

TERMINOLOGY PERTAINING TO ETHNIC RELATIONS AS USED IN LATE IMPERIAL RUSSIA

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The article discusses the denotation and changes in the meaning of terms describing ethnic relations in various formal and informal texts originating from late Imperial Russia, examining the terminology regarding the Empire's ethno-political geography and regional dimension, as well as the correlation between the hierarchical concepts of *Russian Empire – Russia – borderlands*. The article also outlines the identifying characteristics of the basic ethnic categories in the Empire, i.e. Russians and non-Russians (*иностранцы*), and addresses the issue of non-Russians “becoming Russian”. Consideration is given to phrases and expressions illustrating the central government's ethnic integration policy in non-Russian territories. Among those most frequently encountered are “rapprochement” (*сближение*), “merging” (*слияние*), “Russification” (*обрусение, русификация*): terms that lack proper, unambiguous definition, and have produced no consensus among either contemporaries or modern researchers. The government pursued the homogeneity of the Empire not by respecting multi-culturality and diversity or guaranteeing free development of ethnoses, but rather by aggressively enacting rapprochement with the Russian nation, forcing the Russian language upon residents of the Empire (also as the language of tuition in primary schools), and disseminating the Orthodox faith, thus crippling the peoples' natural strive for self-realisation and self-determination. The attempts to eradicate native-language primary education give enough reason to speak about Russification in the sense of assimilation (Russianisation), regardless of whether or not this was a conscious effort and goal set by the masterminds behind the reforms. Estonian national movement activists and intellectuals interpreted the government's ethnic policy as forcible denationalisation and re-ethnification set to annihilate the Estonian nation through the dominance of the Russian language in education and public administration. Whether the government was indeed harbouring such plans, or to what extent, remains unclear. The Empire remained based on dynastic statehood until its demise; nationalism did not become a ruling ideology despite the Russian and non-Russian ethnocentricity thriving and Russian nationalists striving to reshape the dynastic state into a nation state. The central government launched multiple Russification programmes in the border regions, yet these were eventually thwarted by resistance put up by non-Russian peoples.

EMPIRE – RUSSIA – BORDERLANDS

The terms and concepts relevant to ethnic relations used in the Russian Empire have an appeal strong enough for many modern researchers who, inspired by the “imperial turn”, have launched a call for a closer scrutiny of the period's

terminology from the aspect of conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*).¹ Below will be presented a few notes and insights gleaned from the analysis of various Russian texts: formal and informal, public and confidential, journalistic and administrative, but also writings of scholarly or academic nature (historiography). Not a few of these old-fashioned terms are still used routinely, while others are restricted to historical texts or have experienced conceptual transformation. Even though several terms persevered, unchanged, throughout the final half century (or even full century) of the Russian Empire, certain novel notions were introduced by the Polish rebellion of 1863–1864, by the reforms of Alexander III (modernisation, Russification), by the so-called new ethnic policy of Stolypin in the post-1905 era, and by the extreme conditions of World War I, when the rhetoric was affected by programmes of the political parties represented in the *Duma*, and by changes in the government's borderlands policy.

The territorial definition of Russian Empire (*Российская империя*) was based on the ever-expanding frontiers in Europe and Asia, which did not coincide with the borders of the historical territory of ethnic Russians (in the narrower sense, *Россия*).² Although multi-ethnic³, the state was not a mechanical mixture of various ethnoses. The national core (*национальное ядро*) of the Empire (and the Russian imperialism) was composed of ethnic Russians and, according to Nikolai Berdyaev, the Empire was Russian as to its essence, mission and purpose in history – which

¹ **Бахтурина А. Ю.** Окраины российской империи: государственное управление и национальная политика в годы Первой мировой войны (1914–1917 гг.). Росспен, Москва, 2004, 9–12; **Weeks, T. R.** Russification: word and practice 1863–1914. – Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, 2004, **148**, 4, 471–489; **Weeks, T. R.** Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia. Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863–1914. Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb, 2008, 3–18; **Staliūnas, D.** Making Russians. Meaning and Practice of Russification in Lithuania and Belarus after 1863. (On the Boundary of Two Worlds: Identity, Freedom, and Moral Imagination in the Baltics, 11.) Rodopi, Amsterdam, 2007, 22–26; **Werth, P.** Changing conceptions of difference, assimilation, and faith in the Volga-Kama region, 1740–1870. – In: Russian Empire. Space, People, Power, 1700–1930. Eds J. Burbank, M. v. Hagen, A. Remnev. (Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies.) Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2007, 169–181; **Миллер А.** Империя Романовых и национализм. Эссе по методологии исторического исследования. (Historica Rossica.) Новое литературное обозрение, Москва, 2008, 54–77; **Miller, A.** Venestus või venestused. – In: Vene impeerium ja Baltikum: venestus, rahvuslus ja moderniseerimine 19. sajandi teisel poolel ja 20. sajandi alguses, 1. Eds T. Tannberg, B. Woodworth. (Eesti Ajalooarhiivi toimetised, 16 (23).) Tartu, 2009, 33–49; **Geraci, R. P.** Window on the East. National and Imperial Identities in the Late Tsarist Russia. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2009, 30–31; **Brüggemann, K.** Lõpp venestusele: ühe vaieldava uurimisparadigma kriitika. – In: Vene impeerium ja Baltikum: venestus, rahvuslus ja moderniseerimine 19. sajandi teisel poolel ja 20. sajandi alguses, 1, 360–374.

² See **Hosking, G.** Russia. People and Empire 1552–1917. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997, xix–xxviii; **Weeks, T. R.** Managing empire: tsarist nationalities policy. – In: The Cambridge History of Russia, II. Imperial Russia, 1689–1917. Ed. D. Lieven. Cambridge University Press, New York, 2006, 27.

³ The Russian Empire was thought to accommodate about 140 ethnoses; however, the census of 1897 counted 260 languages spoken in the Empire.

outweighed the strictly nationalist functions.⁴ Mark Bassin calls attention to a new dimension the Empire subsequently acquired, which basically meant transformation from a heterogeneous political-geographic entity to a homogeneous one. The presence of ethnic and geographic diversities was acknowledged; yet any variance was expected to be suppressed by common imperial citizenship (*гражданственность*), the establishment and unitary legal space of the Empire, as well as an administrative and cultural incorporation into the European-Russian civilisation defined by the Russian language and Russian Orthodoxy (*православие*).⁵

The adjective *российский* was part of the state's official name, yet was rarely used in spoken language. Instead, a synonymous adjective *русский* was applied while the state was simply dubbed *Россия*, *Русское государство*, later also *царская Россия*. The term *российский* was vigorously criticised by Stolypin era nationalists who saw it as a humiliating degradation of the core nation – Russians – to the status reserved for the aliens.⁶ Pyotr Struve, a liberal enthused by nationalism, wrote in 1909 that the Russian intelligentsia should not relinquish their ethnic identity and “merge” with the other ethnicities of Russia (*оброссиивать*) – just like those objecting to Russification should not be Russified by force.⁷

The Estonian language has always preferred the term *Vene impeerium* for the Russian Empire, and, similarly, *Vene riik* (the Russian state), *Vene valitsus* (the Russian government), *Vene sõjavägi* (the Russian army), etc. Likewise, the English language has opted for the terms *Russian Empire*, *Imperial Russia*, or *Russia*.⁸

In its literal meaning *Россия* (also *Русь*, *Русская земля*) stands for the geographic territory of Russia – as interpreted by geopoliticians, a vast subcontinent of Eurasia.⁹ In a narrower sense, *Россия* covered the European part of the Empire with the exclusion of the Kingdom of Poland (*Царство Польское*), Finland (*Великое княжество Финляндское*), and the Baltic region (*Остзейский/Прибалтийский край*).¹⁰ *Россия* was the agent of the Russian Orthodox faith and the Eastern Christian civilisation with a historic mission to accomplish. The annexation of the Baltic countries to Russia was always taken to mean their

⁴ Бердяев Н. Судьба России. Опыты по психологии войны и национальности. Мысль, Москва, 1990, 101.

⁵ Bassin, M. Geographies of imperial identity. – In: The Cambridge History of Russia, II, 55–57.

⁶ П. К. [Кулаковский П. К.] Чего можем ожидать? – Окраины России, 1908, January 5, 3.

⁷ *Op. cit.* Ольденбург С. С. Царствование императора Николая II. Петрополь, С.-Петербург, 1991, 452. See also Misiunas, R. J. The Russian liberals and the Baltic Lands, 1861–1917. – In: National Movements in the Baltic Countries during the 19th Century. Ed. A. Loit. (Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis. Studia Baltica Stockholmiensia, 2.) Centre of Baltic Studies, University of Stockholm, Uppsala, 1985, 100; Weeks, T. R. Nation and State, 28.

⁸ See The Cambridge History of Russia, II. Imperial Russia; Hosking, G. Russia. People and Empire.

⁹ Савитский П. Н. Геополитические заметки по русской истории. – Вопросы истории, 1993, 11/12, 120–139; Панарин А. С. Россия в Евразии: геополитические вызовы и цивилизационные ответы. – Вопросы философии, 1994, 12, 19–31; Кожин В. О русском национальном сознании. Эксмо, Алгоритм, Москва, 2004, 273–274.

¹⁰ Словарь исторических терминов. Сопр. В. С. Симачов. ЛИТА, Санкт-Петербург, 1998, 287.

annexation to the Russian Empire. In the context of the Baltic Provinces' rapprochement with Russia, the former were treated as a constituent of the Empire outside Russia's borders. Whenever the Baltic region was described as an "ancient Russian territory" reclaimed by Peter the Great (*возвратил отторгнутое*)¹¹, it was not the ethnic territory of Russia that was meant, but the Russian state, the Baltics purportedly comprising its "legitimate and natural extension" (*продолжение русской государственной области*).¹² In 1907, the ethnographer and collaborator of the journal *Okrainy Rossii* Alexandr F. Rittih published an article in the journal *Russkaya starina*, in which he drew a line between the territories of Russians (including Ukrainians and Belarusians) and aliens in the Western part of the Empire. This line coincided with the Western border of Kiev Russia (*Киевская Русь*) in 988.¹³

A distinction between Russia as the territory of ethnic Russians, and Russia as a governmental entity is particularly noticeable in the dual approach adopted by the Estonian newspapers of the Tsarist era: in the news Estonia was treated as either a subdivision of Russia, or as a separate, independent entity. In 1901–1917 the *Postimees* daily featured a section of general news covering Russia with the following subheadings: From Farther in the State, Homeland, Latvia, Finland. In the Estonian daily *Pealinna Teataja* published in St. Petersburg (1914) the columns entitled Russia, Latvia, Finland, and Homeland were given equal weight.¹⁴ Jakob Hurt, the ideologist of Estonian nationalists, said in one of his speeches (1899):

Politically, all of us Estonians, Latvians and Germans living in the Baltic territory, have been "Russians" ever since the Great Northern War. In the future this national *nomen appellacionis* will acquire a special accent, and a greater significance for everyone.¹⁵

The most widely used terms for the outskirts of the Empire were *окраины России, инородческие окраины, окраинные местности империи*, formed by *krais* (*край*), which were in turn composed of several provinces, or *guberniyas* (*губернии*), vicegerencies (*наместничество*), or governorates general (*генерал-губернаторство*). These *krais* were in essence territories located along the periphery of the Empire and enjoying certain idiosyncrasies of administration and government (e.g. the non-existence of *semstvo*), special laws, ethnic and confessional distinctiveness, and regional identity, which distinguished them from other borderlands and Interior Russia. Finland was a Grand Duchy with extensive autonomy, which was only called *krai* as a way of humiliation. The journal *Okrainy Rossii* (1906–1912) listed as headings the following peripheral regions: Finland and the Northern *Krai*, the Baltic *Krai*, the Northwestern *Krai*, the

¹¹ **Чешихин Е. В.** Краткая история Прибалтийского края. Типо-литография А. И. Липинского, Рига, 1884, 43.

¹² *Ibid.*, 9.

¹³ **Риттих А. Ф.** Западно-русская граница и русская народность. С планом. Типо-литография "Надежда", С.-Петербург, 1907, appendix map.

¹⁴ DEA – Estonian Newspapers Digitised. <http://dea.nlib.ee/>

¹⁵ **Hurt, J.** Kõned ja kirjad. – Loomingu Raamatukogu, 1989, 1/2, 79.

Southwestern *Krai*, the Kingdom of Poland, the Caucasus and Southern Russia, Siberia, Central Asia, the Far East.¹⁶

The informal general term for the Western outskirts of the Empire was *западные окраины*. The Provinces of Estland, Livland and Kurland formed the *Остзейский край* – a denomination derived from the German name for the Baltic Sea, *Ostsee*. The German-Russian rivalry in the region was conveyed by the designations *deutschen Ostseeprovinzen Russlands* (which in the twentieth century was already a historical term where “German” was used in inverted commas)¹⁷, and *russischen Ostseeprovinzen*.¹⁸ During the campaign of de-Germanisation and Russification of the region, the German terms were replaced in formal communication with the following phrases: *Прибалтийский край*, *Прибалтийские губернии*, *Балтийские губернии*, *Русское прибалтийское поморье*. Some Russian travelogues use the combination *Прибалтийская страна*¹⁹, marking a substantially different identity as compared to other regions, including the “Russian lands” (*русские земли*), which made the rapprochement (*сближение*) and merging (*слияние*) with Russia even more difficult.

The term *эстонско-латышская окраина* referring to the ethnicity of the indigenous peoples is only rarely found in Russian texts, but is encountered somewhat more frequently in the 20th century, especially during World War I, when the Baltic region was turned into a theatre of war and a defence outpost. Also, by that time the Russian public (*общество*) had developed a greater awareness of the Baltic indigenous peoples. Estonians and Latvians had made a name for themselves with their massive participation in the 1905 revolution – confronting the authorities, torching manorial estates and carrying out terrorist acts, demanding autonomy and the establishment of social democratic republics – but also with the rapid development of their national cultures. Nikolai Gredeskul, a leader of the Russian Cadets (Constitutional Democrats, *Партия народной свободы*), listed Estonians among the ten nationalities (the rest were Finns, Swedes, Poles, Jews, Germans, Lithuanians, Latvians, Georgians, and Armenians) believed to be culturally on par with (or even higher than) Russians.²⁰ Not less significantly, stressing the ethnicity of aliens was a relatively rare practice in formal texts because of the varied ethnic composition characterising their territories. This included the local Russians clamouring for special rights, and the Jews who were

¹⁶ Оглавление. – Окраины России, 1908, December 20, I–IX.

¹⁷ **Transehe-Roseneck, A. v.** Die lettische Revolution. Mit einem Geleitwort von Professor Dr. Theodor Schiemann, II. Die Sozialdemokratie. Die Katastrophe. Zweite veränderte Auflage. Georg Reimer, Berlin, 1908, 323; **Крупников П. Я.** Полвека истории Латвии глазами немцев (конец XIX века – 1945 года). Авотс, Рига, 1989, 113–114.

¹⁸ See **Самарин Ю. Ф.** Окраины России. Серия первая: Русское Балтийское поморье, 1. Типография Ф. Скрейшовского, Прага, 1868, 6, 45, 160.

¹⁹ **Случевский К.** От Либавы до Митавы. – In: От Лифляндии к Латвии. Прибалтика русскими глазами. Сomp. Ю. Абызов. Аркаюр, Москва, 1993, 25.

²⁰ **Гредескуль Н. А.** Россия и ея народы. – In: Отечество. Пути и достижения национальных литератур России. Национальный вопрос, I. М. В. Попов, Петроград, 1916, 75.

openly discriminated against by the government. The preferred terms were therefore the impersonal *край* and, especially, *губерния* as an administrative-territorial category, which both ignored the ethnic boundaries, thus artificially driving a wedge between the nations. Estonians were divided between two *guberniyas*, Latvians between three, whereas three counties of the Vitebsk *Guberniya* were officially affiliated to the Northwestern *Krai* (*Северо-западный край*).²¹ Moreover, the administrators in St. Petersburg lived under the false impression that there was no difference between Estonians and Latvians, and it was not uncommon for Estonians to be mislabelled as Latvians.²² In the context of the Baltics as a region, no separate mention was made of the Baltic Germans in a bid to demonstrate that the government treated all the local ethnic social groups, invariably at odds with each other, equally and in a just manner. Words with the root *Ostsee*, like *остзейщина*, *остзейцы*, were occasionally (in the twentieth century mostly in texts written by Russian nationalists) used to (mockingly) contrast the region's German façade and Russian style, or describe the "archaic and exclusive nature" of the local regime. *Остзейский* was associated with the Germans' Eastern thrust and the colonisation of the "ancient Russian territory" of the Baltics: perceived as an aggression, its legitimacy was invariably contested by Russian authors.²³ The phrase *Остзейская Финляндия*²⁴ used by Yuri Samarin, a nineteenth-century Slavophile, refers to the autonomy of both regions which, in his opinion, was extremely disadvantageous for Russia. In Russian texts, the term *остзеец* denoted a member of the small upper stratum of the Baltic Germans enjoying certain privileges.²⁵ This term can be encountered in modern scholarly literature along with the phrase *прибалтийский немец* (e.g. Maksim M. Dukhanov²⁶, Natalia S. Andreyeva²⁷), and often used synonymously. *Балт*, *балтиец*, *прибалт*,

²¹ Блейере Д. et al. История Латвии. XX век. Jumava, [Рига], 2005, 52.

²² Karjahärm, T. Ida ja lääne vahel. Eesti-vene suhted 1850–1917. Eesti Entsüklopeediakirjastus, Tallinn, 1998, 104.

²³ Rosenberg, T. Die russische baltische Historiographie in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. und zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts. – In: Estland und Russland. Aspekte der Beziehungen beider Länder. Ed. O. Mertelsmann. (Hamburger Beiträge zur Geschichte des östlichen Europa, 11.) Verlag Dr. Kovač, Hamburg, 2005, 77–108; Brüggemann, K. An enemy's "Outpost" or "Our West"? Some remarks about the discourse of Russian *Pribaltika* in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. – In: Ethnic Images and Stereotypes – Where is the Border Line? (Russian-Baltic Cross-Cultural Relations.) Ed. E. Nõmm. (Studia humaniora et paedagogica collegii Narovensis, 2.) Narva, 2007, 85–87.

²⁴ Нольде Б. Юрий Самарин и его время. (Властители дум. История в лицах и фактах.) Алгоритм, Эксмо, Москва, 2003, 221.

²⁵ Федосова Э. П. Россия и Прибалтика. Культурный диалог. Вторая половина XIX – начало XX века. Институт российской истории, Москва, 1999, 186–187; Андреева Н. С. Прибалтийские немцы и российская правительственная политика в начале XX века. Отв. ред. Р. Ш. Ганелин. Издательский дом "Мир", С.-Петербург, 2008, 14–15.

²⁶ Духанов М. М. Остзейцы. Политика остзейского дворянства в 50–70-х гг. XIX в. и критика ее апологетной историографии. 2-е перераб. и доп. изд. Лиесма, Рига, 1978.

²⁷ Андреева Н. С. Прибалтийские немцы, 84.

прибалтиец initially referred to Baltic Germans, later also to ethnic Estonians and Latvians. A Baltic Russian might be called *русский прибалтиец*. Additionally, both *остзейцы* and *балты* (*Balten*) represented the regional collective identity and unity of the three Baltic Provinces.²⁸ It was at the peak of the second wave of Russification that the local Russian nationalists writing in the newspaper *Revelskie izvestiya* came up with an outrageous idea of erasing the Baltic *Krai* by annexing its three *guberniyas* to the *guberniyas* of St. Petersburg, Pskov and Vitebsk. This preposterous idea was met with a positive response in Russia's extreme right-wing circles.²⁹

RUSSIANS AND ALIENS

In the late Russian Empire, ethnic communities went by the terms *народ*, *народность*, *национальность*, *племя*, all of which were more or less synonymous. *Племя* signified both the tribe and the nation. *Русское племя* could refer to ethnic affinity stemming from a distant past and heroic history, the forging of the thousand-year-old state, and the accumulation (*собрание*) of Russian lands into a mighty empire.³⁰ *Племенные группы* also denoted small nations and ethnic groups exhibiting various degrees of consolidation characterising the pre-nation stage – not just on the outskirts but in the internal periphery of the Empire.³¹ The term *национальность* was introduced by Mikhail Katkov in his newspaper *Moskovskie vedomosti* in the 1860s³²; it was widely adopted in the twentieth century.

The word *народ* (people, Volk) had an additional, slightly different tinge to it, reflecting the ethnic aspect through the Russian soul (*русский дух*) and the Russian idea (*русская идея*), as well as through the national character (*национальный характер*). In his famous antinomies, Berdyaev mused on its distinguishing traits: on the one hand, an apolitical stance and disinterest in nationalism; on the other

²⁸ **Pistohlkors, G. v.** Regionalism as a concept of Baltic historiography – some introductory remarks. – In: *Regional Identity under Soviet Rule: The Case of the Baltic States*. Eds D. A. Loeber, V. S. Vardys, L. P. A. Kitching. (Publications of the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies, 6.) Institute for the Study of Law, Politics and Society of Socialist States, University of Kiel, Hackettstown, New Jersey, 1990, 1–8; **Henriksson, A.** Vassals and Citizens. The Baltic Germans in Constitutional Russia, 1905–1914. (Materialen und studien zur ostmitteleuropaforschung, 21.) Herder-Institut, Marburg, 2009, 65–72.

²⁹ Национальный вопрос в Прибалтийском крае. Обзор русской периодической печати, XI (с декабря 1908 г. по май 1909 г.). С.-Петербург, 1909, 25–28.

³⁰ “Великорусское племя и составляет такое ядро русского национализма, оно создало огромную Россию” (**Бердяев Н.** Судьба России, 101).

³¹ **Jääts, I.** Etnilised protsessid Vene impeeriumi siseperifeerias 1801–1904. Komi rahvusluse süünd. (Dissertationes Ethnologiae Universitatis Tartuensis, 2.) Tartu University Press, Tartu, 2005, 13–14.

³² **Михайлова Ю. Л.** “Балтийский вопрос” с правительственной точки зрения: П. А. Валуев и его роль в управлении Прибалтийским краем в 1860-е годы. – In: *Россия и Балтия, 4. Человек в истории*. Наука, Москва, 2006, 20.

hand, intense politicisation and extreme nationalism (*сверхнационализм*), including messianism, oppression of non-Russian population and forcible Russification (*насильственная русификация*).³³ *Народ* stood for the large, obtuse masses of people being led and ruled. The underlying idea of absolute monarchy (*самодержавие*) was the thesis that the Russian *народ*, with its central figure the uneducated *мужик* (boor, or oaf), was forever loyal to the unlimited monarchy (and dismissive of a constitution) and deeply religious, thus reflecting the oneness of the Tsar and the people (*единение царя с народом*).³⁴

The word *нация* (nation) was a familiar presence in the Russian language as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century. In foreign political representations the term initially denoted the Empire as a state; later, under the influence of the French Revolution, it acquired a modern political dimension associated with radical social changes, reforms and liberal ideas. In the nineteenth century, the terms *народ* and *народность* were used instead of the foreign-sounding *нация*. Nationalism gaining strength in society and government policies in the second half of the nineteenth century, *нация* was “legalised” in the imperial context, and acquired a meaning more or less identical to Western usage: i.e. the state (Empire) as well as the nation – interpreted differently by different political forces, as a matter of course.³⁵ The general term was *население России*, or *население Империи* embracing the whole populace. The population continued to be divided into estates (*сословие*), which in a dynastic state held far greater importance than ethnic identity.

Assorted phrases were used to differentiate between Russians and non-Russians, *русские* and *иностранцы* being the most popular among them. *Русский* as an ethnonym mostly represented an ethnic Great Russian (additionally, Ukrainians and Belarusians were officially categorised as Russians). On February 10, 1908, Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin wrote to the Minister of Finance Vladimir Kokovtsev, suggesting that in the Baltic *Krai*, the proportion of essentially Russians (*коренные русские*) among officialdom be increased, and higher and lower positions be filled predominantly with individuals of Russian extraction (*преимущественно лица русского происхождения*).³⁶ At about the same time he also wrote to Aleksandr Meller-Zakomelski, the provisional Governor General of the Baltic Provinces, stressing that the government officials appointed to

³³ Бердяев Н. Судьба России, 9–14; История философии: Запад – Россия – Восток. Книга третья: Философия XIX–XX в. Под ред. Н. В. Мотрошиловой, А. М. Руткевича. Греко-латинский кабинет Ю. А. Шичалина, Москва, 308–310.

³⁴ Иванова Н. А. Феномен российской многопартийности. – In: Россия в начале XX века. Под ред. А. Н. Яковлева. (Россия. XX век. Исследования.) Новый хронограф, Москва, 2002, 401.

³⁵ See Миллер А. Приобретение необходимое, но не вполне удобное: Трансфер понятия *нация* в Россию (начало XVIII – середина XIX в.). – In: Imperium inter pares: Роль трансферов в истории Российской империи 1700–1917. Сборник статей. Ed. М. Ауст, Р. Вульпиус, А. Миллер. (Historia Rossica.) Новое Литературное Обозрение, Москва, 2010, 42–66.

³⁶ Андреева Н. С. Прибалтийские немцы, 269.

positions in the borderlands “must be of Russian descent, if not by pedigree, then by persuasion (*по убеждениям*)”.³⁷ *Новое Время* noted that many Orthodox clergymen of Estonian origin were “politicking nationalists” who needed to be replaced with “individuals of Russian descent who are familiar with (*знакомы*) the Estonian language”.³⁸ A government document from 1904 insists that people of Russian blood are without exception followers of the Orthodox faith (*православные*), including *единоверцы* and Old Believers (*староверы*).³⁹

This indicates that in the Russian Empire, it was not uncommon for non-Russians (e.g. Orthodox believers, civil servants, members of the military) to be recognised as Russians – provided they were fluent in the Russian language, had assimilated into the Russian environment, had adopted Russian values and attitudes, and were loyal to the governing dynasty.⁴⁰ Witold Rodkiewicz has cited a paradoxical document issued by the St. Petersburg-based Ministry of Education, which states that a Roman Catholic Lithuanian can become Russian.⁴¹ Without doubt it was much easier for Orthodox believers to be accepted as Russians: for many, including the proponents of Nikolai Ilminski’s soft methods of Russification, the official state religion and Russianness were concepts almost identical in essence. In his letter to the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod Konstantin Pobedonostsev (8.08.1886), Prince Sergei Shakhovskoy, the Governor of Estland and a major player in the Russification process, noted that Estonians and Latvians could get close (*близкими*) to the Russian people and actually (*действительно*) join the big Russian family after converting into Orthodoxy (*сделавшись православными*).⁴² The priest Aleksander Vārat (Vorotin), himself of Estonian descent, wrote in 1891:

We firmly believe that the whole indigenous population (*туземный народ*) of the Baltic *Krai* will one day be Orthodox converts.⁴³

According to the nationalistic theory of Arkadi Yakhontov, the concept of Russian ethnicity (*русская народность*) involved non-Russians who had assimilated and spiritually merged (*слившиеся*) into the Empire’s indigenous (*коренное*) nation, i.e. Russians.⁴⁴

As mentioned above, an essential component of becoming and being Russian was fluency in Russian – ideally guaranteed by Russian-language education from primary school to university. The period statistics rarely elaborated on an individual’s ethnic identity, yet often stated his/her estate and religion. The first

³⁷ Ibid., 278.

³⁸ Отпадение эстов от православия. – Новое время, 1909, October 27.

³⁹ Weeks, T. R. Nation and State, 8.

⁴⁰ Staliūnas, D. Making Russians, 22, 312–313.

⁴¹ *Op. cit.* Brüggemann, K. Lõpp venestusele, 366.

⁴² Из архива князя С. В. Шаховского. Материалы для истории недавнего прошлого Прибалтийской окраины (1885–1894 гг.), III. В. Эрикс, С.-Петербург, 1910, 5–7.

⁴³ Воротин А. Принципы прибалтийской жизни. Колывани, Ревель, 1891, 100.

⁴⁴ Яхонтов А. К окраинному и инородческому вопросу, II. – Окраины России, 1908, November 15, 660.

all-Russian census of 1897 omitted the category of ethnic affiliation; data on the native language (*родной язык*) were recorded as reported by the respondents – rendering it impossible to decide whether the respondents in fact meant their spoken language (*langue parlée, Umgangssprache*) or mother tongue (*langue maternelle*) learned as a child. Recorded as such, the native language is not a sufficient attribute to define ethnicity. Aliens would regard themselves (or they were regarded) as Russians on account of their skills and application of the Russian language in the Russian environment.

In the multi-cultural society of Eastern Europe, notwithstanding Russification, linguistic diversity was a common feature in cities. Among the better educated, the dominant language did not necessarily coincide with the native language.⁴⁵ The relationship between the mother tongue, spoken language and ethnicity was particularly complicated in the Baltic Provinces, what with their “three local languages” (Estonian/Latvian – German – Russian). This inspired Privy Councillor Pyotr Koshkin, head of the Riga chancellery of the provisional Governor General of the Baltic Provinces, to complain in 1908 that mother tongue was hardly a valid characteristic of a Russian since mixed marriages abounded in the *krai*. Nor was the Orthodox denomination a safe enough indication, what with the multitude of Orthodox believers among ethnic Estonians and Latvians – whereas many Baltic Belarusians practised Catholicism.⁴⁶ For want of further information, analyses of the 1897 census results have nevertheless identified ethnicity with the native language, which in most cases is not totally wrong, but is hardly totally correct either. More appropriately, these respondents should be labelled as Russian-speakers, or Russian-speaking population. Furthermore, the normative parameters like language and religious affiliation say nothing about the actual identity of ethnic groups in a region which in the nineteenth century was characterised by a rather intense process of faith and nationality change. It would be equally appropriate to ask: who is an Estonian?⁴⁷ Bernhard Körber, Professor of Hygiene at Tartu University, has said that in the 1881 census, Estonians identified themselves as Germans, whereas in 1897, Germans identified themselves as Estonians.⁴⁸ In the case of groups formed on the basis of a certain characteristic, it is impossible to pinpoint what exactly was important for an individual in each concrete case: ethnicity, religion, status, property, or something else.

During the Soviet period the West used to label all the citizens of the Soviet Union (habitually called Russia) and red passport holders as Russians – incorrectly since like its predecessor the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union was not a nation

⁴⁵ **Berendsen, V., Maiste, M.** Esimene ülevenemaaline rahvaloendus Tartus 28. jaanuaril 1897. Eesti Ajalooarhiiv, Tartu, 1999, 125–127.

⁴⁶ Имперская политика России в Прибалтике в начале XX века. Сборник документов и материалов. Сomp. Т. Карьяярм. Eesti Ajalooarhiiv, Tartu, 2000, 315.

⁴⁷ **Woodworth, B. D.** Multi-ethnicity and Estonian tsarist state officials in the Estland province, 1881–1914. – In: Russian Bureaucracy and the State. Officialdom from Alexander III to Vladimir Putin. Eds D. K. Rowney, E. Huskey. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 74–75.

⁴⁸ *Op. cit.* **Berendsen, V., Margus, M.** Esimene ülevenemaaline rahvaloendus, 126.

state but a multi-ethnic empire. In his last work (1967) Pitirim Sorokin described the Russian nation (*русская нация*) in the pre-revolution Russian Empire and in the Soviet Union as composed of Great Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, and “Russified” or assimilated ethnic groups.⁴⁹ Whether or not an alien was regarded as Russian did not necessarily tally with the said individual’s self-identification and expression of will or his/her actual degree of assimilation. *Россиянин* denotes a resident of Russia who can be either Russian or non-Russian.

The categories of Russians and non-Russians displayed connotative differences in more than one way. *Природные русские, коренные русские* carried a neutral subtext and were used to describe the indigenous population. *Русские люди, русский элемент* were the terms employed for Russians living among non-Russians.⁵⁰

The supremacy of the Russian nation over other nationalities and ethnic groups was communicated with the expressions *господствующая народность, первенствующая народность, господствующее население, главенство русской нации, первенство русской народности, державная народность, империю-образующий народ, великий русский народ*, which could be asserting, declarative or discriminatory, depending on the context. Hardcore chauvinists earned themselves a clearly political label, “real Russians”, “true Russians” (*истинно русские люди, echten Russen*), which came into wider usage under Stolypin, newspapers mockingly calling them “Russifiers-destroyers” (a pun in Russian: *обрусители-обрушители*). Their xenophobic mentality, especially their harassment of the Jews, was criticised by Sergei Witte in his memoirs.⁵¹ The always well informed M. O. Menshikov, a scandalous publicist standing close to the government, stated that the only chance for the aliens to become equal with the Russians was to become Russian.⁵² The core of “true Russians” was comprised of the right-wing monarchist parties and their publications.⁵³ The Soviet regime later saw the adoption of phrases like “older brother”, “first among equals”⁵⁴, and “the great Russian nation” (introduced in the Tsarist Empire): deserving special gratitude for “unselfish brotherly help”.⁵⁵

The terminology used for the non-Russians in the Russian Empire included the following: *народности России, инородческое население, туземцы, иноземцы, иноплемяне, русские инородцы, западные инородцы, уроженцы отдельных*

⁴⁹ **Сорокин П. А.** Основные черты русской нации в двадцатом столетии. – In: О России и русской философской культуре. Философы русского послеоктябрьского зарубежья. Собр. М. А. Маслин. Наука, Москва, 1990, 469.

⁵⁰ **Андреева Н. С.** Прибалтийские немцы, 270–279.

⁵¹ **Витте С. Ю.** Воспоминания. Царствование Николая II, I. Слово, Берлин, 1922, 188–194.

⁵² Национальный вопрос в Прибалтийском крае. Обзор русской периодической печати, XI, 12.

⁵³ **Hagen, M.** Die Entfaltung politischer Öffentlichkeit in Russland 1906–1914. (Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des östlichen Europa, 18.) Franz Steiner, Wiesbaden, 1982, 234–246.

⁵⁴ **Симолян Р. Х.** Россия и страны Балтии. Академия, Москва, 2003, 120.

⁵⁵ **Андропов Ю. В.** Избранные речи и статьи. Издание второе. Политиздат, Москва, 1984, 8.

местностей империи, etc. These phrases and expressions were not necessarily derogatory or discriminatory in nature, but indicative of non-Russians being dissimilar to Russians: of different kin and ethnic origin (*иногo рода*), or having a different past and background. It was mostly after 1905 that these phrases acquired a pejorative meaning in the hard-line texts of Russian chauvinists. Initially, *инородцы* marked the uncivilised and non-Christian Siberian tribes; in the nineteenth century, the term was expanded to all non-Slavs. In a narrower sense, a number of ethnicities in Siberia, Kazakhstan, the Caucasus and Northern Russia that were impossible to govern with conventional means, were categorised as aliens. This group included, for example, the Chukchi, the Buryats, the Yakuts, the Samoyedic peoples, the Kyrgyz, the Kalmyks, the Turkmen. They were subject to special laws on aliens (*Положение об инородцах 1822, 1892*).⁵⁶ The general designations for the non-Orthodox believers were *иноверцы*, or *инославные*. At the beginning of the twentieth century, with the idea of the autonomy of non-Russian nations acquiring prominence, a more frequent use of the term “non-state nations” (*недержавные народности*) can be observed.⁵⁷

Soviet historiography used the term “Russia” to indicate the state, and the non-Russian ethnicities within the Russian Empire were called “peoples of Russia” (*народы России*).⁵⁸ Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, writing the history of Russia has branched into two: focus on Russia as the territory of ethnic Russians while overlooking the non-Russian nationalities (*русская история*)⁵⁹; a traditional approach treating Russia as a state and empire (*российская история*).⁶⁰ Discussion on the relation between Russia the empire and Russia the country (*страна*) was particularly lively in the first half of the 1990s, as part of the search for a new post-Soviet and post-Communist identity.⁶¹ In modern texts, in the imperial context the following phrases are used: *peoples of Russia* (including Russians, but

⁵⁶ Инородцы. <http://www.vehi.net/brokgauz/all/044/44553.shtml>; Инородцы. http://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/russian_history/; **Jääts, I.** Etnilised protsessid Vene impeeriumi siseperifeerias 1801–1904. Komi rahvusluse süünd, 50; **Slocum, J. W.** Who and when, were the inorodtsy? The evolution of the category of “Aliens” in the Imperial Russia. – Russian Review, 1998, 57, 2, 173–190; **Geraci, R. P.** Window on the East, 30–31.

⁵⁷ **Славинский М. А.** Русская интеллигенция и национальный вопрос. – In: Вехи. Интеллигенция в России. Сборник статей 1909–1910. Сост., коммент. Н. Казаковой. Предисловие В. Шелохаева. (Звонница. Антология русской публицистики.) Молодая гвардия, Москва, 1991, 414–415.

⁵⁸ История СССР, II. 1861–1917. Период капитализма. Изд. второе, перераб. Отв. ред. А. Л. Сидорова. Мысль, Москва, 1965, 322.

⁵⁹ История России с начала XVIII до конца XIX века. Отв. ред. А. Н. Сахаров. (История России. С древнейших времен до конца XX века.) Институт Российской истории РАН, АСТ, Москва, 1996.

⁶⁰ Россия в начале XX века. Под ред. А. Н. Яковлева. (Россия. XX век. Исследования.) Новый хронограф, Москва, 2002.

⁶¹ **Булдаков В. П., Мау В. А., Ципко А. С.** Российская империя, СССР, Российская Федерация: история одной страны. Отв. ред. Г. А. Бордюгов. ИЦ “Россия молодая”, Москва, 1993; **Тишков В. А.** Что есть Россия? – Вопросы философии, 1995, 2, 3–17.

basically non-Russians), *non-Russian nations/peoples/ethnoses, sub-ethnoses, small nations, non-Russian population, national minorities* – the latter has been contested by some authors, seeing that the Great Russians did not constitute a majority in the Empire (they did form a majority, though, together with the Ukrainians and Belarusians formally classified as Russians).⁶² By way of counter-argument: Russians were the biggest ethnic group, whereas all the other nations individually held a minority status in relation to the Russians. In modern Russian literature, a frequently used term for indigenous peoples, both Russians and non-Russians, is *titular nation (титульная нация)*.⁶³

The term *non-dominant ethnic group* introduced in the recent works of the Czech scholar Miroslav Hroch to mark the small nationalities of (Eastern) Europe⁶⁴ (Anthony Smith: *an ethnies*) has, with some reservations, been considered appropriate for the peoples of Russia.⁶⁵ As an analytical category, this term expresses inequality and a submissive relationship with the *dominant ethnic group*. The term *small(er) nations (kleiner Völkern)* found in Hroch's earlier works, also raises some questions, particularly as regards the line between the big and small nations. Unlike the Baltic nations, neither Poles nor Ukrainians could be classified as the small nations of Russia. The term widely used in modern days, *non-Russians*, or *non-Russian nationalities (нерусские, Nichttrussen)*, which is related to the word *нерусь* (can be found in the dictionary of Vladimir Dal from 1881 onwards) has been criticised for its negative mode and vague meaning, in an analogy with the word *Russian (русский)*.

The government's policy in the border regions was illustrated with the following phrases: *окраинная политика, инородческая политика, национальная политика, русская политика, русское дело, окраинно-инородческий вопрос*. Nationalist bias gaining strength in the Russian central government's domestic policy, the imperial and Russian chauvinistic dimension shifted into focus in the border regions' affairs, especially under Stolypin, and found expression through the following terms: *национально-русская политика, русская национальная политика, национально-русское дело, русское национальное дело, русские государственно-национальные начала, национально-государственные цели, интересы русской государственности, русские кровные интересы, истинно-*

⁶² In 1914: 165 million people, 140 ethnoses, 92 million Slavs; 48% of Russians, 70.8% of Orthodox believers, 8.9% of Catholics, 8.7% of Muslims (Сахаров А. Н. Введение. – In: Россия в начале XX века, 31). According to Prime Minister Sergei Witte, the percentage of aliens was 35 (Витте С. Ю. Воспоминания. Царствование Николая II, I. Слово, Берлин, 1922, 493).

⁶³ Национальная политика России: История и современность. Отв. ред. В. А. Михайлов. Русский мир, Москва, 1997, 366; Тренин Д. В. Балтийский шанс. Страны Балтии, Россия и Запад в складывающейся Большой Европе. Московский Центр Карнеги, Москва, 1997, 20.

⁶⁴ Hroch, M. Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe. A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations. Columbia University Press, New York, 2000, xiii.

⁶⁵ Jääts, I. Etnilised protsessid, 44–45; Staliūnas, D. Making Russians, 22.

русская окраинная политика, русско-народная окраинная политика.⁶⁶ Greater emphasis was laid on the supremacy of Russians over non-Russians by introducing the concept of state-nation or imperial nation (*державная народность*).⁶⁷ The trendsetter was Stolypin himself: drawing closer to the nationalists, he held chauvinistic speeches in the State *Duma* and State Council, insisting that the *semstvo* in the Western Provinces must be *национально русским*⁶⁸ in a move aimed against the Polish. Along with *Западный край*, the denomination *Западно-Русский край*⁶⁹ was introduced to effectively remove any claims Poland had to these territories, and legitimise Russia's supremacy in the region. The Kingdom of Poland (*Царство Польское*) went under a far more ubiquitous sobriquet, *Привислинский край* or *Привислянский край* (in Polish, *Kraj Przewiślański*), also *Варшавское генерал-губернаторство*⁷⁰, which was extremely humiliating and hurtful for the proud Poles. Even before its annexation, the region of Holm (part of the Kingdom of Poland until 1912) became known as *Холмская Русь*.⁷¹ The semi-official publication *Novoe vremya* brushed off the existence of entities like *польская окраина* or *кавказская окраина*, claiming these were nothing but Russian borderlands (*русские окраины*) and their boundaries (*окончания и границы русской земли*).⁷²

TERMS PERTAINING TO THE INTEGRATION OF ALIENS

One cluster of terms is associated with the integration, homogenisation, centralisation and unification of the parts of the Russian Empire. The formal and

⁶⁶ Национальный вопрос в Прибалтийском крае. Обзор русской периодической печати, XI; Народности Прибалтийского края. Обзор русской периодической печати, XII (с мая 1908 г. по июль 1909 г.). С.-Петербург, 1909; Школа в Прибалтийском крае. Обзор русской периодической печати, XIII (с мая 1908 г. по декабрь 1909 г.). С.-Петербург, 1910; Церковь в Прибалтийском крае. Вероисповедные отношения. Обзор русской периодической печати, XIV (с мая 1908 г. по сентябрь 1910 г.). С.-Петербург, 1911; **Будилович А. С.** Может-ли Россия отдать инородцам свои окраины? (Библиотека окраин России, 4.) Типография А. С. Суворин, С.-Петербург, 1907, 54, 57–58; **Полежаев П.** За шесть лет (1906–1912 гг.). Типография А. С. Суворина, С.-Петербург, 1912.

⁶⁷ Национальный вопрос в Прибалтийском крае. Обзор русской периодической печати, XI, 11.

⁶⁸ **Аврех А. Я.** Столыпин и судьбы реформ в России. Издательство политической литературы, Москва, 1991, 159–160; **Корелин А. П.** К стабильности через реформы. – In: Россия в начале XX века, 510. In the interpretation of Viktor Leontovich, Stolypin's reform programme is one of the most liberal programmes in Russia's history (**Леонтович В. В.** История либерализма в России 1762–1914. (Исследования новейшей русской истории, 1.) Русский путь, Москва, 513).

⁶⁹ **Риттих А. Ф.** Западно-русская граница и русская народность. С планом. Типо-литография "Надежда", С.-Петербург, 1907, 17, 23.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁷¹ **Аврех А. Я.** Столыпин и судьбы реформ, 170; **Бахтурина А. Ю.** Окраины российской империи, 17.

⁷² Народности Прибалтийского края. Обзор русской периодической печати, XII, 19.

informal texts of late Imperial Russia spotlight terms like *присоединение*, *единение*, *объединение* mostly indicating the annexation of newly conquered territories, without elaborating on how and on what terms the incorporation was effected, how tightly these regions were tied to the imperial centre, or on the extent of their right to make independent decisions.⁷³ The context, more often than not, leaves an impression that the annexation/incorporation took place by mutual agreement, was voluntary and in the best interests of the inhabitants of the annexed territories. *Воссоединение* represented the reclamation of territories that used to belong to Russia (either in reality or in mythology) and had been “illegally” (*незаконно*) appropriated by the enemy. Such perfectly justified, “legitimate conquests” were covered by the term *возвращение* (indeed meaning homecoming), and hardly a chance was missed to describe the benefits brought to the local population. This also applied to Estland, Livland and Kurland as the “old Russian territories” (*старинные русские владения*)⁷⁴, or the “ancient allodial lands of Russian rulers” (*исконная вотчина русских властителей*)⁷⁵, Russia’s property (*достояние России*) “reclaimed” in 1710–1795.⁷⁶

The next stage in the ethno-political phraseology applicable to integration is characterised by an extremely varied vocabulary: *сближение*, *сроднение*, *приобщение*, *сплочение*, *слияние* (*полное, окончательное, совершенное, действительное, внутреннее*), *слитие* all described stronger or weaker degrees of integration – not necessarily involving Russification (*обрусение/обрусение*) in the sense of non-Russians’ assimilation (Russianisation). Any degree of rapprochement or newly-found imperial identity (in the political sense or through citizenship) represented an intermediate stage towards a closer alliance – until full assimilation into the imaginary nation state of Russia, whose illusory nature did not become apparent until much later. Outside the discourse of ethnic relations these terms do not cause semantic problems. In the period’s ethno-political context, however, their precise meaning remains vague or even ambivalent due to the non-existence of generally accepted and unambiguous definitions. Often an author would use different phrases to mark one and the same process (integration in this particular case). For example, a letter by Stolypin (16.03.1908) simultaneously features the following phrases and expressions: *сближение Прибалтийской окраины с прочими частями нашего государства, внутреннее слияние сих губерний с Россией, мирное приобщение его к общему течению русской государственной жизни, сближение местных жителей с русской общественностью*.⁷⁷ The

⁷³ Thaden, E. C., Thaden, M. F. *Russia’s Western Borderlands 1710–1870*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1984, 63.

⁷⁴ Чешихин Е. В. *Краткая история Прибалтийского края*. Типо-литография А. И. Липинского, Рига, 1884, 43.

⁷⁵ Пшеничников П. Г. *Русские в Прибалтийском крае (Исторический очерк)*. Русская Беседа, Рига, 1910, 3–4.

⁷⁶ П. К. [Жулаковский П. К.] *Прибалтийские юбилеи. – Окраины России*, 1910, September 18–25, 537.

⁷⁷ Андреева Н. С. *Прибалтийские немцы*, 275–277.

terminology being highly politicised and pertaining to the sensitive and explosive issue of ethnic relations, deliberate misconstrual, hypocrisy and circumlocution were frequently applied – by government administrators, political figures and non-Russian national movement leaders alike – leading to major discrepancies between semantics, rhetoric and reality.

It remains equally obscure what the government intended the border regions to integrate into; in a broader sense, administrative, territorial or cultural/ethnic characteristics were used as markers: *с остальными частями империи (государства), с коренной Россией, с матушкой Россией, с русским народом, с русской (государственной) культурой, с русской общественностью, с великой русской семьей, с центром*. Again problems arise with defining *Россия, коренная Россия, внутренняя Россия, внутренние губернии, чисто-русский центр*.⁷⁸ Such integration could come to pass in various ways, gradually and with relatively soft methods: as prescribed by Ilinski's system, or following the model of Lithuania where the Latin alphabet was banned until 1904.⁷⁹ In any event, the non-Russian peoples of the periphery were supposed to take after the heart and soul of the Empire, the ruling nation and its culture (*объединение народностей на почве обще-русской культуры*)⁸⁰, *чтобы латыши и эсты привлекались к русской культуре и государственности*.⁸¹ This was inevitably to lead to a drastic minimisation of variety and multiculturalism in the Empire and curtailment of the peripheral region's independent decision-making, while furthering consolidation with the Russians.

What was the desired outcome of the closer integration of the non-Russian nations? There is no singular answer to this question: according to Governor of the Province of Estland, Shakhovskoy, his province was to become an “organic part (*органическая часть*)” in the big Russian family; Stolypin spoke of “integrity of the state” (*целостность государства*)⁸²; Deputy Minister of Justice Aleksandr Veryovkin stressed political unity and “actual merging” (*действительное слияние*)⁸³; Orthodox priest of Estonian extraction Aleksander Vārat (Vorotin) wrote about a “collective national organism” (*общий государственный организм*)⁸⁴; nationalist A. Yakhontov sang odes to the nation state of Russia.⁸⁵ Government representatives and officials cited as principal reasons the need to abolish the

⁷⁸ See **Gorizontov, L.** The “Great Circle” of interior Russia: representations of the imperial center in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. – In: Russian Empire. Space, People, Power, 84–90.

⁷⁹ **Raun, T. U.** Cultural russification in Lithuania and the Baltic provinces in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: comparative perspectives. – Eesti Teaduste Akadeemia toimetised. Humanitaar- ja Sotsiaalteadused, 1994, **43**, 3, 238–244; **Staliūnas, D.** Making Russians, 241–249.

⁸⁰ Народности Прибалтийского края. Обзор русской периодической печати, XII, 103.

⁸¹ Имперская политика России в Прибалтике, 332.

⁸² **Андреева Н. С.** Прибалтийские немцы, 277.

⁸³ Государственная дума. Третий созыв. Стенографические отчеты 1912 г. Сессия пятая, II. С.-Петербург, 1912, 2358.

⁸⁴ **Воротин А.** Принципы прибалтийской жизни, 101.

⁸⁵ **Яхонтов А.** К крайнему и инородческому вопросу, II, 658.

seclusion (*обособленность*)⁸⁶ and exclusivity (*исключительность*) of border regions, and the class-oligarchic system (*сословно-олигархическое устройство*)⁸⁷ in the Baltic Provinces. A standard reason given in justification of the merger was the need to fight separatism, especially after the Polish-Lithuanian uprising of 1863, and the 1905 revolution. Issues of internal and external security, struggle against threats and enemies including pan-Germanism, pan-Polonism, pan-Asiatism, pan-Turkism, pan-Islamism, pan-Mongolism⁸⁸, acquired growing importance in a world that was rolling towards a global war. National unity (*государственное единство*) was cited by nearly all the political forces of Russia, while the Liberals, Socialists and Nationalists, the government, and the very objects of national policy, the non-Russians, all had a different idea of the nature of a multi-ethnic state.

CONNOTATIONS OF *RUSSIFICATION* IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EMPIRE'S EXTERNAL PERIPHERY

The biggest problems, not just terminological, but also historiographical and conceptual, involve the meaning and usage of phrases and expressions related to Russification, e.g. *обрусение*, *русификация*. Essentially they boil down to the interpretation of the nature and goals of the government's ethnic policy, and to whether and to what extent such policy was in essence Russification. Of the extensive discourse of ethno-policy the use of the term *Russification* in the late Russian Empire will be discussed, leaving aside the historiographical debate on this particular issue. What generates the problem is not so much the phrases and expressions *per se*, but the meanings attached to them, and our understanding of these meanings. Russification can be discussed by resorting to tergiversation and "more civilised" terms like *сближение* and *слияние*, but the essence of the problem does not change. This is precisely the reason why the texts issued by government departments and officials cannot be relied upon as sources in assessing the actual situation, but need to be complemented by an analysis of the government's ethno-policy and the reactions of its objects, i.e. non-Russian nations.

⁸⁶ **Янович И. А.** Записка о земских повинностях в Лифляндской губернии, составленная по поручению министра финансов управляющим Радомской казенной палатой, статским советником Яновичем. В. Киришбаум, С.-Петербург, 1888, 14.

⁸⁷ Образование при Министерстве юстиции Особого совещания для разработки законопроекта об отмене особых привилегий собственников дворянских вотчин в Прибалтийских губерниях. Журнал заседаний 12, 19, 23 января и 6 февраля 1916. Российский государственный исторический архив (РГИА), ф. 560, оп. 26, д. 1350, л. 31, 36, 39, 57; **Рудченко И. Я.** Записка о земских повинностях в Эстляндской губернии, составленная по поручению министра финансов управляющим Херсонской казенной палатой, коллежским советником Рудченко. В. Киришбаум, С.-Петербург, 1888, 6.

⁸⁸ **Яхонтов А.** К окраинному и иностранческому вопросу, IV. – Окраины России, 1908, November 22, 673–674.

Empress Catherine II used the intransitive verb *обрусеть* to describe the administrative and legal centralisation and unification of the Empire.⁸⁹ In the same vein, Tsar Nicholas I used the substantive *обрусевание* in the context of the Kingdom of Poland in 1835. In the second half of the nineteenth century, a period witnessing the rise of nationalism, the political terminology predominantly applying to imperial statehood developed an undercurrent of ethnic relations. The terms *обрусить*, *обрусеть*, *обрусение*, *русификация* only rarely featured in formal usage, though, but then it neither denies nor confirms the existence of Russification as a straightforward policy. Provisional Governor General of the Baltics Meller-Zakomelski interpreted the Stolypin Circular (10.02.1908) about appointing individuals of Russian descent to local offices in the Baltic Provinces as “an issue of Russification” (*вопрос о русификации*), and requested explicit directives from the government to be able to “abruptly (*круто*) change the policy that has been in force for centuries”.⁹⁰

The article “Прибалтийский край” featured in the Brockhaus-Efron Encyclopaedic Dictionary (published in St. Petersburg in 1890–1907) states that the Russification of the *krai* (*обрусение края*) was implemented during the reign of Alexander III, most vividly through the universal application of the Russian language.⁹¹

The higher officials’ statements concerning the government’s goals in the ethnic border regions were mostly generic and vague. The government categorically denied any plans of assimilation of non-Russians. In a letter addressed to Meller-Zakomelski (16.03.1908), Prime Minister Stolypin noted that the Russian government had never sought the de-ethnification of the peoples of the Empire, and that the “merging” (*слияние*) of the Baltic Provinces with Russia would be executed by way of “peaceful embracing” (*мирное приобщение*), carefully preserving the religious and ethnic identities (*особенности*).⁹² Similar statements were made by government representatives in the State *Duma* and in press releases, never detailing, however, which idiosyncrasies would survive after the coalescence. Not infrequently the singularities were played down and treated as “communal peculiarities” (*бытовые особенности*). However, the government’s statements and promises mostly remained empty rhetoric, and no practical measures followed.

Russification was more widely discussed in newspapers and other publications where certain authors – either approving or condemning it – declared it to be a

⁸⁹ Laur, M. Eesti ala valitsemine 18. sajandil (1710–1783). (Scripta Archivi Historici Estoniae.) Eesti Ajaloohiiv, Tartu, 2000, 208.

⁹⁰ Андреева Н. С. Прибалтийские немцы, 274.

⁹¹ “Вообще, повсеместное введение русского языка (например в городских управлениях и пр.), выразившееся, между прочим, в переименовании Дерпта в Юрьев и Динаминда в Усть-Двинск, было наиболее ярким выражением мер к обрусению края в царствование императора Александра III” (Прибалтийский край – Энциклопедический Словарь Ф. А. Брокгауза и И. А. Ефрона. В 86 томах с иллюстрациями и дополнительными материалами. <http://www.vehi.net/brokgauz/index.html>).

⁹² Национальный вопрос в Прибалтийском крае. Обзор русской периодической печати, XI, 14; Андреева Н. С. Прибалтийские немцы, 277.

policy in effect, while other authors dismissed the actuality of the Russification issue as such.

In the era of political parties, *Duma* monarchy and revolutions, the whole discourse of ethnic relations turned into an arena of party political struggles complete with the emergence of model solutions for ethnic relations based on diverse ideologies and “party historiographies”. Left-wing (Socialist) and liberal parties accused the government of ethnic oppression and re-ethnification (ethnicity inversion, *Umvolkung*) of non-Russian nations. Professor Nikolai Gredeskul, one of the leaders of Cadets, wrote in 1916 that the government’s policy towards the aliens had been “nothing but de-ethnification and Russification (*денационализация, обрусение*)”.⁹³ Chauvinists who lambasted the government with brutal rhetoric for insufficient resolution, did not even try to hide their target – a Russian nation state (*национальное государство*) achieved through the amalgamation of non-Russians with Russians.

It goes without saying that the Russification issue had the strongest hold over its objects: the non-Russian peoples, whose main concern was the survival of their nation. The victim discourse brought up by Gert von Pistohlkors, Karsten Brüggemann and Aleksei Miller was certainly present in the case of Estonians and Latvians.⁹⁴ Even before the Estonian national awakening period the term “Russification” made an appearance in the German-language correspondence of the movement’s first generation leaders. On August 10, 1845, Friedrich Robert Faehlmann wrote to Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald that “there can be no more progress once the nation is Russified”.⁹⁵ At the time such a stance was a defence reaction against the sudden invasion of an unwanted foreign body into the German-Western mindset rather than conscious resistance to the yet indeterminate Russification plans.

Russification as an alternative to Germanisation was prominent in the German-Russian polemics on the Baltic issue since the 1860s. *Moskovskie vedomosti* wrote in 1867 that the Baltic *Krai* would be facing a crossroads:

either Germanisation, or Russification (*либо германизация либо обрусение*).⁹⁶

Conducting a heated political debate with the Slavophile Yuri Samarin, Professor of Tartu University Carl Schirren in 1869 formulated the term “*System der*

⁹³ Гредескуль Н. А. Россия и ея народы. – In: Отечество, 77.

⁹⁴ Brüggemann, K. Lõpp venestusele, 361–362.

⁹⁵ Friedrich Robert Faehlmann to Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald 10.8.1845. – In: Fr. R. Kreutzwaldi kirjavahetus, I. Kirjad Fr. R. Faehlmannile, D. H. Jürgensonile ja teistele 1833–1866. Comp. E. Aaver, A. Nagelmaa, L. Raud. Eesti Raamat, Tallinn, 1976, 113–114; Raun, T. U. The Estonians. – In: Haltzel, M. H. et al. Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland 1855–1914. Ed. E. C. Thaden. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1981, 295.

⁹⁶ *Op. cit.* Михайлова Ю. А. Остзейский вопрос в русской прессе в 1860-е годы. – In: Балтийский регион в международных отношениях в новое и новейшее время. Издательство Калининградского университета, Калининград, 2004, 98. See also Исаков С. Г. Остзейский вопрос в русской печати 1860-х годов. (Ученые записки Тартуского государственного университета, 107.) Тартуский государственный университет, Тарту, 1961.

*Russifizierung*⁹⁷, which became one of the cornerstones of the apologetic Baltic German historiography.

The “Estnisch-deutsches Wörterbuch” by academician Ferdinand Johann Wiedemann published in St. Petersburg in 1869 (Jakob Hurt’s new redaction in 1893, reprints in 1923, 1973) translates the verb “*wenestama*” into German as *russisch werden – russificiren*⁹⁸: make/become Russian or Russian-like (compare: the verb “*saksastama*” – *germanisiren*, (intr) *deutsch werden*⁹⁹ means “to make/become German”). The definition implies a process (not necessarily Russification in the sense of assimilation) without prescribing its final outcome or regulating the desired extent. The Dictionary of Estonian Grammar (Õigekeelsussõnaraamat, 2006), similarly, supplies *venepäraseks tegema* (make Russian-like) for the entry “*venestama*” (Russify, Russianise). The entry “*venestuma*” (to become Russified/Russianised) is paired with *venepäraseks muutuma* (to become Russian-like), *venelaseks ümberrahvustuma* (to adopt Russian ethnicity). Possible interpretations abound because of the varied manifestations of Russianness, not the least being assimilation *per se*.¹⁰⁰ The Contemporary Estonian Dictionary also provides “*venepärastamine*” as a synonym to “*venestamine*”.¹⁰¹

During the period of Estonian national awakening, the themes related to Russification found expression in both the private correspondence and public speeches of patriots from the 1870s onwards. Jakob Hurt, the pro-German leader of the moderate wing of the Estonian national movement, identified both Russification and Germanisation as re-ethnification: Estonians becoming Russian or German, the loss of national identity, the death of a nation. He made a distinction (1899) between Russification and Slavification, the former representing an inevitable national and social transformation and as such a positive drift; the latter standing for a merging into Slavism (language, education, religion) and something to be fought against at all costs.¹⁰²

At the start of the 1870s and 1880s the main nationality problem faced by the Estonians was Germanisation of local intellectuals, whereas Russification, its

⁹⁷ **Pistohlkors, G. v.** Ritterschaftliche Reformpolitik zwischen Russifizierung und Revolution. Historische Studien zum Problem der politischen Selbsteinschätzung der deutschen Oberschicht in den Ostseeprovinzen Russlands im Krisenjahr 1905. (Göttingen Bausteine zur Geschichtswissenschaft, 48.) Musterschmidt, Göttingen, 1978, 17–18; **Brüggemann, K.** Lõpp venestusele, 362.

⁹⁸ **Wiedemann, F. J.** Eesti-saksa sõnaraamat. Neljas, muutmata trükk teisest, Jakob Hurda redigeeritud väljaandest. Valgus, Tallinn, 1973, 1344.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 1000.

¹⁰⁰ Eesti õigekeelsussõnaraamat ÕS 2006. Ed. T. Erelt. Comp. T. Erelt, T. Leemets, S. Mäearu, M. Raadik. Eesti Keele Instituut, Eesti Keele Sihtasutus, Tallinn, 2006, 1046.

¹⁰¹ <http://www.eki.ee/dict/ekss/index.cgi?Q=venestamine&F=M>. See also Eesti-inglise sõnaraamat. Estonian-English Dictionary. Comp. P. F. Saagpakk. With an introduction by J. Aavik. (Yale Language Series.) Yale University Press, New Haven, 1982, 1083.

¹⁰² Jakob Hurda kõned ja avalikud kirjad. Ed. H. Kruus. Eesti Kirjanduse Selts, Tartu, 1939, 77–79, 121–122, 153–158; **Hurt, J.** Kõned ja kirjad, 79–80; **Karjahärm, T.** The image of Russia according to Estonian national movement leaders (until 1917). Ethnic images and stereotypes. – In: Where is the Border Line?, 191.

effect still very weak in Estonia, was not perceived as a threat. Carl Robert Jakobson, the leader of the national movement's radical wing, wrote about Moscow newspapers' desire "to make everyone Russian through forced means"¹⁰³, yet resolutely dismissed any threat of Russification, since, in his opinion, the Emperor was treating all the nations equally.¹⁰⁴

Alexander III's reform package in the Baltic Provinces inspired a more frequent appearance of the motif of Russification in the local German, Russian, Estonian and Latvian texts from the 1880s and 1890s onwards. In 1894 Yevgraf Cheshikhin, a renowned local historian, wrote that the government's goal was the "general and comprehensive Russification of the *krai* (*общее обрусение края*)".¹⁰⁵ The popular Russian historian and active nationalist Dmitri Ilovaiski believed Alexander's reforms went beyond unification, mirroring the "national orientation (*национальное направление*) of the Russian policy".¹⁰⁶ In 1893 the newspaper *Rizhskij vestnik* carried a travelogue by an anonymous Muscovite about Tallinn (Ревель, Reval) speaking of the "progress of Russification (*успехи руссификации*)" in the Province of Estland where cities were assuming an increasingly Russian character (*более русский характер*) and the Russian language was thriving: now even those who could speak neither German nor Estonian could live there.¹⁰⁷ Estonian and Latvian newspapers used the word "Russification" in various meanings: for all or (more frequently) some of the reforms, but mostly for the Russification of education. In 1898 the *Postimees* noted that "the Russification of schools" had become a conventional term.¹⁰⁸ Not bothering to suppress its informal usage, the censors probably posited "Russification" as an agreeable term characterising the government's Baltic policy. After all, it was aimed against Germanisation, and the local Estonian nationalists had been clamouring for the Russian order. At the end of the nineteenth century, any criticism of the government's policy was obviously out of the question.¹⁰⁹

The cultural Russification that wiped out native-language education, introduced Russian-language public administration and in a longer perspective threatened Estonians with de-ethnification, bred deep pessimism among Estonian activists and intellectuals. However, in the absence of a serious alternative until the 1905 revolution, the government's administrative reforms were generally hailed as instrumental.¹¹⁰

¹⁰³ Carl Robert Jakobson to Jaan Adamson 7.3.1870. C. R. Jakobsoni kirjad J. Adamsonile. – Eesti Kirjandus, 1913, 7, 275.

¹⁰⁴ [Jakobson, C. R.] Omalt maalt. – Sakala, 1881, January 10; [Jakobson, C. R.] Omalt maalt. – Sakala, 1881, January 17; Raun, T. U. The Estonians, 302.

¹⁰⁵ Чешихин Е. В. Краткая история Прибалтийского края. Типо-литография А. И. Липинского, Рига, 1894, 72–73.

¹⁰⁶ Иловайский Д. И. Очерки отечественной истории. Мысль, Москва, 1995, 490.

¹⁰⁷ Н. А. Ревельские впечатления москвича. – In: От Лифляндии к Латвии, 88.

¹⁰⁸ -п-. Kadakasaksus. – Postimees, 1898, April 1.

¹⁰⁹ Issakov, S. Tsaarivalitsuse tsensuuripoliitikast eesti ajakirjanduse suhtes 19. sajandi teisel poolel. – In: Läbi kahe sajandi. Comp. J. Peegel. Eesti Raamat, Tallinn, 1971, 125–137.

¹¹⁰ Raun, T. U. The Estonians, 311.

At the turn of the century, social life in the Estonian community perking up considerably, a discussion about the fate of small ethnoses and the future of the Estonian nation gathered momentum. This is how the author Andres Saal defined Russification in the pro-Russian newspaper *Olevik*:

The word Russification is interpreted as our re-ethnification, converting an Estonian into Russian in respect of his language and mentality. That would almost equal a demise of the Estonian nation.

In the same article he insisted that the government was harbouring no such plans and that Russification was “nothing but a phantasm” to scare the people. Lacking enough strength for progress, small nations would do wisely to append themselves to larger ones.¹¹¹ Saal’s article attracted wide attention and nationalists called it a “requiem for the Estonian nation”.¹¹² In 1902 the young poet Gustav Suits published an essay under a meaningful title, “Estonian life or Estonian death?”¹¹³ in which he discussed the prospects of the nation’s survival. In 1898 the renowned linguist Johannes Aavik wrote in his diary:

The only measure that could save Estonians from de-ethnification is full-fledged autonomy; it is – the Estonian language as the language of tuition in schools, national university for ethnic Estonians; Estonian must be adopted as the language of courts of justice and government; in a word: Estonia should be more or less an independent state. – After all, this is no Russia, this is Estonia where Estonians live.¹¹⁴

In the final years of the nineteenth century Jaan Jõgever, a Tsarist-era censor and later Professor of Tartu University, was quite convinced of the inevitable eclipse of the Estonian nation – judging by the entries in his journal.¹¹⁵

In the debate conducted by intellectuals, however, optimism prevailed.¹¹⁶ New hope dawned with the government’s pressure weakening; with the revolution of 1905 witnessing many non-Russian nationalities, including Estonians and Latvians, demand self-determination and autonomy; and with the central government’s blessing to native-language private education in the Baltic Provinces. All the same, the Estonian social thought upheld the image of Alexander III’s reforms as a policy of Russification and Estonians’ denationalisation.¹¹⁷ The new generation leader Konstantin Päts regarded the language of tuition as the principal means of assimilation, opining in 1905 that schools providing education in native language help avoid the “amalgamation of one nation with another”.¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ **Saal, A.** Aeg ja elu, 14. – *Olevik*, 1899, November 30, 1111–1112.

¹¹² Valeprohvetid. – *Postimees*, 1899, December 31.

¹¹³ **Suits, G.** Eesti elu või surm?... – In: Kiired, III. Ed. G. S. Kirjanduse Sõprade kirjastus, Jurjev, 1902, 7–9; see also **Suits, G.** Sihid ja vaated. Yrjö Weilini kirjastus, Helsingi, 1906, 17.

¹¹⁴ **Vihma, H.** Mäleta... – In: Kultuurilugu kirjapeeglis. Johannes Aaviku & Friedebert Tuglase kirjavahetus. Comp. and comment. H. Vihma. Eesti Muinsuskaitse Selts, Tallinn, 1990, 7–8.

¹¹⁵ **Tuglas, F.** Ado Grenzsteini lahkumine. Päätükid meie ajakirjanduse ja tsensuuri ajaloost. Noor-Eesti Kirjastus, Tartu, 1926, 28–31.

¹¹⁶ **Jürgenstein, A.** “Postimehe” ajalugu. – In: *Postimees 1857–1907. 50-aastase kestuse mälestuseks. Postimehe Trükikoda*, Tartu, 1909, 96–99.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹¹⁸ **Päts, K.** Järeldustrikas uuendus meie kodumaa elus. – In: **Päts, K.** Eesti riik, I. Comp. T. Karjahärm. (Eesti mõttelugu, 27.) Ilmamaa, Tartu, 1999, 367.

The period of *Duma* monarchy allowed more freedom to write about national relations, and even moderately criticise the policies of the central government and Russian chauvinists. Estonian newspapers protested against the increasing national pressure and denounced the Stolypin Circular (10.02.1908) on the Russification of the local civil service, which was seen as a follow-up to the ambitions of Alexander III.¹¹⁹ The idea of a nation state proposed by Russian nationalists was brusquely dismissed in a heated debate.¹²⁰ The Baltic Provinces were keenly following the government measures applied in other peripheral regions: Poland, Finland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus, the Caucasus. The future of non-Russian nations and the fate of Estonians, the demands for national equality remained the paramount concerns. The leader of moderate nationalists Jaan Tõnisson noted that the Baltic indigenous peoples were facing two perils: the “Russian-Slavic” cultural influence bolstered by the “external power measures” taken by the Russian government was invading from the East, while the German(ic) culture was threatening from the West.¹²¹

One of the harshest critics of the government’s Baltic policy during the pre-independence period was Villem Reiman, the spiritual leader of the moderate national movement. His descriptions of the reforms of Alexander III are dominated by references to the destructive aspects and plans to “wipe away” the Estonian nation and all non-Russian peoples.¹²²

Such sentiments were boosted by the publication of the third tome of the archival documents of the Governor of Estland Sergei Shakhovskoy in St. Petersburg in 1910 to mark the 200th anniversary of the Province of Estland’s accession to Russia. The volume covering the Governor’s correspondence with the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod Konstantin Pobedonostsev, came as a shock to the Estonian public. It was rife with colourful language, from “rapprochement” (*сближение*) to “complete fusion” (*совершенное слияние*), which was interpreted by the Estonian public, already sensitised by Stolypin’s new ethnic policy and threats made by Russian chauvinists, as absolute outrage: Russification-assimilation-de-ethnification. Commenting upon this piece, Villem Reiman wrote a treatise on the evils of Russification, which would peak with “the annihilation of the Estonian nation”.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Jälle otsast peale. – *Õigus*, 1908, February 28; Venestamise ajajärgu algul. – *Õigus*, 1908, March 17.

¹²⁰ Vene rahvuslased – eestlaste “heategijad”. – *Päevaleht*, 1909, December 30; Võõraste vihkamine. – *Päevaleht*, 1909, May 29; Tõsivenelaste soovid. – *Päevaleht*, 1910, October 30; Võitlus võõraste rahvaste vastu. – *Postimees*, 1911, May 9; n. Kas tõesti viimane tunnike? – *Tallinna Teataja*, 1913, October 21.

¹²¹ **Tõnisson, J.** Maa ja rahva vaim. – In: *Oma maa*, II. Ed. E. Virgo. *Postimees*, Tartu, 1913, 11–13.

¹²² [**Reiman, V.**] Viimased sidemed kärisevad, II. – *Postimees*, 1913, June 22; **Reiman, V.** Eesti rahva vabanemine. – In: **Lindequist, K. O.** Üleüldine ajalugu, II. Uus- ja kõige uuem aeg. 2. trükk. P. Schmidt’i raamatu-kauplus, Jurjev, [1909]–1911, 622–623; **Reiman, V.** Eesti ajalugu. Varrak, Tallinn, 1920, 138–139; **Palm, A.** Villem Reiman. Saavutusrohke rahvuslik võitleja. (*Suurmeeste elulood*, 40.) Eesti Kirjanduse Selts, Tartu, 1937, 140–141.

¹²³ **Spektator [Reiman, V.]** Venestamise sihid ja tööriistad, I. – *Postimees*, 1910, November 16; **Reiman, V.** Kolm tähtsat ajaloohallikat venestamise päevilt, II. – *Eesti Kirjandus*, 1911, 6, 193–200; **Reiman, V.** Kolm tähtsat ajaloohallikat venestamise päevilt, III. – *Eesti Kirjandus*, 1912, 3, 106–107.

The negative sentiments towards the Empire's Baltic policy of Russification were summed up by a document addressed to the world public and compiled during the Estonian war of Liberation, "Statement of the Estonian Constituent Assembly on the National Sovereignty and Independence of Estonia" as of May 19, 1919. The document declares that the Russian officials tried to

as much as possible prevent the realisation of the nation's independence plans, block its unique development and destroy its national sovereignty. /.../ Drastic measures were applied to accomplish the Russification of the Estonian nation. Russian became a prevalent language in local government offices and courts of justice. /.../ Originally operated in German, schools were subsequently transformed into purely Russian-language establishments. Even the public schools initially providing tuition in the native language, adopted Russian as the language of tuition.¹²⁴

Representatives of other non-Russian nations interpreted the steps taken by the central government in the same vein.¹²⁵ For example, the Latvian right-wing politician Arvīds Bergs wrote that the reforms of Alexander III solved the Baltic issue in a "bureaucratic-Slavophilic manner": "the *krai* was supposed to become assimilated and all diversities erased", and "it was the onset of forcible Russification (*обрусение*)".¹²⁶ Researchers have expressed an opinion, however, that the historical role of Russification has been played up by contemporary as well as later commentators.¹²⁷

CONCLUSION

The ethno-political geography and regional dimension found expression in the following hierarchy of terms: the Russian Empire – Russia – border regions, or *krais*. The term Russia signified both the Empire as well as the territory of ethnic Russians. The Russian Empire was not a nation state, but a poly-ethnic state based on citizenship and dynasty. The basic ethnic categories in the Empire were Russians and non-Russians, whereas it was possible for the latter to "become Russian" on certain conditions. Various phrases and expressions were used for "aliens" (*инородцы*), which in itself were not discriminatory, but acquired pejorative meaning in chauvinistic texts. The government's integrating ethnic policy in the regions populated with non-Russians was predominantly described with "rapprochement" (*сближение*) and "merging" (*слияние*), occasionally also "Russification" (*обрусение, русификация*): terms that lack proper, unambiguous definition, and have produced no consensus among either contemporaries or modern researchers.

¹²⁴ Eesti Vabariigi sise poliitika 1918–1920. Dokumentide kogumik. Comp. J. Ant, E. Kessel, A. Pajur. (Ad Fontes, 5.) Rahvusarhiiv, Umara, [Tallinn], 1999, 149.

¹²⁵ Бахтурин А. Ю. Окраины российской империи, 9–12.

¹²⁶ [Bergs, A.] Земское устройство Прибалтийского края. Я. Лавенштейн, С.-Петербург, 1908, 1.

¹²⁷ Raun, T. U. The Estonians, 341.

For the Estonian intellectuals and national movement activists (here serving as an example of the Empire's external periphery) these terms mostly meant forcible Russification/re-ethnification, annihilation and assimilation of the Estonian nation. Estonians shaped their perception of Russification not so much from ambivalent terminology but from experience, from the government's actual language and education policies implemented through the introduction of Russian-language education and public administration. The Russian threat that had secured itself a place in the national narrative was magnified by the self-perception and existential fears of a small ethnos. Estonian patriots who cherished culture, native language and national education, perceived the situation as extremely tragic.

Whether (and to what extent) the government had any Russification plans in the sense of assimilation, or how far the assimilation/amalgamation was supposed to reach, is purely hypothetical. Government representatives categorically denied any such objectives, while eagerly launching Russification projects – with varied efficiency, though. The Empire remained based on dynastic statehood until its demise; nationalism did not take on the role of a ruling ideology. The government's ethnic policy was not consistent, but proceeded in waves and alternated with concessions. Ethnocentricity and nationalism (both Russian and non-Russian), however, was thriving in Russia and the Russian nationalists clearly nurtured a goal of reshaping the dynastic state into a nation state. The government sought the homogeneity of the Empire not by respecting multi-culturality and diversity or guaranteeing the free development of nations, but by aggressively enacting rapprochement with the Russian nation, forcing the Russian language upon residents of the Empire (also as the language of tuition in primary schools), and disseminating the Orthodox faith, thus crippling the nations' natural strive for self-realisation and self-determination. The attempts to eradicate native-language primary education give enough reason to speak about Russification in the sense of assimilation, regardless of whether or not this was a conscious effort and goal set by the masterminds behind the reforms. The government's measures in the Baltics, like filling the local administrative apparatus with officials of Russian extraction (the Stolypin Circular), the plans of Russian colonisation, distribution of Crown lands, giving preference to Russian nationals and Orthodox believers, were the actual schemes of Russification launched with the support of the Orthodox Church. If these designs were thwarted early and were never a major success, it was not because the idea of Russification was dropped, but because of the impracticability of the plans, and staunch resistance put up by indigenous peoples.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was financed by Estonian Ministry of Education and Research project SF0130038s09.

ETNILISTE SUHETE TERMINID HILISES VENE IMPEERIUMIS

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Etnilisi tunnuseid ja suhteid märkivate venekeelsete terminite hulk hilise Vene keisririigi ajastu tekstides on suur ning mitmekesine. Mõistmaks nende sõnade tähendusi ja kasutamist, on otstarbekas uurida neid mõisteloos aspektist. Impeeriumi etnoliitiline geograafia ja regionaalne mõõde avaldus mõistete hierarhias: *Vene impeerium* – *Venemaa* – *ääremaad* (kraid). *Venemaa* märkis nii impeeriumi kui etniliste venelaste asuala. Vene impeerium polnud rahvusriik, vaid kodaniku- ja dünastiapõhine poliitiline riik. Impeeriumi etnilised põhikategooriad olid venelased ja mittevenelased (*инородцы*), kusjuures viimastel oli võimalik teatud tingimustel “saada venelaseks”. Muulaste märkimiseks oli mitmeid keelendeid, mis iseenesest polnud diskrimineerivad, ent omandasid vene äärmusrahvuslaste tekstides pejoratiivse tähenduse. Valitsuse integreerivat rahvuspoliitikat mittevenelastega asustatud aladel märgivad peamiselt terminid *lähenemine* (*сближение*) ja *kokkusulamine* (*слияние*), mõnikord ka *venestamine* (*обрусение, русификация*), mis kõik pole korrektselt defineeritavad ning mille tähenduste suhtes polnud ei tolle aja ega ole ka tänapäeva uurijatel üksmeelt.

Eesti haritlastele ja rahvuslikele aktivistidele tähendasid niisugused integratsioonile orienteeritud sõnad valdavalt vägivaldset venestamist-denatsiooniseerimist, eesti rahvuse hävitamist ning assimileerimist. Eestlased kujundasid oma arusaamise venestusest mitte niivõrd valitsuse ambivalentse ja ähmase retoorika abil, vaid kogemustest lähtuvalt, valitsuse tegeliku keele- ning koolipoliitika põhjal, mis seisnes venekeelse hariduse ja venekeelse asjaajamise sisseviimises. Rahvuslikus narratiivis ja historiograafias kindla koha hõivanud vene hädaohtu võimendas väikerahvalik enesetunnetus ning ekstentsiaalne hirm väljasuremise ees.

Kas ja kui palju oli valitsusel venestuslikke plaane assimileerimise mõttes ning kui kaugele pidi *lähenemine-ühtesulamine* jõudma, seda me tekstidest välja ei loe, selle kohta võime üksnes oletusi teha. Valitsuse esindajad eitasid kategooriliselt assimileerivaid eesmärke, ent samal ajal käivitasid nad ääremaadel venestuslikke projekte. Need töötasid erineva tulemuslikkusega. Tõsiasi on siiski see, et impeerium jäi lõpuni valdavalt riigipõhiseks, vene rahvuslus polnud seal valitsevaks ideoloogiaks saanud. Kuid rahvuslus (nii vene kui mittevene) sammus Venemaal tõusuteed ja vene äärmusrahvuslaste selge siht oli dünastilise riigi ümberkujundamine rahvusriigiks. Valitsus tahtis impeeriumi ühtsust saavutada mitte multikultuursuse ja mitmekesisuse austamise ning rahvaste vaba arenemise tagamise, vaid muulaste vene rahvusele sunni viisilise lähendamise, vene keele pealesurumise (ka õpetuskeelena algkoolis) ja õigeusu levitamise teel, takistades niimoodi mittevene rahvaste loomulikku pürgimist eneseteostusele ning enesemääramisele.

Emakeelse alghariduse likvideerimise katsed annavad alust kõnelda venestusest ka assimileerimise mõttes, sõltumata sellest, kas reformide kavandajad selliseid überrahvustavaid sihte teadlikult eesmärgiks seadsid. Valitsuse abinõud Baltikumis, nagu kohaliku haldusaparaadi komplekteerimine vene ametnikega (Stolõpini tsirkulaar), vene kolonisatsiooni plaanid, kroonumaade jagamine vene-lasi ja õigeusklikke eelistavalt, olid reaalselt eksisteerivad venestuskavad, mille elluviimisega tehti õigeusu kiriku toetusel algust. Kui need plaanid takerdusid juba eos ja loodetud edu jäi saavutamata, siis polnud põhjus mitte piirkonna vene-pärastamise ideest loobumises, vaid plaanide mittevastavuses tegelike võimalus-tega ning kohalike rahvaste vastupanus.