights. They also charged that the Right wanted to divert the hunger for land among the peasantry away from the property of the nobility to that of the colonists, and warned that implementation of the decrees could unleash long suppressed demands for free land that could easily escalate out of control.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Gatrell, 1999, p. 22.

¹⁷⁴ Rempel, 1932, p. 53.

¹⁷⁵ Gatrell, 1999, p.24.

¹⁷⁶ Brandes, 1997.

On December 13, 1915 the Council of Ministers expanded the liquidation laws to include the state lands that were originally granted to the German colonies. The zone of confiscations was also expanded to include Finland, 29 provinces in western and southern Russia, the entire Caucasus and the Amur regions as far east as Saratov and Samara. The colonists were mandated to sell their property to the Peasant Land Bank, which would then reallocate it to ethnic Russians. The Bank was empowered to set its own devalued price for the lands (ranging from 20% to 60% of the pre-war value), payable as bonds redeemable after 25 years, which could not be sold in the interim. This amounted to a form of de facto confiscation. Community owned properties were to be transferred to the Bank without compensation.

In response, the German colonists began to cut back on their harvests, raising serious prospects for a food crisis in 1916. Once again the Ministry of Finance worried that the laws would deflate land prices and the local banks became alarmed about the terrible losses they would suffer when the German farmers defaulted on their loans. Undaunted by these concerns, the government pushed forward with the liquidation process. The German colonists had become a convenient scapegoat for government failures, and they were the only outlets for mounting frustrations as the war effort faltered. By Feb. 6, 1917 the law had been extended to include virtually the entire Russian empire, including the Volga and Siberia, excluding only those portions that were uninhabitable. A special corps of state police officials was dispatched to South Russia to facilitate the liquidation process. By February they had compiled an inventory of 3,500,000 dessiatines of land subject to confiscation, and an estimated 500,000 dessiatines had already been seized.¹⁷⁷

Fortunately for the colonists, the regime of Nicholas II fell at that point in March 1917. Their faith in the tsarist regime had been shattered, and they greeted its downfall with elation.

Conclusion? -- The Russian government had implemented discriminatory restrictions against the German colonists already by 1882, and this was but the beginning of even worse restrictions that followed. Was it a unilinear path, a secret blueprint that tsarist advisors had been following, leading inexorably from the credit restrictions of 1882 to the wholesale land evictions of 1915? No, that would be a simplistic plot-theory run mad, and I for one would not accept that notion. Does it indicate that already by the 1880s tsarist advisors were concerned about this successful ethnic minority in their midst, that this led to stereotypic attitudes paralleling those against the Jews, and that some of their policies were shaped by these attitudes? That conclusion seems unavoidable.

Part B: The Velicyn Incident

This portion of the discussion has been published under the heading: The Growth of Anti-Germanism in Tsarist Russia -- the Velicyn Incident as Reported in the *Odessaer Zeitung*, 1890

¹⁷⁷ Rempel, 1932, p. 62; Long, 1988, p. 232.

Bibliography

- Aberle, Msgr. George P. From the Steppes to the Prairies. Bismarck, N.D.:Bismarck Tribune Co., 1963.
- Berend, Nina & Hugo Jedig, Deutsche Mundarten in der Sowjetunion, Geschichte der Forschung und Bibliographie, Marburg: N. G. Elwert Verlag, 1991 (*Schriftenreihe der Kommission für Ostdeutsche Volkskunde in der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde e. V.; Bd. 53*).
- Besancon, Alain. "Nationalism and Bolshevism in the USSR," in Robert Conquest (ed.), The Last Empire, Nationality and the Soviet Future, Stanford University: Hoover Institute Press, 1986, pp. 1-29.
- Brandes, Detlef. "From the Persecutions in the First World War Up to the Deportation," in Gerd Stricker (ed.), Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas: Rußland, Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1997
- Brendel, J. "Fluchen und Schwören," in the Heimatbuch der Ostumsiedler, Stuttgart: Landmannschaft der Deutschen Aus Russland, 1955., p. 83.
- Clarkson, Jesse D. A History of Russia, second edition. New York: Random House, 1969.
- Courtois, Stephane, Werth N., Panne J.L., Paczkowski A., Bartosek K., and Margolin J.L. The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression. Harvard University Press, 1999. The article by Nicolas Werth, "A State Against Its People," is of special relevance.
- Dunlop, John B. The Faces of Contemporary Russian Nationalism, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Eich, Hermann. The Unloved Germans, New York: Stein and Day, 1965.
- Eisenach, George. Pietism and the Russian Germans in the United States, Berne, Indiana: The Berne Publishers, 1946.
- Eisenbraun, Theodor. "Agjar-Djiren (Achtjar) i. D. Krim," Heimatbuch der Deutschen aus Russland, Stuttgart: Landmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland, 1959 issue, pp. 66-71.
- Esselborn, Karl. "Introduction: About the German Heritage on the Volga," AHSGR Journal, Spring, 2000, pp. 25-27.
- Figes, Orlando & B. Kolonitskii. Interpreting the Russian Revolution, the Language and Symbols of 1917, New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1999.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. Stalin's Peasants, Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Fleischhauer, Ingeborg. Das Dritte Reich und die Deutschen in der Sowjetunion, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, (Schriftenreihe der Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte; Nr. 46), 1983.
- Fleischhauer, Ingeborg and Benjamin Pinkus, The Soviet Germans, Past and Present, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986.
- Fleischhauer, Ingeborg. "The Germans' Role in Tsarist Russia: a Reappraisal," in Ingeborg Fleischhauer and Benjamin Pinkus, The Soviet Germans, Past and Present, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986.
- Fleischhauer, Ingeborg. "the Ethnic Germans in the Russian Revolution," in Edith Rogovin Frankel, J. Frankel, and Baruch Knei-Paz (eds.), Revolution in Russia: Reassessments of 1917, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 274-284.
- Frankel, Edith Rogovin, J. Frankel, & B. Knei-Paz, Revolution in Russia: Reassessments of 1917, Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Friesen, Peter M. The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia 1789 – 1910, Fresno, California: Board of Christian Literature, Gernal Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1980.

- Gatrell, Peter. A Whole Empire Walking, Refugees in Russia During World War I, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999
- Geiger, Joseph. "Winzigkeiten aus dem wolgadeutschen Idyll zu Grossvaters Zeiten," Heimatbuch der Ostumsiedler, Stuttgart: Landmannschaft der Deutschen aus Russland, 1955
- German, Arkadii Adolfovich. Nemetskaja autonomiia na volge, 1918 - 1941. Part 1, Autonomnaia oblast, 1918 - 1924. Saratov: Saratov University Press, 1992.
- Giesinger, Adam. From Catherine to Khrushchev. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Marian Press, 1974.
- Gross, Fred W. The Pastor, the Life of an Immigrant, Philadelphia: Dorrance & Co., 1973.
- Harding, Neil. "Lenin, Socialism and the State in 1917," in Edith Rogovin Frankel, J. Frankel, & B. Knei-Paz, Revolution in Russia: Reassessments of 1917, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. pp. 287-303.
- Height, Joseph. Paradise on the Steppe. Bismarck, N.D.: Germans from Russia Heritage Society, 1972.
- Height, Joseph. Homesteaders on the Steppes, Bismarck, N.D.: Germans from Russia Heritage Society, 1975.
- Height, Joseph. Memories of the Black Sea Germans, Bismarck, N.D.: Germans from Russia Heritage Society, 1979.
- Jones, George Fenwick (translator). Wittenwiler's Ring, New York: AMS Press, 1956.
- Jung, Carl, "On the Psychology of the Trickster Figure," in Paul Radin, The Trickster, New York: Schocken books, 1972.
- Kloberdanz, Timothy. The Volga German Catholic Life Cycle: an Ethnographic Reconstruction, Master's thesis, Fort Collins, Colorado: Colorado State University, 1974.
- Kloberdanz, Timothy and Rosalinda Kloberdanz. Thunder on the Steppe, Lincoln, Neb: American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, 1993.
- Kluge, Friedrich. Etymologisches Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1960.
- Kohl, Johann Georg, "The Bashtan: Pride of the Steppe," written in 1838, translated by Joseph Height, Heritage Review, Bismarck, North Dakota: Germans from Russia Heritage Society, Dec. 1977.
- Kontschak, Ernst. "Erinnerungen und Begegnungen" Freundschaft, Nr. 197, dated Oct. 5, 1968.
- Long, James W. From Privileged to Dispossessed, the Volga Germans, 1860 - 1917. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988.
- Long, James. "The Volga Germans of Saratov Province Between Reform and Revolution, 1861-1905," pp. 139-159 in Rex A. Wage & S. J. Seregny (eds.), Politics and Society in Provincial Russia: saratov, 1590-1917, Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1989.
- Malinova, Galina. "From the Early Days of Stalin's Great Terror: Repression of Those Researching the Local History of the German Colonies," in Martyrs of Odessa: Odessa Memorial Series ("Odesskii martirolog: seriia Odesskogo memoriala"), Odessa, 1997. Malinova's article is summarized by Vladimir Soshnikov in RAGAS Report, vol. IV, no. 4, Winter 1999, pp. 3-7.
- Marzolf, Arnold H. That's the Way it Once Was, Bismarck: Germans from Russia Heritage Society, 1985.
- Marzolf, Arnold H. Let's Talk German-Russian with Ernschtina un Hanswurscht, Grand Forks, N.D. University Printing Center, 1990.
- Neutatz, Dietmar. Die "deutsche Frage" im Schwarzmeergebiet und in Wolhynien, Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des Östlichen Europea, Band 37. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1993.
- Patenaude, Bertrand. "Peasants into Russians: the Utopian Essence of War Communism," The Russian Review, vol. 54, October 1995, p. 552-570.

- Philipps, John. The Tragedy of the Soviet Germans (A Story of Survival). Bismarck, N.D.: Richtman's Printing, 1983.
- Philipps, John. Die deutschen Bauern am Schwarzen Meer, Fargo, N.D.: Germans from Russia
- Philipps, John. Die Deutschen am Schwarzen Meer zwischen Bug und Dnjestr, North Dakota
- Pinkus, Benjamin. "From the October Revolution to the Second World War," in Ingeborg Fleischhauer and Benjamin Pinkus, The Soviet Germans, Past and Present, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986.
- Pinkus, Benjamin and Ingeborg Fleischhauer. Die Deutschen in der Sowjetunion, Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1987.
- Pipes, Richard. Russia Under the Old Regime. NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974.
- Pohl, J. Otto. Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR, 1937-1949, Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1999.
- Poliakov, Leon. The Aryan Myth, New York: Barnes & Noble, 1996.
- Ponomarev, B.N., I. I. Mints, Y.I. Bugaev, M. S. Volin, V.S. Zaitsev, A. P. Kuchkin, and N.A. Lomakin, A Short History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, translated by David Skvirsky (USSR, 1970).
- Rempel, David G.. "The Expropriation of the German Colonists in South Russia During the Great War," Journal of Modern History, vol. 4, no. 1, March, 1932, pp. 49-67.
- Riasanovsky, Nicholas V. A History of Russia, second edition. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Rink, Fr. "Die Vertreibung der Deutschen Kolonien aus Wolhynien 1915/16," Stuttgart: Heimatbuch der Deutschen aus Russland, 1966, pp. 61-65.
- Schalk, Adolph. The Germans, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1971.
- Schirmunki, Victor. The German Colonies in the Ukraine, Moscow Central People's Press of the Soviet Union., 1928.
- Schmaltz, Eric J. & S. D. Sinner, "The Nazi Ethnographic Research of Georg Leibbrandt and Karl Stumpp in Ukraine, and Its North American Legacy," Holocaust and Genocide Studies, v. 14, no. 1, Spring 2000, pp. 28-64.
- Schock, Adolf. In Quest of Free Land, CA: San Jose State University, 1967.
- Seton-Watson, Hugh. "Russian Nationalism in Historical Perspective," in Robert Conquest (ed.), The Last Empire, Nationality and the Soviet Future, Stanford University: Hoover Institute Press, 1986, pp. 14-29.
- Sinner, Samuel. The Open Wound, the Genocide of German Ethnic Minorities in Russia and the Soviet Union, 1915 - 1949 - and Beyond, Fargo, N.D.: Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, North Dakota State University, 2000.
- Slocum, John W. "Who, and When, Were the *Inorodtsy*? The Evolution of the Category of 'Aliens' in Imperial Russia." The Russian Review 57 (April 1998): 173 - 190.
- Springer, Otto. "On Defining the Sources of Colonial Speech," Arbeiten zur germanischen Philologie und zur Literatur des Mittelalters, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1975.
- Stricker, Gerd. "Preface," pp. xxv - xxx in Samuel Sinner, The Open Wound, the Genocide of German Ethnic Minorities in Russia and the Soviet Union, 1915 - 1949 - and Beyond, Fargo, N.D.: Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, North Dakota State University, 2000.
- Stumpp, Karl. Das Schrifttum über das Deutschtum in Russland, self-published, Tübingen, 1970.

- Stumpp, Karl. The German-Russians, Bonn: Edition Atlantic-Forum, second edition, 1971.
- Wagner, Roland. "The Sibylline Prophecies as a Source of German-Russian Apocalyptic Traditions," Journal of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, Vol. 22, No. 2, Summer, 1999, pp. 29 - 40.
- Walth, Richard H. Flotsam of World History, The Germans from Russia between Stalin and Hitler, second edition. Institute for Culture and History of the Germans in Eastern Europe, University of Düsseldorf, vol. 5, 1996.
- Weeks, Theodore R. Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1915, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996.
- Werth, Nicolas. "A State Against Its People," in Stephane Courtois, Nicolas Werth, Jean-Louis Panne, Andrzej Paczkowski, Karel Bartosek, and Jean-Louis Margolin, The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression, Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Whittemore, Katherine. "How a Weed Once Scorned Became the Flower of the Hour," Smithsonian, vol. 27, no. 5, August 1996.
- Widmer, Andreas. "Memorable Events in the History of the German Colonies in Bessarabia," Lincoln, NB: AHSGR Journal, spring, 2000, pp. 15-19. Translated by Frederick Bolgert. Originally published as "*Denkwürdigkeiten aus der Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien in Bessarabien*," in Jahrbuch des Landwirts, 1914.
- Aberle, Msgr. George P. From the Steppes to the Prairies. Bismarck, N.D.:Bismarck Tribune Co., 1963.
- Aston, Aston. "Russia: Tsarism and the West," in Bruce Waller (ed.) Themes in Modern European History, 1830 - 1890, London: Unwin Hyman, 1990, pp. 159-189.
- Chinn, Jeff and Robert Kaiser. Russians as the New Minority, Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Soviet Successor States, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1996.
- Christoff, Peter. K. S. Aksakov, A Study in Ideas, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982
- Clarkson, Jesse D. A History of Russia, second edition. New York: Random House, 1969.
- Courtois, Stephane, Werth N., Panne J.L., Paczkowski A., Bartosek K., and Margolin J.L. The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression. Harvard University Press, 1999. The article by Nicolas Werth, "A State Against Its People," is of special relevance.
- Dmytryshyn, Basil (ed.). Imperial Russia, A Source Book, 1700 - 1917, second edition. Hinsdale, Illinois, Dryden Press, 1974.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. Stalin's Peasants, Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Fleischhauer, Ingeborg and Benjamin Pinkus. The Soviet Germans, Past and Present. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986.
- German, Arkadii Adolfovich. Nemetskaja autonomiia na volge, 1918 - 1941. Part 1, Autonomnaia oblast, 1918 - 1924. Saratov: Saratov University Press, 1992.
- Giesinger, Adam. From Catherine to Khrushchev. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Marian Press, 1974.

- Haxthausen, August von. Studies on the interior of Russia. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago press. Original title, *Studien über die innern Zustände Russlands*. 3 vols. Berlin: B. Behr, 1847-1853.
- Henriksson, Henriksson, "Nationalism, Assimilation and Identity in Late Imperial Russia: the St. Petersburg Germans, 1906-1914," The Russian Review, vol. 52, July 1993, p. 341-353.
- Long, James W. The German-Russians, a Bibliography of Russian Materials, with Introductory essay, Annotations, and Locations of Materials in Major American and Soviet Libraries, Santa Barbara, Ca: Clio books, 1978.
- Long, James W. From Privileged to Dispossessed, the Volga Germans, 1860 - 1917. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988.
- Neutatz, Dietmar. Die "deutsche Frage" im Schwarzmeergebiet und in Wolhynien, Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des Östlichen Europa, Band 37. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1993.
- Petrovich, Michael. "The Peasant in Nineteenth-century Historiography," in Wayne Vucinich (ed.) The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia, California: Stanford University Press, 1968.
- Philipps, John. The Tragedy of the Soviet Germans (A Story of Survival). Bismarck, N.D.: Richtman's Printing, 1983.
- Pintner, Walter. "The social characteristics of the early nineteenth century Russian bureaucracy," Slavic Review, 29, no. 3 (September, 1970): pp. 429-43.
- Pipes, Richard. Russia Under the Old Regime. NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974.
- Poliakov, Leon. The Aryan Myth, New York: Barnes & Noble, 1996.
- Riasanovsky, Nicholas V. A History of Russia, second edition. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Riasanovsky, Nicholas. "Afterword: The Problem of the Peasant," in Wayne Vucinich (ed.) The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia, California: Stanford University Press, 1968
- Selig, Robert A. "Ungarland ist's Reichste Land." German Life, February/March, 1999, pp. 21 - 25
- Slocum, John W. "Who, and When, Were the *Inorodtsy*? The Evolution of the Category of 'Aliens' in Imperial Russia." The Russian Review 57 (April 1998): 173 - 190.
- Wagner, Roland. "The Sibylline Prophecies as a Source of German-Russian Apocalyptic Traditions," Journal of the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, Vol. 22, No. 2, Summer, 1999, pp. 29 - 40.
- Walth, Richard H. Flotsam of World History, The Germans from Russia between Stalin and Hitler, second edition. Institute for Culture and History of the Germans in Eastern Europe, University of Düsseldorf, vol. 5, 1996.