ZDES Working Papers

№ 1

Beyond the Nation

Writing European history today

Papers presented at an international workshop
November 21 – 23 2003 in St. Petersburg

Bielefeld, St. Petersburg 2004
ISSN 1860-5680
ZDES Working Papers

Arbeitspapiere des Zentrums für Deutschland- und Europastudien
Рабочие тетради Центра изучения Германии и Европы

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Foreword

To write a European history today which is more than a simple addition of national historical narratives -- and more than a teleological description of European integration -- is a difficult but significant task. There seems to be consensus among scholars that this can only be achieved through international cooperation. Enhanced dialogue among historians from Europe’s various national discourses is important in order to move beyond new national perspectives on European history. It can also enhance discussion about the varieties of historical development within Europe and the different ways to describe them. In this context, it seems essential not only to intensify dialogue among historians within the newly enlarged European Union but also to integrate colleagues from Russia and Eastern Europe into the discussion. Only if the history of the Eastern part of the continent is included in the general picture of European history will it be possible to develop a new pan-European historical narrative which reflects the true variety of its diverse paths and developments.

The papers collected in this volume were presented at an International workshop on the topic “Beyond the nation: writing European history today” which took place from November 21-23 2003 in St. Petersburg. Organized by Prof. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, Prof. Jürgen Feldhoff and the Zentrum für Deutschland und Europastudien (Center for Germany and European Studies, ZDES) the conference aimed at intensifying dialogue among German and Russian historians about different concepts of and approaches to European history it. The discussion focused both on alternative ways of writing European history today and on the place of Russia and her history within the broader European context.

Unfortunately, not all of the papers presented at the workshop could be included here. Thus, the first issue of Working Papers of the ZDES reflects only a portion of the major issues discussed during the debate. It is planned to continue that discussion and exchange of ideas at a second workshop in October 2004.

The ZDES and the editor would like to express their gratitude to Ms. Elizabeth Franziska Davies for her valuable assistance in the process of editing this volume.

Munich, October 2004
Frithjof Benjamin Schenk
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All the terms or concepts used in the title of my paper are in fact problematic. Let me begin with the most problematic one - "the framework of European history". In his Freiburg lecture Max Weber defined political economy as a political science. History is often treated as a political science in the same sense. The political demand is obvious, and numerous histories of Europe tailored to be the first chapter of the history of the eternal European Union are inevitable. We must reflect upon the negative consequences of such developments and not to contribute to this trend, which reminds me very much of my school textbook in Moscow of the 1960's. It began with a chapter "The USSR in the period of paleolith".

In fact, whatever period we take - the scope of European history proves to be either too broad or, at least for the last four centuries, too narrow. In my opinion, if there is other than political reason for thinking about the framework of European history it is the possibility which it opens to overcome the national historic narratives. What is so wrong about national historic narratives? Most of all the teleological nature of such narratives, the wish to see history as inevitably leading to the triumph of one's nationhood. History serves as a projection of contemporary state of affairs or of the desired future into the past. I. Wallerstein was right saying that past is a hostage of present and not vice versa.\(^1\) If the project of European history is supposed to help us to overcome the shortcomings of national historic narratives, we should not approach this project from the same perspective. I do not think that Hegel's famous saying that Minerva's owl flies in dusk should be interpreted in a way, which makes the writing of history to be an exercise in teleology. We should try to avoid building another myth, the myth of European unity.\(^2\)

Another serious danger which the project of European history is pregnant with comes from the fact that the question about belonging to European history is perceived by the majority as a question whether some region, or nation, or state is good enough to belong to those chosen. It is important not to allow this discourse about belonging to dominate the agenda of

historians. Let me give one example. Much of a good job has been done recently in order to deconstruct the exclusivist and ranging discourses about different historical regions, also European East and South-East.\(^3\) But striving to prove the Europeanness of the history of those excluded is present in many texts about *inventing* and *imagining*. Sometimes it constitutes even the main goal of these texts, and that is nothing else but accepting the rules of the game, which initially these efforts of deconstruction of exclusivist discourses aimed to challenge. I am sure that as long as the debate about the proportion of Europeanness and non-Europeanness in the history of a particular region or a country remains the debate about legitimacy of their claims to belong to the contemporary European structures, history will remain victim of immediate political interests.

I believe that approaching the task of writing European history we should not concentrate so much on the limits of Europe and on the problem of belonging or not belonging to Europe. In difference to politicians for historians these limitations are of secondary importance. Those writing diplomatic or military history of Europe will not hesitate whether the Russian or the Ottoman Empires should be a subject of their interest. Those writing the history of the Balkans, of the Iberian peninsula or of the southern territories of contemporary Ukraine and Russia would not dare to claim that European history is only the history of people born in Europe. Also true is that history of Europeans reaches far beyond Europe. The framework of European history for the historian is just a concept, an instrument which should help him in his research, with flexible borders and meanings.

European history has everything, including Holocaust, including Stalin and Hitler, who could, actually, win. Just imagine, what meaning of the European history would the participants of the conference on writing such history be talking about in that case, of course not in Vienna or St. Petersburg, but somewhere in Boston or Beijing. European history is not about the inevitable victory of market economy and democracy, but just about that capitalism and democracy were possible here, alongside with many other, often much less respectful things. European history is about dynamism, expansion and the multiplicity of possible outcomes of not only political, but also structural development. That means that for understanding the history of Europe the teleological approach is particularly dangerous. That also means for me that comparison and interest to possible alternatives of development should constitute the backbone of approach to the history of Europe.

If we choose a comparative approach, then what should we compare? Or, better to say, what spaces should we have in mind while comparing different structures, processes, etc? Borders of contemporary states are of limited value, whatever national histories try to claim. Then we inevitably turn our attention to the concept of historical regions.

The good thing about the regional approach is its flexibility. In difference to state borders regional borders are not necessarily lines on the map. Very often we can operate with transitional border zones or borderlands, allowing the spaces we designated for different research purposes to overlap partially. We can look at micro-regions, which belonged to some state or were cut by state border. We can also operate with the concept of macro-region, which could cover territories of several contemporary states or parts of them.

No question, also the concepts of regions are not free from ideological bias. Speaking about regional divisions of Europe, Jeno Szücz in his famous essay names three such huge historical regions - Western, Central and Eastern Europe. There were and there are much more than three of them. The reason for that obvious simplification, committed by Szücz is that his attention was focused on the ideologically important cases. As soon as the problem of some particular region loses political importance, see the cases of Scandinavia or Iberian peninsula, historians find themselves in a very comfortable situation using such concepts for their own purposes of comparison. But not in case of the regions and concepts I am supposed to talk about - namely Central and Eastern Europe.

The term "Central Europe" was first coined in the 19th century for political purposes. Different versions of the concept were changing the ideological contents and geographical limits of the notion according to the needs and plans of the authors who very often pursued mutually exclusive political goals. (That is why “Central Europe” and “Mitteleuropa” mean so different things, not only in geographical aspect; that is why the term “East-Central Europe” has been recently coined.) The common feature of all the concepts of Central Europe was the combination of two functions - to integrate and to isolate or exclude. The last task was always performed better.

The concept serves political purposes until now. Many authors had shown recently how much the discourses of Central and Eastern Europe were and remain politically biased, and how this political bias influenced many historians. I have also written on this subject. But, in

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difference to E. Hobsbawm, M. Todorova and some other authors I do believe that the concept of Central Europe as a historical region can be a helpful instrument for historians under the condition that we manage to separate it from political discourses. The usefulness of the concept is particularly obvious for me as far as I am dealing with the history of the western borderlands of the Russian Empire, previously the eastern borderlands of the Polish Commonwealth, and with some of the Eastern marches of the Habsburg Empire. These empires as political entities had very clearly cut borders. This circumstance might be comfortable in some cases. But for those studying cultural history, or the problem of identities the concept of historical regions with borderlands, transitional zones instead of clearly cut state borders becomes much more appropriate.

In order to separate the concept of Central Europe as a historical region from its contemporary political versions we should remember, that the borders of the historical region had very few in common with the contemporary state borders. We should also remember the fabric of the region, particularly its cultural and ethnic heterogeneity, which I consider to be one of the most important constitutive features of the area in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. M. Janowski beautifully formulated this point: "the heroes of the play are not only Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, etc., but Masurians and Cassubians, Slovinians and Slovenes, Uskoks and Hanaks, Cumans and Iasygians, Valachians and Armenians, Gypsies and Jews, Seklers, Ruthenes, Cossacks, Lemkos, Boykos and by whatever names the innumerable ethnic, social or ethnosocial groups of the region were called in various epochs". This fabric went through consequent and steady destruction during the 20th century with the extermination of Jews, the expulsion of Germans and many other exercises in ethnic cleansing. Thus the whole contemporary debate whether some country belongs or not to Central Europe understood as a club of better candidates among those many aspiring to be accepted to the European Union has rather little to do with history.

There is one lesson in contemporary development of those countries claiming to be the heirs of Central European heritage, which is particularly important and relevant to the previous history of the region. The post-communist development can be much better understood and

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6 We should keep in mind that these borders of the region were moving in time. If I had to name the single most important factor which should be taken into consideration while looking for the eastern border of the region, I would suggest the German urban colonization. It shaped, to a large extend, structures, legal systems and the very appearance of the towns in this region. But very much depends on perspective. While Isaak Babel spoke about Europeanness of Galicia, Joseph Roth described it as an obsolete half-civilized place. Eastern borderlands of Central Europe were considered even by people in the region, not to speak about people in the West, to be famous for their poverty and backwardness, as Galicia, or so strange and forgotten by God, as to serve as a reserve for vampires (Transilvania).

7 M. JANOWSKI, Pitfalls and Opportunities: The concept of East-Central Europe as a Tool of Historical Analysis" in: European Review of History, Vol. 6, N. 1, Spring 1999, 95.
described not as "coming back to Europe" of some "stolen" regions, which is the slogan of the day in all of these countries, but as the expansion of Europe (a name of the West in this context) to these areas with capital, businesses, insurance companies, technologies, etc. That can be seen as the answer of history to quite accurate observations of Jenő Szücz and his teacher Istvan Bibo that social and political structures of the region allowed different trajectories of development depending on external influence.

Now to the last, or more exactly to the first two notions in the title of my paper. Why do I need both? Does not Russia equal Eastern Europe? If Russia is to designate the Russian Empire, then it includes Eastern Europe, but also much more even in its European part: some borderlands, which have evident characteristics of Central Europe, some Baltic territories which cannot be easily ascribed either to Scandinavia, or to Central and Eastern Europe. That reminds us about the significance of the notion of borderland, which combines features of different types of development, of different historical fabric.

But today we use the name "Russia" to designate a completely new phenomenon. And in its contemporary version Russia does not include the whole of Eastern Europe. All the other states which emerged in the post-Soviet space are also very young if not completely new entities. What happens to history-writing in these new nationalizing states? If the attempt to write European history can be defined in negative terms - then it is overcoming the weaknesses of national historic narratives. But in Eastern and to some extent also in East-Central Europe local historiographies are mostly preoccupied with quite the opposite - the creation or recreation of national myths. This task is addressed with the whole range of means from modest make-up to radical plastic surgery. These national narratives are intolerant to any discussion of the alternatives in history and very reluctant to use comparative methods. They are also full of martyrlogy. The attempts to externalize the responsibility for the evils of the past, for example the Holocaust, are common practice. Many historians in these countries still believe that the main task of teaching history at school is to prepare good soldiers out of their pupils.

The logic of creation of national historic narratives inevitably leads to distortion, or destruction of that fabric of encounters, mutual influences, conflicts, etc., which constituted the internal history of the empire. Centuries spent in the empire are often presented as a sad episode or deviation in the originally "European" history of the nations. Looking now at the historioghraphies of the post-Soviet countries, one gets the impression that in the discourse of the last decade Eastern Europe as a historical region tends to disappear. Nobody wants to be Eastern European – a reasonable position from the point of view of political interests, but not
for a historian. We can see a new version of an old Central European disease - the wish to
claim that exactly the eastern border of his own country, or even his own city, as in the case
the famous *mot* of count Metternich, should be considered the border of Europe. The task of
finding a proper balance in writing the history of the Russian Empire as the history of all its
subjects in their interaction is still to be met. Now the pendulum moves from one extreme,
which was writing this history as only the Russian history, to another extreme of a wholesale
fragmentation, and there are very few reasons to believe that equilibrium will be reached
soon.

Let me conclude with several inevitably brief remarks about the place of Russia in the
framework of European history. Russia had many features of a unique civilization. Many
concepts used to describe European societies and their development are irrelevant here. The
most important task is, probably, to understand the phenomenon of Russian power how it
emerged from the second half of the 16th until the beginning of the 18th century. This
Christian Power was striving to suppress all the other independent political and social
subjects. It was not just a reduction of normal pluralism of Christian societies, but the creation
of a new quality of power and body social. But one can ask a question – was not that scenario
an implementation of a potential danger of European development, which others in Europe
managed to avoid? Kant in his comments on patrimonial power, Montesquieu in his "Persian
Letters" and many other authors thought this way. If we agree with them, then Russian and
Soviet history becomes an alternative version of European history. I do not insist on such
interpretation, but it opens so interesting possibilities of comparative approach, that it should
not be rejected too easily.⁸

Even if we accept the view that Russia in some of her basic characteristics was not European,
it makes no sense to ask, whether it is possible to write history of Europe without Russia. The
role of Russia in the major European military conflicts from Napoleonic wars to the Second
World War is the most trivial answer. History of the Cold War without the Soviet Union is
nonsense. (And we have to look not only at the negative consequences of it, but also at the
role of the Cold War as a precondition of the contemporary unification of Europe.) But
leaving aside power politics – during the last three centuries Russian involvement in
economic and cultural life of Europe was too serious to be ignored.

Finally - is it possible to write history of Russia outside the European context? The last three
centuries of Russian and Soviet history were the history of gradual, although often selective,

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⁸ We should also keep in mind the possibility of diachronic comparison. For example, Soviet experience
should be compared not only to the Nazi rule, but also to the experience of the leading European countries,
which were dealing with the problem of agrarian overpopulation centuries earlier.
westernization. Paradoxically, during the Soviet time it was westernization within a project tailored to be the rejection of the West, or aimed at overcoming the West. If the history of the unique phenomenon, which I called Russian power, has reached its end, then one can ask whether this three centuries long process of westernization can reach a new quality. If it is possible then Russian history could become an example – a very particular example - of overcoming relative backwardness, which constitutes one of the major paradigms of the development of the European periphery. Let me leave you with this question, but I would like to stress that while politicians are free to speculate about it (or even act as if they know the answer) now, historians should wait at least for several decades.
The Historical Regions of Europe – Real or Invented?  
Some Remarks on Historical Comparison and Mental Mapping

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Introduction

One of the pivotal tasks of writing European history today is to overcome the national historical narratives originating in the 18th and 19th centuries and still predominating most history textbooks in Europe. But this is not a simple exercise - as many attempts to compile manuals, surveys or book series on European history show. The project of writing a “European history” which is more than a simple addition of national historical narratives leads to a number of crucial questions: Do we want to write “European history” or the “History of Europe”? What is the specificity of European history in comparison with Asian, African or American history? Where are the limits of Europe and of its history? How do we deal with the varieties of historical developments within European history? Which other historic-geographical subdivisions than the nation-states can be useful for the description of Europe’s historical diversity?

It goes without saying that it would be too ambitious to try to formulate exhaustive answers to even one of these global questions in a short paper like this. Nevertheless I would like to discuss in the following one methodological approach which might be useful to generate solutions to at least one or two of the problems mentioned above. In this paper I will discuss whether the concept of “historical regions” (Germ.: “Geschichtsregion”) like for example “Eastern Europe”, “Western Europe”, “Central Europe”, “South-Eastern Europe”, “Northern Europe” etc. might be a proper, adequate and useful device for the analysis and the description of the specificity of European history on the one hand and its historic-geographical varieties on the other. In the first part of the article I will describe briefly the theoretical concept of “historical regions”, outline some major studies where this method was applied and make some general remarks on historical comparison. In the second part I will present some major points of critique which have been made by opponents of the idea of dividing the European continent into historical regions and discuss the method of analysing processes of “Mental mapping”. Finally I will draft a brief summary and present some thesis for further discussion.
The concept of historical regions and the method of historical comparison

The impetus to divide Europe into different imagined areas or regions is probably as old as the idea of Europe itself. Already philosophers and historians in ancient Greece and Rome separated the world into a “civilised” South and a comparatively “barbaric” North. This exercise of dividing Europe into two parts was based first of all on normative, political and cultural presumptions. The “barbaric” North simply consisted - from the viewpoint of the “progressive” South - of all regions which were not part of the Roman Empire and which were not influenced and touched by its culture and “civilization”.¹

The methodological exercise of dividing Europe into different historical meso-regions is much younger than this universal and “eternal” impulse to separate a “good” part of the world from a “bad” one. The scientific approach of thinking the borders of Europe alongside historical regions stems from a time when the nation-state had already become the dominant element on the political map of Europe, when national history had been established as the main framework of historical discourses in Europe and when the continent had experienced more than once the atrocities of wars between its nation-states. The concept of thinking Europe compound of different historical regions finds its origins in a debate among Polish, Czech and German historians in the 1920s and 1930s about the definition of “Eastern Europe / Europe orientale” and the object of analysis of the historiographic sub-discipline “Eastern European history” (“Osteuropäische Geschichte”).² This discussion found its “most lasting result” (Troebst) in Oskar Halecki’s famous book The limits and divisions of European History, published after the Second World War in the year 1950.³ In this study the Polish historian developed the model of European history consisting of three “historical regions”: “Western Europe”, “Eastern Europe” and “Central Europe” - the last one itself subdivided into an Western and an Eastern part. Later the concept of “historical regions” was applied and modified by the French historian Fernand Braudel in his famous book La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l’époque de Philipp II⁴, by Klaus Zernack in his study Osteuropa. Eine Einführung in seine Geschichte⁵, by Jenö Szűcz in his work The three historical regions of Eu-

⁴ F. Braudel, La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l’époque de Philipp II, 2 vol., Paris 1966.
rope\textsuperscript{6} and by the Berlin historian Holm Sundhaussen in various articles on the nature of the historical region of “South-Eastern-Europe”\textsuperscript{7}. This list is not at all complete and could be of course extended without problems.

Despite the fact that the authors just mentioned focus in their books on different historical regions of Europe - for example Fernand Braudel analysing the “costal world” around the Mediterranean Sea and Jenö Szücz looking for the differences between Western Europe, Central Europe and Eastern Europe - one can describe four general characteristics of their common methodological approach:

First: All historians studying the historical regions of Europe try to overcome the narrow framework of “national” historical narratives. They try to analyse and explain historical processes on a \textit{regional} level, taking into a account that historical regions can either be smaller or larger than a nation state and that historical processes of \textit{longue durée} rarely develop within territories demarcated by geographical or political borders.

Second: Most of these scholars concentrate not so much on the history of events, politics and governments but focus in their studies on the development of social, economic and cultural “structures” which had and have a long lasting effect on the history of the respective region. The most prominent representative of this methodological approach is probably Fernand Braudel, one of the theorists of the French Annales-school, who developed and applied the concept of “longue durée” in his oeuvre.\textsuperscript{8}

Third: Most of the respective studies are based on a comparative approach. Arno Strohmeyer has demonstrated that talking about imagined historical regions always implies inter- and intra-regional comparisons.\textsuperscript{9} The historical regions in question are described as relatively homogeneous spacial entities which are different from others. A certain cluster of characteristics and historical structures is put forward to explain their individuality.\textsuperscript{10}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{7} H. SUNDHAUSSEN, Europa balcanica. Der Balkan als historischer Raum Europas, in: Geschichte und Gesellschaft 25 (1999), 626-653; idem, Der Balkan: Ein Plädoyer für Differenz, in: Geschichte und Gesellschaft 29 (2003), 642-658.
\item \textsuperscript{9} A. STROHMEYER, Historische Komparatistik und die Konstruktion von Geschichtsregionen: der Vergleich als Methode der Europaforschung, in: Jahrbücher für Geschichte und Kultur Südosteuropas 1 (1999), 39-55.
\item Holm Sundhaussen for example argues that the historical region of South-Eastern Europe can be ascribed by a cluster of eight historical characteristics: (1) The instability of borders between ethnic groups who share a small territory and their changing population relations , (2) the loss and the late reception of the heritage of
\end{itemize}
Fourth: Most of the authors mentioned above believe in the possibility of establishing a discourse about the historical regions of Europe which is different from the model mentioned at the beginning of this paper: dividing the world into a “good” and civilised part on the one hand and a “bad” and barbaric part on the other. In other words: They believe in the possibility of an objective, scientific and not normative discourse about historical difference. Some underline that they apply the concept of “historical regions” as a mere methodological and artificial device in order to explain specific historical processes and to overcome and scrutinise established national historical narratives.  

To summarise these four characteristics one can define a “historical region” as a historic-geographical entity which may include various political territories and the homeland of different nationalities. A “historical region” can be described by a certain cluster of social, economic, cultural and political structures which shaped its historical development in certain periods and which allows to distinguish the respective region from other historical regions from the same category.

Apart from this general consensus one can also observe a number of differences among those authors who have studied or are still studying the historical regions of Europe. First of all the motivation why the concept of historical regions is applied differs in my opinion significantly from one historian to the other. I would like to distinguish a set of five different reasons why historians have worked on or are still working on the description of the historical regions of Europe: (1) As already mentioned, the goal of writing European history within the framework of its historical regions often stems from the wish to overcome national historical narratives. This wish can be interpreted as an expression of the political conviction that the nation-state is a political structure of the past which has to be left behind and which has to be replaced by a supranational one. (2) Another motivation to describe the historical structures of Europe’s regions may be found in the aspiration to define properly the subject of institutions, journals, university courses etc. which are closely linked to certain regions by definition and - by doing this - to legitimise their further existence: For example the discipline of “Osteuropäische antiquity (Roman law etc.), (3) the heritage of the Byzantine Empire (Orthodox religion, political theology, anti-Western disposition), (4) the Ottoman-Islamic heritage (characteristic family structures, the spread of Islam in the towns etc.), (5) a relative social and economic backwardness in the modern period in comparison with the development in Western Europe, (6) the process of Nation-building in the 19th century, (7) the importance of national myths for the foundation of national identities and finally (8) the fate of being the object of the politics of the great European powers for centuries. Cf. SUNDHAUSSEN, Europa balcanica; idem, Der Balkan: Ein Plädoyer für Differenz. - Sundhaussen does not deny, that some of these features can also be found in other historical regions of Europe, but in their combination they have shaped only one region: South-Eastern Europe.

TROEBST, What’s in a Historical Region, 177. Cf. also the paper of Alexej Miller in this volume.
Geschichte” (East European History), the School for East-European and Slavonic Studies or the journal called “Osteuropa” are all based on certain definitions or presumptions what “Eastern Europe” is and where its borders can be found. After the wide-ranging changes on the political map of Europe after 1918 and after 1989 traditional definitions of “Eastern Europe” had expired as well. The impulse to describe Europe’s historical regions may originate not only in the wish to overcome the narrow borders of the nation state but also in the desire to break up the constricting bonds of an empire or a political block. The book of the Hungarian historian Jenő Szücz about the three historical regions of Europe for example which was published in 1983 and which highlighted in particular the differences between the regions “Central Europe” and “Eastern Europe” was embedded in a wider political discourse about Central Europe, stressing its difference from Russia and South-Eastern Europe and its affiliation with the Western world.

A fourth motivation why historians take a closer look at historical regions may be the wish to deconstruct wide spread images and popular myths on the nature and character of certain imagined meso-regions of Europe like the Balkans or Eastern Europe. This impulse can be described as the desire of enlightenment or the wish to correct popular images by confronting them with an “objective” picture of the reality. Last but not least one can identify the inclination to explain certain historical and contemporary political developments which have affected particular regions in Europe and have not occurred in others. For example: How can we explain the development of civil society and democracy in Western Europe and their comparative weakness in many countries of Eastern Europe or the Balkans? Historians examining the history of Europe’s regions hope to find answers to questions like this by identifying certain clusters of characteristics and structures which can be found in some regions and cannot be found in others.

Historical regions contested - The historical analysis of “Mental mapping”

The endeavour of historians to identify and describe the historical regions of Europe was seriously contested in the last years by a range of books and articles aiming at the deconstruction of the respective spacial terminology. After 1989 one could observe not only an intensive discussion about the nature and the borders of historical regions like “Eastern Europe”, the “Bal-


kans” or “Central Europe” and the object of analysis of a number of scholarly sub-disciplines and institutions in the Western world but also certain attempts to de-construct these regions as pure “inventions” on the “Mental Maps” of Western or Central Europe.  

The most prominent authors which have to be mentioned in this context are Larry Wolff with his study *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*; Maria Todorova with her book *Imagining the Balkans* and Alexej Miller, who has recently published a number of articles on the problem of the invention of Central Europe. As the list presented in the first part of this paper this catalogue could be also prolonged without problems.

Both, Wolff and Todorova stress in their studies, that “Eastern Europe” and “the Balkans” should mainly not be looked at as “historical regions” but as imagined spaces, constructed and invented by Western philosophers, scholars and journalists. Whereas Larry Wolff describes in his book the “invention” of Eastern Europe mainly in the discourses of the Western enlightenment of the 18th century, Maria Todorova analyses in her survey the Western discourse of “Balkanism” from the 18th to the end of the 20th century. Both authors are obviously deeply influenced by Edward Saids study *Orientalism* in which he examined the Western discourse about the Orient since the 18th century. Said pointed out that the image of the Orient served Western writers and thinkers as a tool to delimit the idea of a civilised West against this invented image of an “barbaric” “other”. Wolff and Todorova adapted this idea and argue in their studies, that the Western images of Eastern Europe and the Balkans served similar purposes. In their opinion the West “invented” “the East” to define an image of the “self” in contrast to an imagination of “the other”. Both authors analyze this exercise as a reflection of a

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17 Miller, Vostok Evropy ili k vostoku ot Evropy?; idem, *Central Europe: A Tool for Historians or a Political Concept?*
Western attitude of superiority towards Eastern- and South-Eastern-Europe which led not only to an alienation of these regions but also to various examples of Western aggression against them.

Apart from the fact that spaces on Mental maps are often constructed by people or social groups from outside, one should not forget that they are not only the product of external discursive practices. The idea and the image of “Central Europe” is for example as much a product of Western discourses between the two World wars as the result of discourses within Central Europe in the second part of 20th century. How much the elites of the Balkans or those of Eastern Europe contributed to a certain Western image of these regions needs further investigation.

If one takes a more general look at the studies of Wolff, Todorova and others, some remarks can be made on their methodological approach which has to be compared with the method of those scholars who study Europe’s historical regions. Historians working on Europe’s historical regions and scholars who analyse the “invention” or imagination of those spaces have first of all chosen different and to some extent complementary objects of analyses. Whilst the first group looks at the structures of historical regions, the other takes a closer look at the images of space, the respective terminology and its normative connotations and subtexts and treats them as parts of discourses of power and identity. “Constructivists” like Todorova and Wolff are interested in processes of collective “Mental Mapping”. They examine representations of spatial structures in discourses of social groups and analyse their meaning and function within these discourses. Like the example of “Mental mapping” in ancient Rome shows: Mental maps are never “objective” or “neutral”. Their function is not to depict an “objective” reality but to generate simplified images of the “self” and the “other” which serve as crucial elements in discourses of collective identity. That is why imagined spaces on Mental maps can be linked to a lesser extent to a set of “objective” criteria but reflect to a larger extent emotions, prejudices and normative presumptions. This is true in the case of the construction of posi-

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20 SCHENK, Mental Maps, 508-514.

tively connoted spaces like “the West” as for the imagination of negatively marked areas like “the Orient” or “Eastern Europe”. Mental maps are neither harmless nor innocent. Imagined spaces on Mental maps can be ascribed not only as “spaces of perception” but also as “spaces of action”. For example the aggression of Nazi Germany against the countries and people of Central and Eastern Europe cannot be explained properly without stressing the importance of a specific image of space which influenced the provokers of World War II in their planning. Or, to take a more positive example: The discourse about Central Europe in the 1980s and its distinctiveness from Eastern Europe had probably a strong impact on the readiness of a number of Western politicians to agree with the enlargement of the European Union which was finalised in May 2004.

**Historical regions and Mental Maps - two incompatible approaches?**

As already mentioned above, the methodological approach of describing and analysing the historical regions of Europe and the project to examine their representation on our Mental maps can be interpreted as complementary exercises. Nevertheless the concept of “historical regions” and their use as heuristic devices in historiography has been harshly criticised by representatives of the “constructivist’s” side. This debate can be well analysed using the example of the discussion about the historical region “South-Eastern-Europe” between Holm Sundhaussen and Maria Todorova. Referring to Sundhaussen’s concept of South-Eastern-Europe as an “analytical category” Todorova has formulated four general points of critique. First: Todorova questions the possibility to formulate a neutral and rational set of characteristics and features which may help to draw an “objective” picture of difference on the historical map of Europe. In her view the selection of criteria which are applied to ascribe historical regions are always either arbitrary or follow normative presumptions. She argues that “difference” of a certain historical region is often ascribed in comparison to and as deviation from a region which is told to represent the “norm”. In most of the cases difference within European history is ascribed as a deviation of an idealised and homogeneous image of the “West”. Maria Todorova argues that historians cannot escape the rules of the normative discourses of

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24 Sundhaussen, Europa balcanica; Todorova, Der Balkan als Analysekategorie; idem, The Balkans as Category of Analysis; Sundhaussen, Der Balkan: Ein Plädoyer für Differenz. On the debate: Müller, Southeastern Europe as a Historical Meso-region, cf. 400-405.

25 Todorova, Der Balkan als Analysekategorie, 491.
Mental mapping and that the exercise to ascribe historical regions by scholars does not differ in its substance from the discursive practices of journalists, politicians and the like. In her mind there cannot be an “innocent”, neutral and pure academic discourse about different historical paths in Europe. As a second point of critique Todorova points to the fact that in this exercise difference between various areas in Europe is overestimated while the similarities and the links of communication between them is set apart. Thirdly she points out that the overestimation of dissimilarity of Europe’s regions often leads to an ideological homogenisation of diversity within a region. Finally Todorova warns of the danger of essentialism, teleological thinking and determinism when talking about Europe’s historical regions.

**Conclusion: Historical regions, real or invented?**

Considering the concepts of historical regions on the one hand and the processes of Mental Mapping on the other - which conclusions can be drawn? Is the concept of historical regions a useful tool for the exercise of writing European history today or not? I would like to suggest five conclusive remarks as a starting point for further discussions:

1. The concept of historical regions seems to be - despite the points of critique - a useful heuristic device to overcome the narrow framework of national historical narratives. They help us to describe difference between various paths of historical development within Europe. Historical regions are no mere “inventions” of historians. They are the result of historical studies with a comparative approach, which take a closer look at differences in historically grown economic, social and cultural structures within Europe.

2. Historical regions are not eternal entities. Despite the fact that they have been shaped by processes of “longue durée” they can emerge and disappear and their borders are open and steadily in flux. That is why a map depicting Europe’s historical regions in the 18th century may differ substantially from that showing them on a map today. If we talk about the historical regions of Europe we should therefore always make clear, which historical period we are talking about.

3. Historical regions are just working tools for historians. The set of features and characteristics which are used to describe the space of a historical region should always be

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26 idem, 491.
27 idem, 475.
28 idem, 482.
named clearly and their relevance for the historical process should always be scrutinized.

(4) While describing the diversity of Europe’s historical regions, one should always keep in mind the history and the symbolic dimension of the respective terminology. Terms like “Central Europe”, “Eastern Europe” and “Western Europe” have always been and are still used in discourses of power and identity as representations of various political concepts.

(5) But this dichotomy can be ascribed not only when we look at Europe’s historical regions but also when we describe Europe as a whole. Like its historic-geographical sub-divisions, Europe has always been at the same time a historical space with specific political, economic and cultural structures and a concept, an invention, a space of desire and a tool in political discourses. It is this similarity why the reflection about the concept of Europe’s regions seems to be a fruitful exercise in the context of writing European history today.

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In this talk, I am going to present a comparative argument on the nature of Russian cultural politics of the 19th century. In a word, my idea, which of course is not exclusively mine, is that the Russian Empire emerged in the context of a specific Russian colonialism, which was different from better-known processes that created British, French and other European Empires. The Western European Empires were based on a colonialism that was directed overseas, from Europe outwards to the most distant peoples and continents. The Russian Empire, in contrast, expanded on firm land, gradually annexing adjacent territories from Siberia to Kazan’ to Finland to the Caucasus, Poland, Manchuria and Alaska. External colonization, which spanned from the Middle Ages to the 20th century, was an extremely complex, variegated historical process. Terrestrial colonization is analogous but, of course, different from the colonization of high seas, as different as – I use a metaphor of Bismarck who spoke about Great Britain and Russia – as an elephant and a whale. But my subject now is different. Approximately in the middle 19th century, while the Russian Empire stretched from Poland to Alaska, its intellectuals and then, officials, realized that the very core of the Empire, the European heartland, the Russian people themselves, was the major colony of the Empire. They responded to this discovery with a number of political, legal, and cultural ideas and practices, which I will try to summarize.

I begin with a short quotation from the Russian writer and diplomat, Alexander Griboedov, who in 1826 wrote an essay *Zagorodnaiia poezdka (A Trip to the Countryside)*:

> What black magic made us alien from ourselves (чужие между своими)! The Finns and the Tunguses more easily enter our brotherhood, but our own people, the folk of our own blood, are separated from us, and for ever! If by any chance a foreigner got here he would conclude from the sharp difference of mores that our masters and our peasants originate from two different tribes, which have not had enough time to mix their mores and customs.

Thus Griboedov described a trip to the St. Petersburg countryside (now this village, Pargolovo, is a part of Petersburg) as a trip to a different continent. The Russian peasants were perceived by this Russian gentleman as if they belonged to another race. The peasants whom Griboedov described were not really disturbed by this divide. It was the gentry who
were suffering from the gap. We, the Russian gentry, are “damaged half-Europeans”, wrote Griboedov in this essay. Two years later, Griboedov applied to the Government with a fascinating plan for the Transcaucasian Russian Company, modeled after the British East Indian Company. Besides other proposals, the plan proposed to resettle to the Caucasus several dozens of thousands of serfs, who would colonize the land in the British spirit of external colonization. His plan was rejected, but Griboedov was appointed ambassador to Persia, where he was murdered by a mob in Teheran in 1829. I think this is also our common European heritage.

The “black magic”, shrewdly described but not explained by Griboedov, is precisely our subject today. This is the magic, or rather the mechanics, of internal colonization. It is interesting to note that Griboedov, uncertain in his own self-perception, imagines a third perspective, a foreigner who would certify his experience. As we will see, foreigners did not hesitate to come to Russia and certify. I will just note on this point that even now, quite a long time after Griboedov, we know more about the Russian elite’s relations with the Finns and the Tunguses than we know about its relationships with their own compatriots. Brilliant books written by American and German scholars illuminate the relations of the Russian elite to the Finns, Tunguses, Bashkiires and other strange peoples of the North and East. To my mind, we still have nothing comparable to deal with another strange people, the Russian peasantry. Following Griboedov, I will speculate on the cultural politics of the Russian State and the intelligentsia in respect to the Russian people itself – the narod.

In the times of Griboedov, his peers from the Russian gentry were separated from peasants by relations of power and property: the gentry owned the peasants. The legal system was different for different estates. It threatened peasants with corporal punishments and gentry with penitentiary system. In terms of language, the gentry were usually literate and often bilingual, and the peasantry were not. In terms of religion, almost one third of the gentry was Lutheran and approximately one third of the peasants were Old-Believers. Differences in manners of clothing and shaving were required by law. There were many dimensions of difference, but one marker was notably absent, that of race. This was precisely what concerned Griboedov most of all: that peasants were so different from him and his peers while being of what he characterized as the same blood, (единокровные). A foreigner would have concluded that these were two different races, so huge were the visible differences between them, but Griboedov was not a foreigner and he knew that this would be wrong. Still, he used the comparison of cultural contrast to race difference as a strong metaphor, which could explain the situation of the countryside.
The first foreigner who aspired to make sense of this situation was the Prussian traveler and romantic intellectual August Haxthausen. Visiting Russia in 1843, conversing with his local peers, writers and professors, and traveling into the Russian heartland, Haxthausen noticed: “The higher classes in this country have received for a century past a European cultivation, which is neither of native origin nor of national character. In this respect therefore two different peoples may be said to exist in Russia”. In a shrewd way, Haxthausen particularly emphasized the problem of language. In contrast to the German experience, there were no significant dialects in Russia, and high and low classes spoke the same language. But the Russian elite borrowed its concepts from the West, which made it impossible for the elite to understand its own native institutions. Like foreigners in their own country, Russians “have no longer a knowledge of its real condition and institutions”. This is a subtle idea, which was developed later by several generations of Russian Slavophiles and Populists, who emphasized the riches of Russian cultural reserves and their unavailability to intelligentsia. Populism represented the Russian narod as an alien exotic body, which comprised the major part of the nation. Being radically different from urbane society and unknown to it, the narod was intelligible only through special lenses, which, according to the prevailing positivism of the time, were believed to be “scientific”. In contrast to British cultural anthropology, which tended to be an imperialistic study of other peoples, usually distant “Others” from overseas, Russian ethnography was an imperialistic study of one’s own people perceived as the “Other”. An amalgam of socialist activism and lay ethnography, the Populist movement saw the peasantry as silent, dispossessed, obscure, exotic, virtuous – in short, different. Whatever the narod did or thought was known to the intelligentsia through authors who were part of the same intelligentsia. The people were silent (“Narod bezmolvstvuet”), but erudite, objectifying knowledge about them proliferated through formal channels of high culture, from newspapers and magazines to books and university courses, and back. To put it in postcolonial terms, the narod was the subaltern. The colonial past, argued Gayatri Spivak through the last decade, is incommunicable. The very language of ours, the language of the colonizers, is different, and it cannot express the experience of the colonized. The Subaltern does not speak; when he or she speaks to us, her speech is not authentic, and her language is already contaminated by Western meanings. Taking all the differences into account, this is not

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that far from Haxthausen’s observation about Russia: “The foreign civilization and cultivated language of the higher classes [...] have impressed upon Russian words a borrowed meaning”, and these meanings do not render the condition of the common folk.

Haxthausen reserved for himself the task of elaborating the knowledge of the Russian people and his practice confirmed his theory. A friend of the famous Grimm brothers, the discoverers (or inventors) of German fairytales, Haxthausen traveled through peasant Russia with the specific purpose of revealing its best kept secrets, which were unavailable to educated Russians because of their Westernization. He produced two discoveries, the Russian commune and Russian sects, which he presented with a typical Romantic inspiration, but his language was obviously contaminated with Western meanings. In the obshchina he saw a “a well-organized free republic,” and in Russian sects he saw “the remarkably powerful spirit of association”, obviously borrowed from Tocqueville. One sect, the Dukhobory, Haxthausen alternatively compared to Plato’s Utopia and to the Anabaptist theocracy of Jean of Leyden. The main trope of his rhetoric was the comparison between the ancient, as he believed, Russian institutions and the most recent European socialist teachings. According to Haxthausen, the Russian people in the invisible secrecy of their folk ways had already achieved socialism, and Russian sects had realized “dreams of some of the modern political sects, particularly the St. Simonians and Communists.” Beginning with Nikolai Chernyshevsky, Russian radicals accepted all of these arguments but the last one. It is very clear in this case how the perception of the traveler was preprogrammed by his previous readings; but the locals were no more innocent, or no less prejudiced, for they came to see the Russian countryside through the lenses of Haxthausen. As in many other cases, this stereotypical perception was anything but negative or derogatory; it was, on the contrary, very enthusiastic, which did not make it more realistic. Haxthausen promised to enter “upon my investigation unprejudiced and with the profound veneration and love [that] I have always felt for everything genuine, natural, and simple”. The results read like this: “The St. Simonians went to Egypt to discover the free woman; had they gone to Russia they would perhaps have returned better satisfied” (v. 1, 44).

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Still, it was Haxthausen who should be credited with the conceptualization of Russian politics as one of “internal colonization”. He believed it to be “the most important subject of the whole internal politics and economy of this Empire”, and he stated that Russia had to establish a Colonial Ministry, “like England, although in a somewhat different sense” (v. 2, 76). His ideas were an original attempt to conceptualize Russian politics before the Crimean War. The early and middle 19th century was the high time of great colonial Empires. Great Britain wanted India, France wanted Africa, the United States wanted Mexico, and the Middle East, Central Asia, Indochina, and many other parts of the world were divided and re-divided between these great powers. Russia took its part in the colonial expansion, occupying adjacent territories from parts of Sweden to parts of California. What is less acknowledged is, I think, a reluctance that the Petersburg monarchy manifested every time that it had to make a decision about an overseas expansion, which would have been easily available to the recent victors of Napoleon. The most interesting episodes of such reluctance were Alexander’s refusal to support Dr. George Scheffer’s attempt to colonize the Hawaii archipelago for Russia in 1815, and his refusal to send troops to support the Orthodox Greeks, who rebelled against the Turks in 1821. Another example of the same resistance to the overseas expansion was the voluntary decision to get rid of Russian colonies on the American continent, when Alaska and parts of California were peacefully sold to the US in 1867. All this is highly atypical for the 19th century power games. On the other hand, through many decades Russian rulers welcomed foreign European populations into their inner territories, a policy which was characteristic of America but was not practiced in Europe. The same kind of people, the persecuted sects of radical Reformation, took part in the colonization of the heartland in both countries. When the Mennonites and other similar communities from the Netherlands and Germany resettled on the banks of the Volga and in the Crimea, they were called, in Russian, “colonists”. Another fascinating example of a peculiar Russian institution which has a colonial touch is the so-called military settlements. Founded after the Napoleonic wars, these settlements functioned for several decades and in the 1820s had almost a million settlers, consisting of the former soldiers and resettled peasants. They lived in artificially constructed, symmetrically designed settlements that in the documents of the time were called “colonies”. They cultivated newly developed fields, obeyed a military discipline and had to attend reformed church services. Their children were educated in the so-called “Lancaster schools”, imported from British colonies. To all this, the settlers responded with acts of resistance, riots and sabotage which were also typical of colonial situations. Historians have interpreted these military settlements
as precursors of the Stalinist collectivization. I would also contextualize them as an attempt at internal colonization, one of the largest-scale experiments in colonial history.

In the history of European Empires, there have been cases when scholars have spoken about internal colonization. In British history, this concept was introduced in the 1970s by Michael Hechter, who claimed that the “uneven pattern of development termed internal colonialism [...] developed in the first industrial society”. In other words, the British colonized Wales in a way similar to how they colonized Ireland or India. When we look backward, processes of colonization are distinguished as internal and external. But in the Russian case, geographical boundaries have been unstable until now. What is most important, I think, is the very fact of the flexibility of these boundaries, which makes it impossible to distinguish, even while looking backward, what was the proper Russia and what was not. The traditional idea of colonization presumes that the colonizers and the colonized belong to two distinct entities, or nations. The idea of internal colonization deconstructs this difference. The colonizers and the colonized might belong to the same people. Often they did.

The European empires exploited the colonized territories, extracting profits and spending parts of them to run and develop these territories. Beginning with Alexander I, the Russian Empire, on the contrary, provided its peripheral territories, such as Finland or Poland, with privileges of self-governance that the Russian mainland did not enjoy. Serfdom was abolished in Estonia, the Ukraine and Bashkiria earlier than in the central regions. According to the Russian social historian Boris Mironov, at the end of the 19th century an average resident of 31 “Great Russian” gubernias paid two times more taxes than a resident of the 39 gubernias with predominantly non-Russian population. For the purposes of administration, the Empire spent two times more per capita in central gubernias than in non-Russian ones. The heartland regions of the country were exploited more than the peripheral regions, and they needed more centralized expenditures for their administration, security and education. This is unusual for an Empire, and supports Haxthausen’s idea regarding the internal character of Russian colonization.

Saying all this, I should return to the crucial issue of race. In colonial and postcolonial studies, race and racism are usually specified as the most important parameters of colonial conquest. In the Russian case, there was no racial difference between the high society and what this society used to call “the People”. Still, the colonial society needs clear, visible markers of distinction between the colonizers and the colonized. Peter I created such a distinction, a visible substitute for race. His method was to shave the gentry. The famous order of 1698
regarding the obligatory shaving of beards of Russian nobility predated other foundational acts of internal colonization, such as the “Manifest to Invite Foreigners to Russia” (1702) and the foundation of the imperial capital in a newly occupied territory, outside of the traditional metropolitan (a foundational act which we enjoy here in this city, but which find no analogies in the history of empires). Selective shaving was hugely important. It constructed the estate system of the empire in the most effective way, by corporal markers. Interestingly enough, in the complex and unstable system of four Russian estates – gentry, priests, meshchane, and peasants, – a beard marked the only reliable borderline, which separated the shaved gentry from everyone else. In the post-Petrine society, the marker of a subaltern, who was culturally mute and economically exploited, was a beard. In his A Sportsman’s Sketches Turgenev described the significance of the beard by presenting a serf called “Khor” who was prosperous enough to buy freedom from his master, but chose not to do so. A liberal-minded narrator, the sportsman, insists, “It’s always better to be free”. To this Khor objects with a reference to the cultural symbolism of the beard, which codifies power relations: “Among free men, everyone without a beard would be superior to Khor”, whereas among serfs, every adult male had a beard like Khor’s. The Sportsman’s solution was easy: “Then shave your beard”, - he advised Khor. To this Khor responded with a two-folded argument. Even if he shaved the beard, he would not become rich, but on the other hand, those merchants who were rich still had beards. This conversation is full of interesting meanings, which English translations, by the way, do not fully transmit. Like a proponent of cultural studies, the sportsman believes in the autonomous agency of cultural symbols; in a Marxist-sounding response, the practical peasant asserts that economic differences are more important than cultural identities.

In classical colonialism, the double task of exploitation and the Enlightenment of the colonized was famously described by Kipling as White Man’s Burden. If I was in a playful mood, I would describe the Russian responsibility (and guilt), carried by the higher classes, as “Shaved Man’s Burden”. I would love to refer to a cultural history of Russian beards, but such a book has not been written. It would tell that, approaching the Emancipation Act of 1861, the Russian gentry reluctantly stopped shaving their beards. This coincided with the advent of populism, which was informed by a new feeling of cultural inferiority on the part of the elite in respect to the bearded peasant. Approaching the Revolution of 1917, Russian beards grew longer and longer. Visualize the symmetrical beards, black and white, of G. Rasputin, a peasant prophet who became a favorite of the Tsar, and L. Tolstoy, an aristocratic writer who became a peasant prophet.

5 Б.Н. Миронов. Социальная история России, СПб 1999, т. 1, 30-37.
But let me go back to theoretical issues. As you know very well, many years ago an American scholar, Edward Said, introduced a theoretical construct of Orientalism. The main issue is the cultural distance from the “Other”, as it is perceived or rather constructed by an Orientalist observer. Historically, the construction of cultural distance combined various sources, such as race, ethnicity, language or dialect, religion, economic class, or legal status in the estate system. No cultural distance – no colonial situation. Orientalism is the construction of cultural distance that legitimates the political domination and economic exploitation. For the Western empires, race was an ideal marker, one that was impossible to conceal or imitate. The negotiation of cultural distance between power and its subjects – its exaggeration or minimization but in all cases, its exploration, is the key element of colonial politics. The regulation of cultural distance demands a special agglomeration of colonial arts and sciences, such as literary travelogues, missionary activities, cultural anthropology, and museum collections. Culture is in the center of all these negotiations and therefore, the leading role in the imperial centers as well as among the colonial subjects belonging to intellectuals. Manipulating cultural distance is their job. They founded collection of rarities, developed historiographies, ran field studies, and wrote novels.

The position of Russia, imperial and marginal at the same time, created a situation that is absent in Said’s examples. Westernized Russian intellectuals produced oriental(izing) knowledge and practices that were directed at their own people. They thereby created an Orientalism of the Orient, – squared, internalized and projected onto the national body. In the story of populism we see the familiar features of colonialism, such as exotic pilgrimages, ethnographic studies, and missionary activities. In Russia, these endeavors were directed not overseas but rather at the people in the homeland. The Russian Empire, as its rulers proudly called it, derived its power from internal colonization; Russian Populism was the cultural response to internal colonialism.⁶

Russian Populism and Western Orientalism were intellectual, political, and aesthetic movements, fashioned by the peculiar conditions of the colonization of the “Other”. The Russian Empire defined the “Other” by estate and religion; Western empires defined it by geography and race. Crucial in both cases, however, was the metropolitan elite’s construction of cultural distance from its subjugated subjects. An obsessive search for information about

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the repressed, equally usable by those elites who wished to repress and those elites who wished to rebel, characterized both movements. Both movements, Russian Populism and Western Orientalism, produced cultural amalgams of fear, guilt, pride, and curiosity, all in respect to the Other, in areas as divergent as ethnography, novels, and terrorism.

Attributing to “noble savages” and “simple peasants” the most improbable virtues, such as unselfish proficiency and intuitive wisdom, such idealizations did not prevent native populations from being oppressed, but rather supported their exploitation in subtle and paradoxical ways. For those who enjoyed living off of the income from their estates, it was comfortable to believe that peasants did not need private property because of their sublime beliefs. For those who observed the Bolshevik regime from the happier countries of the West, it was comfortable to believe that Russians did not need freedom because of their sublime masochism, communitarianism, and religious traditions. What emerged was a positive Orientalism, a stereotyped reasoning on the part of the West that affirmed the moral superiority and spiritual advantage of the colonial subjects.

“Half beasts, half children”, as Kipling put it, were subject to the submission and the enlightenment. Racial differences between subjects and objects in this process promised that even the successful assimilation of the colonized will not lead to an undesired confusion. It was culture itself that created cultural distance. Writing on the bodies and the faces of its subjects, the empire produced a substitute for race, which proved to be even more problematic and unstable than race itself. Carrying their burden, the shaved men of the Russian Empire were obsessed with guilt and protest, a desire to unload their colonial burden, which finally culminated in the Revolution. Still, the metaphor of internal colonization subverts conventional truths about race, culture and empire.
“Russians into Peasants?”
Writing Russian History into European Historiographic and Historical Contexts.¹

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(Journal Ab Imperio, Kazan’)

The Problem of Social Dynamics in Late Imperial Russia
Viewing Russian imperial history as a complex, open-ended process and not as a straightforward vector culminating in the 1917 collapse is a relatively recent phenomenon, inaugurated most notably by the 1991 magisterial collection Between Tsar and People.² A growing body of studies has emerged that more or less explicitly departs from what is informally called the “Haimsonian orthodoxy” that has dominated the historiography of late imperial Russia in the West for almost three decades, since the publication in the mid-1960s of Leopold Haimson’s groundbreaking two-part article The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905-1917.³ Haimson’s paradigm retrospectively sealed the fate of the Russian Empire by advancing a structuralist formula of “dual polarization” (between the tsarist government and educated society, and between the latter and the working class) as the main characteristic of the longue durée processes that shaped the last decades of imperial Russia. The revisionist approach of the 1990s instead concentrated on social practices and intermediate groups that “bridged” the alleged polarization in Russian pre-revolutionary society. However, the new research agenda was from the very beginning effectively limited by the methodological assumptions put forward in the classic texts that initiated this new historiographic trend. A special role was played by the articles The Sedimentary Society by Alfred Rieber and Combined Underdevelopment: Discipline and the Law in Imperial and Soviet Russia by Laura

¹ An early draft of this paper was presented at the Russian-German workshop “Beyond the Nation: Writing of European History Today” (Universität Bielefeld / St. Petersburg State University / Zentrum für Deutschland- und Europastudien), St. Petersburg, November 21-23, 2003. I gratefully acknowledge valuable comments of Alexander Etkind, Jürgen Feldhoff, Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, Peter Hertner, Benjamin Schenk and others. Under different title this paper will appear in the Journal of Modern European History (Fall 2004).
Engelstein. Both articles presented a methodological quintessence of highly acclaimed recent books by those historians.  

Alfred Rieber replaced Haimson’s clear-cut image of Russia as a society composed of (predominantly) capitalist classes with a subtle vision depicting a social fabric woven from a mosaic of social identities, archaic and modern, coexisting simultaneously and overlapping with each other.  

Rieber’s snapshot revealed a “sedimentary society”, but could not provide insight into the direction of its evolution in late imperial Russia. However, this static picture was perceived by many as a diagnosis of social processes underway in early 20th century Russia. Here is where the popular thesis originates about the fatal “fragmentation” of Russian pre-revolutionary society that allegedly explains its collapse in 1917. Laura Engelstein did for a new stage in the studies of Russian culture and ideologies what Alfred Rieber did for a new social history of Russia. She was among the first to introduce the themes and concepts developed by Michel Foucault to the field of Russian history, and provided valuable commentary on their applicability to a new historical context. In her “Combined Underdevelopment”, Engelstein opened a new venue for the studies of ancien régime society as a (partially) modern society of professionals and intellectuals who used modern “techniques” and produced modern “discourses”. She also laid grounds for subsequent interpretations of the Soviet regime as “an alliance between the old tutelary state and the new disciplinary mechanisms”.  

Her critical and balanced application of Foucault kept Russian studies from being overwhelmed by a vulgar reading of this European thinker so widespread in the American academia in the early 1990s. At the same time, she built into her model of emerging pockets of modernity in Imperial Russia a rather simplistic juxtaposition of advanced “Europe”, where the disciplinary power of professionals (i.e., institutes of civil society) was guaranteed and

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6 A catalogue of fatally fragmented social entities in pre-1917 Russia can be found in a 1996 article by R. MCKEAN, which summarized the first stage in the revision of “Haimsonian orthodoxy” and triggered an important discussion in Revolutionary Russia: “One of the outstanding features of the Duma political system was the fragmentation of politics … the nobility was ethnically and religiously diversified; it was divided by occupational allegiances.; it was stratified by income and landownership. …Furthermore, ethnic diversity and regional economic rivalries divided merchants and entrepreneurs. …Politically divided in 1905, the professions fragmented after the failure of that revolution… Furthermore, there existed a deep divorce and a gulf of suspicion and misunderstanding between the professionals and the intelligentsia… and the industrial middle class…”. R. B. MCKEAN, Constitutional Russia, in: Revolutionary Russia, 9 (June 1996), 34-36.  
regulated by the law, and “Russia”, where “both the reign of law and the ascendance of bourgeois discipline remained largely hypothetical.”

Engelstein based her powerful argument about the vulnerability of modern institutes in Russia on metahistorical speculations, using “Europe” as a self-explanatory trope, relying on a then nascent literature on Russian professions, and avoiding any reference to relevant European historiography. As a result, the subsequent studies of modern ideologies and social practices in late imperial Russia were overshadowed by the sense of their inherited inadequacy and failure to emulate some normative “European” scenario.

Thus, an attempt in the 1990s to revise a “Haimsonian orthodoxy” – which was structuralist in a Marxist or rather Brodelian sense, and was moved by the “trauma of 1917” and the necessity to explain its historical inevitability – was itself bound by the equally structuralist criteria of “normality” (class social structure, institutionalized civil society, party politics, etc.) and a Sonderweg vision of Russian development, largely caused by a lack of interest in a truly comparative perspective. Little wonder that, when multiple empirical lacunae were filled in by a new wave of research on professions, local social networks, and interaction of different social groups at various levels, a conflict emerged between the general methodological scheme of post-Haimsonian studies and the newly studied, rich body of sources suggesting a different vision of the late imperial society.

A Battle for Civil Society

This conflict found its most powerful expression in a debate about the perspectives of civil society in late imperial Russia, which, given the social composition of Russian society, is often referred to as the problem of turning “peasants into citizens”.

I would like to begin where the late Scott Seregny left the topic of Russian peasants’ transformation into “Russian citizens” in the early 20th century in articles published over the past couple of years. Following David Moon, Seregny applied Eugen Weber’s formula “peas-
nants into Frenchmen”12 to the Russian case in its political reading – “peasants into Russian citizens” – studying the growing involvement of Russian peasants with a nascent rural civil society in the 1910’s.13 He thus joined the ranks of American and foreign historians who over the last decade have re-assessed the role of local self-government agencies (zemstvos) and rural professionals in the service of zemstvos and government in mobilizing and integrating the peasantry into a broader society, and stressed an amazing success of those attempts at dismantling the traditional peasant isolationism and passivity.14 Still bound by the powerful legacy of the partial revision of Heimsonian historiographic canon, Seregny stopped short of acknowledging the building of a universal civil society in pre-1917 Russia as a success.15 Josh Sanborn, another historian who in recognition of a huge body of primary sources has challenged a common wisdom of the inherited fallacy of Russian nascent civil society, has taken a more radical view on the problem. Methodologically, he abandoned the archaic structuralist approach toward defining “the norm” and viewed the modern nation “as a ‘category of practice’ than upon states of consciousness or properties of collectivities”.16 Studying social practice in its “eventuality” dynamics rather than distilling “ideal types” from an unavoidably

13 Bertrand PATENAUDE was perhaps the first to apply the Weberian formula to the Russian case, although more as a rhetorical device than a coherent concept, and in the context of the Russian Civil War. See: B. M. PATENAUDE, Peasants into Russians: The Utopian Essence of War Communism, in: The Russian Review 54 (October 1995), 562. Jane BURBANK made an indirect reference to this formula in a 1995 article by discussing an evolution “from peasant to citizen”, and in a much more elaborated and nuanced form: J. BURBANK, A Question of Dignity: Peasant Legal Culture in Late Imperial Russia, in: Continuity and Change 10 (1995), 391-402, cf. particularly 400-402. - The actual appropriation of the explanatory paradigm “Peasants into Frenchmen” by historians of Russia in the formula “Peasants into Russians” took place over the last decade, particularly following discussions in Revolutionary Russia (June 1996) and Slavic Review (Summer 2001).
limited pool of processed data, he views the development of modern forms of social interaction like civil society or nation as a process.\footnote{Ibid., 289. He contextualized this approach in a recent book \textit{Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905-1925}, Dekalb/IL, 2003.}

The opposite views are never advocated by selecting a different set of sources or events, but by appealing to the general methodological considerations mentioned above. However, this has become even more complicated a task after Joseph Bradley’s 2002 article in \textit{American Historical Review}.\footnote{J. BRADLEY, Subjects into Citizens: Societies, Civil Society, and Autocracy in Tsarist Russia, in: American Historical Review 107 (October, 2002), 1094-1123.} Probably for the first time, Bradley put to the test the structuralist critique of Russian modernization as a corrupted emulation of “European” standards set against a broad historiographic context. Drawing from an impressive pool of recent studies on Great Britain, France, Germany, and the United States, he discusses the specificity of civil society formation and social modernization in general – not in some imaginary homogeneous “West” or “Europe”, but in actual national contexts. He also refers to methodological debates about civil society and its prerequisites that have taken place over the last decade – not during the lifetime of Trotsky or Gramsci. The resulting picture is a complex one that leaves no room for those myths that are so common in historiography of Russia: Russian “sedimentary society” finds its counterparts in “advanced Europe”, while the lack of legal guaranties for modern institutions in Russia cannot be regarded as a unique Russian phenomenon or as having played any decisive role in the initial and intermediate stages of modernization.\footnote{Ibid., 1102.}

In this perspective, the very nature of the debate about the prospects of civil society’s development in late imperial Russia is changed. “Civil society” often served as a new marker and euphemism of a present-day, discriminatory, orientalist attitude shared by a part of the Western academic community.\footnote{This argument was put forward in a delicate form by M. TODOROVA in: \textit{Kritika}, no. 4 (Fall 2000).} The more qualified and less ideological approach offered by Bradley reserves for “civil society” the status of a useful analytical category, helping to conceptualize the processes of social interaction, depriving it of any sacral or symbolic meaning.\footnote{“…civil society may be a necessary but not a sufficient condition for liberal democracy… Civil society and its institutions do not guarantee a future devoid of political trauma; the development of civil society in ancien régime France did not prevent the Terror, and in Germany it did not prevent Nazism and the Holocaust.” J. BRADLEY, Subjects into Citizens: Societies, Civil Society, and Autocracy in Tsarist Russia, 1099. These examples can be expanded at the expense of virtually any modern European country, including France that was torn in the 1930’s between the Popular Front politics and the ultra-right, and ended its Third Republic in the Vichy regime.}
Placing late imperial Russia’s modernization processes into a broad comparative perspective removes many methodological obstacles and historiographic stereotypes that denied on principle the very possibility of a “genuine” modernization in that country, opening the floor for debates on the scale and intensity of those processes in various quarters of Russian society. At the same time, after a decade of heated and largely scholastic debates about the “authenticity” of Russian nascent civil society, many crucial historical problems remain unseen, unexamined, and unanswered. To begin with, the very “translation” of Eugen Weber’s formula into the Russian context should have posed a formidable problem: given that Russia was a multi-ethnic empire, the transformation of “peasants into Russians” would have meant their “russification” rather than integration in a modern political nation. Hence, many historians added the important term “citizen” – resulting in “peasants into Russian citizens” – to their formulas and necessitating a debate on the degree that citizenship was on principle accessible under the Russian ancien régime. Thus, relativizing the “Russianness” by replacing the noun in the original Weber’s formula by an adjective, neither proponents, nor critics of the concept of a growing civil society in pre-revolutionary Russia have questioned the other element of the dilemma – the peasants.

**Could the Peasantry be “Russian?”**

In fact, even the most careful and informed scholars believe in the fundamentality of this social category. In the book that has set a new benchmark in the studies of rural Russia for decades to come, David Moon discusses “Russian peasantry” as a social entity with clear characteristics and boundaries, and even calculates their quantity as separate from other “Slavic peoples (Ukrainians, Belorussians and Poles), and Finnic, Turkic, and Baltic peoples”. Quite aware of the challenges he faces, Moon selects a number of criteria of “Russianness”, yet he does not explain, why Orthodox “Ukrainian peasants” differed from “Russians” more than “Russian” Old Believers; why individualistic peasants of the Russian North or Siberia were more close to commune-minded peasants of Central Russia and not to Ukrainian farmers; why life “inside the borders of what had been the realm of the Muscovite tsars” did not make “Russians” of the numerous Turkic and Finnic peoples of the Volga region. The general problem is, of course, an attempt to ascribe a modern national identity to the social group that is pre-modern by definition. But the idea that all varieties of non-privileged agricultural popu-

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23 Ibid., 18.
lation, from Poland to Sakhalin, from Archangelsk to Turkestan, could be lumped together under a single category of “peasants” seems to be equally problematic. Even if limited to “Russian” peasantry (which could be possible in some situations empirically, but never for a single methodological reason), the analysis of this category would encounter such different cultural, social, economic, and technological patterns that any generalizations would have been limited to a few meaningful regularities. To say that “peasants” in the Russian Empire were evolving into “Russian citizens” is simply to suggest that the majority of the empire’s population residing in the countryside were about to become more self-conscious, and the opposition between the two phases of development remains unclear. Could not peasants indeed become publicly active while still living in their villages?

If we turn to the public debates about the “agrarian question” in post-reform Russian society (1861-1917), we will discover that contemporaries had the opposite view of the problem from that accepted by modern historians. By the turn of the 20th century, neither top bureaucrats, nor professional economists nor the populist intelligentsia doubted the “Russianness” of themselves or the peasants, but were at pains to harmonize ever differentiating notions of the “people”, “agriculturists”, “peasant social estate” and “villagers” – once captured in the single epistemological and (perhaps) social entity of the “peasantry”. In fact, the abolition of serfdom in 1861 launched the process of continuous social engineering and the discursive construction of “peasants”. From now on, any ideological projection on the peasantry could be followed potentially by an actual change in the peasantry’s socioeconomic or legal conditions. Historians studying debates between the Reform’s architects – top bureaucrats, noble members of the provincial Editing Commissions (drafting legislation proposals for consideration in St. Petersburg), and general educated public in 1857-1861 may disagree in their inter-

\[24\] In the twentieth century, the notion of “the agrarian question” became virtually obsolete in economic and sociological studies almost everywhere, except the Soviet Union. Due to a peculiar character of Soviet scientism, which together with Marxism mummified an extensive layer of concepts and terms of late-nineteenth century social science, this notion was widely used well into the 1970’s. A detailed article on the “agrarian question” in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia carefully reconstructed this notion in accordance with Marxist orthodoxy. Even so, the very definition of the term (“the question about laws of capitalism... and relations between classes...”), and the examples of the “agrarian question” in different societies and historical periods suggest that the most adequate modern equivalent to this archaic concept is discourse on social, political, and economic processes involving agriculture and rural population. See “Agrarnyi vopros,” in: Bol’shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia 3. ed., Vol. 1, Moscow, 1970, col. 555-567. Thus, discussions of the agrarian question can be interpreted as a public discourse on agriculture almost by definition. Elvira M. WILBUR distinguishes three major interpretations of this predominantly discursive phenomenon: the liberal, the Leninist, and the peasant studies one. See E. M. WILBUR, Agricultural Crisis, Russian (1890s-1917), in: The Supplement to The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian, Soviet and Eurasian History, Vol. 1, ed. G. N. RHYNE (Gulf Breeze/Fl., 1995), 124-131.
pretations of the nature of the reform and intentions of the actors involved. However, nobody questions its significance in the process of differentiation of a legally and economically amalgamated complex of the gentry-serf estate into separate entities: the nobility and private land propriety vs. the peasantry and communal land holding of individual households.\textsuperscript{26} It was not before the emancipation of serfs in 1861 that the peasant emerged as a universal category, not defined by its legal bond to the owner and economic dependency on the landlord. In fact, as Mikhail Dolbilov who studies the Reform of 1861 as a discursive event \textit{par excellence} notes, the very possibility of a holistic vision of the “peasantry” as a homogenous group emerged out of the legislation that artificially constructed two legal and economic subjects in the countryside out of actual variety of social groups: the gentry and the peasantry.\textsuperscript{27} We may add that the magnificent emancipation reform also overshadowed the theme of non-Russian agricultural populations (i.e. the majority of non-Russian ethno-confessional groups) in the public debates for decades to come and even in subsequent historiography. Only Orthodox Slav peasants had been enserfed, hence post-emancipation discourse fixed only on these groups of petty agriculturists. That is why from the very beginning the new holistic notion of “peasantry” meant “Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian \textit{peasantry},” by definition constructed image, was idealized initially by the authorities and populist-minded public alike. Its ancient sacral bond to the land was celebrated giving impetus to rising political\textsuperscript{28} and ethno-cultural\textsuperscript{29} nationalist sentiments. By the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, however, this ideal image was compromised by the actual performance of “peasantries” in different regions of Russia, with the famine of 1891-1892 putting a final blow to the trend of Russian public discourse that idealized the peasantry. By the turn of the century, different political factions within Russian educated society shared a common awareness that a “true”


\textsuperscript{28} A. RENNER, Russischer Nationalismus und Öffentlichkeit im Zarenreich 1855-1875, Köln, Weimar, Wien, 2000.

\textsuperscript{29} M. DOLBILOV, Zemel'naia sobstvennost' i osvobozhdenie krest'ian, in: Sobstvennost' na zemliu v Rossii: istoria i sovremennost', ed. by D. F. AYATSKOV, Moscow, 2002, 45-152.
peasantry was yet to be shaped out of the heterogeneous mass of unprivileged agriculturists – whether by endowing them with all arable land in the realm as a result of revolution and egalitarian agrarian reform, by rationalizing and intensifying agriculture, or by replacing the communal land ownership with private petty land ownership. Few journalists or government officials would have questioned the “Russianness” in their identity, but the concept of “peasantry” was problematized and its integrity was questioned. Hence, to fit Russian realities a hundred years ago, Eugene Weber’s formula would have to have been adapted to “from Russians into peasants” – such was the order of priorities in public discourse of the time. Moreover, it seemed that the very “national” principle (often understood in ethnographic terms) contradicted the idea of rationalizing the peasant economy. Sticking to traditions (and often literally inventing new ones) hampered reorganization of household production and the reallocation of labor resources for purely “ideological” reasons.30

Of course, the idea of “Russianness” in the multiethnic Russian Empire itself posed a tremendous practical and analytical problem. It seems that “Russian nationalism” failed to separate itself from Russian imperialism and to evolve into a some form of a modern nationalism, whether political, racial, cultural, etc.31 Yet, turning the Weberian formula upside-down should not be viewed as just another peculiar Russian paradox. In a most influential attempt at revising Eugen Weber’s explanatory paradigm, James Lehning has offered a very similar perspective. French educated society created its own vision of the “French peasant” and then negotiated a compromise protocol of social interaction with the peasantry, adjusting mutual projections to each other’s practical needs.32 “Frenchmen into peasants”...

30 While the evaluation of a degree of rationality and effectiveness of the peasant economy remains a subject of discussions and depends on a historian’s methodological and even ideological preferences, the peasant labor discipline can be measured statistically. In his study of the labor/leisure balance in the Russian pre-1917 village, B. N. MIRONOV came to the conclusion that an average number of working days per year had decreased from 140 in the 1850’s to 107 in 1902 in the Russian Orthodox communes. He explained the fact that on the eve of the Revolution of 1905 Russian peasants were working only 29-34% of the available time (as opposed to 38-54% during the pre-emancipation period) by the initiative of the peasants themselves, who were not controlled by their lords anymore and suffered from a relative overpopulation. The last argument, however, looks questionable, as the Volga Muslims living in the same socioeconomic conditions had about 75 holidays as opposed to 240 of the Russian Orthodox, Catholics had 90-100 holidays, and Protestants only 65-75. See B. N. MIRONOV, ‘Vsiakaia dusha prazdnik ruada’: trud i otdyk v ruskoi derevne vtoroi poloviny XIX - nachala XX v., in: Problemy sotsial’no-ekonomicheskoi i politicheskoi istorii Rossii XIX-XX veka, ed. by A. N. Tsamutali, St. Petersburg, 1999, 200-210.

31 For a most recent comprehensive discussion of this problem see thematic issue Searching for the Center: Russian Nationalism of the international quarterly Ab Imperio, 2003, No. 3.

The Problem of “Actors of Modernization”

Quoting Lehning, we may view Russian educated society’s debates about the future of the peasantry as an instrument “by which one culture creates its own version, in its own terms, of another”. In the wake of the 1891-1892 famine that shocked the imagination of Russians used to thinking that they lived in an “agricultural country” and in the situation of domestic economic recession and the aftermath of a global agrarian crisis with its dramatic drop in grain prices, Russian educated society created a very critical version of the peasantry. Russia’s unprivileged agriculturists were increasingly viewed as an inert and unorganized group of inefficient producers. That was a dramatic departure from the populist beliefs that dominated public opinion during the previous decades, which saw the Russian peasant as an innate genius of land cultivation. After the revolution of 1905, there was a growing consensus among the educated public that the way out of the agrarian crisis was the “road, little known to... the farmers, but well studied by people of science and rational practice.”

And no matter how long peasants stubbornly continue to believe that the three-field system has existed almost from the creation of the world, they will [eventually] have to introduce a new order and move to grass-cultivation and the multifield [system of] production.

Quite in line with the dominant rhetoric of the 1860’s, peasants were viewed as the custodians of ancient [national] traditions, but that was no longer a cause of celebrations. It was not sufficient just to be “good Russians”, peasants needed to learn to become efficient agriculturists. Russian educated society changed its self-appointed historical role from emancipators (revealing the “true” essence of the people) to modernizers (teaching people new skills and knowledge). “Modernization” is an abstract sociological concept. In imperial Russia, as elsewhere, there were actors of modernization, social groups and institutions that consciously embarked on the task of implementing certain measures perceived as contributing to the modernization of society. Modern historians tend to criticize the “Kulturträger” rage among the Russian elite, accusing it of thirsting for cultural domination and discursive manipulation à la

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33 Ibid., 3.
34 F. SEV, K voprosu o merakh uluchsheniia krest’ianskogo khoziaistva (Doklad 4-mu Samarskomu gubernskomu agronomicheskому soveshchaniyu), in: Otchet o deiatel’nosti i sostoianii sredstv Samarskogo obshchestva uluchsheniia krest’ianskogo khoziaistva za vtoroe trekhletie ego suschhestvovaniia (s 7/XI 1910 g. po XI 1913 g.), Samara, 1914, 183.
35 M. FRANKFURT, Zanimaites’ skotovodstvom (Pis’mo k krest’ianam iuga-vostoka Rossii), in: Samarskii zemledelets, no. 19 (October 1, 1916), 517.
36 DOLBILOV, The Emancipation Reform of 1861, 224.
Foucault, or stressing the rationality of peasant agriculture, quite in line with the old populist arguments, and its adaptability to changing environmental and economic realities. This criticism might be well deserved, but it cannot make irrelevant the Russian public’s grave concerns at that time period about the future of agriculture nor does it exhaust the complexity of social interaction and the elaboration of new social practices. In fact, many arguments of contemporary historians originate in the discourse of Russian modernizers of the early 20th century and thus poorly serve their task of assessing the past events on the grounds of modern explanatory models and possibly improved knowledge.

To begin with, it was exactly the discovery of the potential for evolution and the adaptability of the traditional peasant household that triggered the most well-known modernization campaign in the Russian countryside, a system of government measures known as Stolypin agrarian reform (began in 1906). The chief ideologist and executor of the Stolypin land reforms, the Danish emigrant C. A. Koefoed, was serving as assessor to the State Noble Land Bank in 1901 when he took a business trip to the Mogilev Province (in present-day Belarus) and discovered a village that by its own initiative replaced communal land holding with individual farmsteads. Koefoed wrote a memorandum and later a book advocating peasant land con-

40 “It was on one such assessing trip to the northern part of the province, near the point where the provinces Mogilev, Vitebsk and Smolensk touch, that I found the group of villages, where land had been consolidated on the peasants’ own initiative, to which I believed it was necessary to point, before I could start on propaganda for land consolidation with any hope of getting people to listen to what I had to say.

[…] I drove around from farm to farm until it was dark, and questioned the owners, and when I lay down to sleep that evening on one of the farms, I knew that I had reached a turning point in my life. I had found the Russian village, where farms had been consolidated on the peasants’ own initiative, and for which I had searched in vain for twenty years. I had found my mission in life.

[…] It transpired that several villages had carried out land consolidation in the neighborhood of Somonovo, and by driving from one to the next of them I had at last found the starting point of the movement – the village of Sagorodnaja in the neighboring province, Vitebsk.

The peasants in this village had wished to join together to buy a farm, the fields of which adjoined their village land. They had bargained and haggled for years, and one fine day in 1876, a group of Latvian peasants had arrived, who had outbid them and snatched the farm from under their noses.

Since the Latvian peasants, wherever they have settled in the world, run their farms as individual farms, like their forefathers from Arild’s times have done in their home country, it was only natural that these buyers shared the land between them in such a way that each of them received the share due to him, in the form of a well-rounded holding, on which he then settled.

The peasants in Sagorodnaja, who would have bought the farm which the Latvians had now shared between them, eyed the newcomers with anything but kind feelings, but nevertheless they observed their behavior closely. They were extremely interested in the Latvian peasants’ method of farming, and soon after, at the
solidation and the dissolution of peasant commune as a short path toward a more efficient agriculture and a better peasantry. Eventually, he was put in charge of the government legislation on the agrarian question; the rest is history. It was very important for Koefoed (Koffod in Russian spelling and in the writings of some modern historians) to stress that his plan offered nothing new or radically opposite to the peasant routine. On the contrary, the proposed measures just fostered and facilitated processes already underway in countryside. He (and most of his associates in the government) did not deny the peasantry’s rationality nor did he claim that peasants could not learn and adapt to new ways of life. He just questioned the speed at which innovations spread among the peasantry. Judging from his case study in the Mogilev province, we may estimate this speed at about a mile per year. Given the size of Russian Empire, this progress was not too encouraging. The problem of peasant technological backwardness in this more complex formulation has not yet been addressed by scholars. The key question here is not whether peasants were unjustly regarded as “backward”, but whether they could keep pace on their own with rapidly changing socioeconomic realities: slashing agricultural prices, the demographic explosion in the village, and even changing landscapes.

Andrei Andreevich (Andreas Carl) Koefoed represented just one segment of a broad spectrum of public discourse on the modernization of the Russian countryside and the making of a “new peasant”. He became the government modernization campaign’s ideologist (usually associated with the name of the Prime Minister Petr Stolypin), was institutional by nature and forceful in implementation. He is among the best known reformers among historians and is...
often perceived as a symbol of Russian modernizers’ politics toward the peasantry. However, the well-known “Stolypin reforms” were preceded, contested, and, in the end, overshadowed by a different project to modernize Russian agricultural. Unlike other modernization campaigns, this project assigned governmental agencies virtually no decisive role, choosing instead to make educated society (obshchestvennost’) and the community of rural specialists the main actors of modernization. Simply stated, the efforts of tens of thousands of agricultural specialists were channeled into the single task of making a new economic man out of the traditional peasant by means of schooling and professional consultations under the umbrella of the zemstvos, cooperatives and agricultural societies.43 Borrowing from the classical concept of “substitutes for lacking economic prerequisites” by Alexander Gerschenkron,44 we may describe such public modernization efforts as yet another substitute for the national producers’ (first of all, the peasants’) lack of economic initiative and efficient state agencies. Instead of the state, it was a self-conscious group of individuals who embarked on a mission of economic modernization that became particularly visible during the inter-revolutionary decade. These people can be defined as actors of modernization, since they themselves, rather than any social institution, were the main instrument of modernization, which is understood here as an interaction of mental structures and social institutes. Although this campaign was never formally institutionalized, we can reconstruct its stage, the number and social composition of its participants, and the movement’s most influential discourses and ideologies.45

43 When in December 1909 the famous politician and publicist, Petr STRUVE, stated that “The question of the economic revival of Russia is first of all a question of making the new economic man,” he merely summed up public discussions of the previous half decade. P. B. STRUVE, Ekonomicheskie programmy i ‘neestestvenyi rezhim’, in: P. B. STRUVE, Patriotica: politika, kultura, religiia, sotsialism, Moscow, 1997, 96.


The Emergence of the “Agrarian Segment” in the Public Sphere

At this point we approach a serious problem, both historiographically and methodologically, that only recently has become the subject of systematic exploration: how modernization or any adaptation to new circumstances can become possible in such an archaic polity as the Russian Empire and what are the mechanisms of that internal transformation. Institutionally, the Russian Empire was very rigid and did not possess an efficient bureaucracy or the traits of democracy and mass politics to both foster and implement changes that would have been perceived as necessary by the majority of the enfranchised population. The social composition of imperial society was rather amorphous and multifaceted, which made it difficult to form any coherent interest groups. Traditionally scholars have viewed the government and anti-government revolutionaries as the only actors of modernization in the undermodernized Russian Empire. However, new research reveals that imperial practices were more complicated and relied in part upon the spontaneous (though restricted) activity of self-organized social groups. Esther Kingston-Mann described this type of social activism in the early 20th century Russia as a particular “culture of modernization”, but we may speak of the emergence of a whole politics of self-organization, working beyond (but not necessarily against) official institutions to achieve certain publicly recognized objectives.

The crucial role of the state in Russian history has been stressed innumerable times by statesmen, contemporary observers, and subsequent historians. Yet, when one compares the history of modernization of agriculture in Russia to that of its sociopolitical antithesis, the United States, a striking similarity is revealed. In 1926, the American sociologist William Bizzell distinguished five stages of American society’s involvement in the modernization of the countryside from the eighteenth to the twentieth century:

1) The organization of agricultural societies;
2) Interest in rural and community fairs;
3) The establishment of the agricultural press;
4) The opening of agricultural schools;
5) And the establishment of state and federal agencies for the promotion of agriculture.

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46 See the comprehensive collection of essays: A. SEMYONOVA et al. (eds.), Novaia imperskaia istoriia Rossii i Evrazii, Moscow, 2004.
Despite the actual and imagined omnipotence of the Russian state, it intervened in the process of rural reformism only at the very last stage, when the educated progressive public (obshchestvennost’) and the zemstvos had substantially succeeded in leading Russia through Bizzel’s previous stages – and in exactly the same order. In Russia, the first association discussing the problems of agriculture was the Imperial Free Economic Society established in 1765. By 1861, about 30 agricultural societies had surfaced for various periods on the Russian public horizon. It is quite understandable that their practical influence was minimal under the social conditions of pre-reform Russia. After the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, the nature of Russian agricultural societies gradually changed and after the adoption of the Normal Regulations of 1897, they became a sort of cooperative enterprise constantly growing in number. Their success reflected the growth of public (and state) concern with agriculture, expressed in millions of rubles of subsidies a year, rather than the real effectiveness of agricultural societies that spent on average 20 per cent of their budgets for staff expenses. New attitudes towards agriculture and rural careers gained momentum right after the First Russian revolution. The number of periodicals and articles dedicated to agriculture in any year from the reign of Catherine II to the present provide an excellent device to measure Russian society’s interest in agriculture and engagement with agricultural problems. A study of agricultural press suggests that the scale of public interest in agrarian topics, the social composition of readers, and even political forces were behind the boom in “agrojournalism” at the beginning of the 20th century, for very few of the agricultural periodicals were profitable (and therefore ideological concerns, rather than revenues, stimulated publishers). The mass printed word contributed enormously to changing the social climate, preparing the stage for a new type of social activism. The real boom in agrojournalism took place in the interval between the First Russian revolution and the First World War, as the following table suggests:

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50 There were almost 4.000 agricultural societies in Russia on the eve of the World War I. Cf.: V. V. MORACHEVSKII (ed.), Agronomicheskaia pomoshch’ v Rossii, Petrograd, 1914, 108.
51 Ibid., 223, 226, 227.
52 As one can expect, the first periodicals dealing with agriculture were the Transactions (Trudy) of the Free Economic Society, the first issue of which was published on December 7, 1765. It took fifty-six years for a second periodical to appear, this time dedicated exclusively to agriculture. This was The Journal of Farming (Zemledel’cheskii zhurnal), founded in 1821 by the Moscow Agricultural Society. In 1830 The Leaflets of the Agricultural Society of Southern Russia (Listk i...) appeared. Cf. M. VIT’, Sel’skohoziaistvennaia pechat’ vRossii (k ee piatidesiatiletiu), in: Agronomicheskii zhurnal, no. 7-8 (1915), 75.

By the end of the first century of the Russian agricultural press’ existence, there were some 20 periodicals in the entire Russian Empire dedicated to various aspects of land tilling: farming, stock-breeding, and forestry. Characteristically, until the 1890’s the majority of these periodicals targeted a very narrow circle of readers
Table 1. The number of agricultural periodicals in Russia, 1907-1914.\textsuperscript{53}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1907</th>
<th>1908</th>
<th>1909</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1912</th>
<th>1913</th>
<th>1914</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of titles</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The actual figures may vary depending on the criteria of selection adopted by different statisticians, but other sources confirm the basic trend. By 1917 almost half of all agricultural periodicals were less than 5 years old and 75\% of all publications were founded after 1905.\textsuperscript{54} If we equate the number of specialized periodicals with the popularity of their topic, we can reconstruct the Russian press’ top hit topics.\textsuperscript{55} Agricultural periodicals held a firm third place and formed a niche of their own. An important feature of the Russian pre-revolutionary “agrarian segment” of the public sphere was its pluralism in terms of the social actors involved in its creation. Looking through the prism of agricultural periodicals, we can estimate those actors’ “weight” by the number of periodical titles published by each of them. In 1916, we witness a very diverse picture. Government agencies, the zemstvos, and private publishers each accounted for around 15\% of the agricultural periodicals produced (45\% altogether).\textsuperscript{56}

The remaining 55\% belonged to a loose conglomerate of various associations – cooperatives,

interested in theoretical aspects of agriculture. Few titles were published by the government, most of the others were published by Imperial societies specializing in separate branches of the rural economy (sheep-breeding, forestry, etc.), and during the last third of the century by zemstvos. It was, probably, the impact of the 1891 famine and the united relief efforts by the intelligentsia that changed the face of agro-journalism (as it changed the pattern of public activity of the entire “educated society”). See R. G. ROBBINS Jr., Famine in Russia 1891-1892: The Imperial Government Responds to a Crisis, New York, London, 1975, 176-183; W. B. LINCOLN, In War’s Dark Shadow. The Russians before the Great War, New York, 1983, 26; B. EKLOF, Russian Peasant Schools: Officialdom, Village Culture, and Popular Pedagogy, 1861-1914, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1986, 97; D. KERANS, Agricultural Evolution and the Peasantry in Russia, Tambov Province, 1880-1915, Ph.D. dissertation; University of Pennsylvania, 1994, 432.

In the 1890’s, a number of new, mainly weekly, periodicals appeared that targeted a new type of reader: still highly educated and well-to-do, but also having a practical interest in agriculture (hence the spread of weekly editions in contrast to the monthly and even yearly publications of previous epochs). At this stage, local zemstvos and provincial agricultural societies were the leading investors in the agricultural periodical press, demonstrating the decentralization of the emerging public discourse on the agrarian question.

Based on data derived from: M. VIT’, Sel’skohoziaistvennaia pechat’ v Rossii (k ee piatidesiatletiiu), 76; V. V. MORACHEVSKII (ed.), Agronomicheskaia pomoshch’ v Rossii, 344.


In 1911 agro-journalism accounted for 5.5\% of the periodicals published in the Russian Empire, which gave it an honorable third place among 28 other topics. See: I. V. VOL’FSON (ed.), Gazetnyi mir na 1911 god: Adresnaia i spravochnaia kniga, St. Petersburg, no date, columns 329-330. By 1912 its share had grown to 6.8\%.

The precise figures were: for the government 14.3\%, for zemstvos 15.7\%, and for private publishers 15.0\%.
agricultural and professional societies, and so on.\(^{57}\) This means that no political or institutional lobby was able to control the market for agricultural publications by virtue of ownership alone.\(^{58}\)

It is difficult to estimate the total number of copies of agro-journalistic newspapers, magazines and journals that came out every day. Such information usually was not published and police records are the main source of such data. Another obstacle for even approximate calculations involves the frequent shifts in the size of runs.\(^{59}\) We have information of about 302 out of 310 periodicals published in 1916.\(^{60}\) These 302 periodicals together published about 6,872 issues, predominantly of magazines and journals. Multiplying this figure by the minimal estimated run of 2,000 copies per issue, we receive some 13,744,000 copies per year. This is a considerable quantity. Even with the paper shortage of the war years in a country with a generally illiterate population, there were still hundreds of thousand of people who might have read those fourteen million copies of periodicals (not counting hundreds of popular brochures.

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57 V. V. MORACHEVSKII (ed.), Spravochnik po sel’skohoziaistvennoi pechati, p. xviii.

58 That had not always been the case in previous decades. Looking through a somewhat distorting prism of statistics that fixes the publisher and the time of foundation of existing periodicals (but not of those which had disappeared by 1916), we observe the following dynamics: the last decade of the nineteenth century and the years immediately preceding the First Russian revolution were marked by a steady withdrawal of the state from the business of establishing more of new agricultural periodicals. Out of all the government’s periodical publications which existed in 1916, only 7.7% had been founded during the decade of 1897-1906. Exactly during this period, zemstvos made their take off in the market of agro-journalism, having established 17% of all the zemstvo titles that survived to 1916. During the years of the active implementation of the Stolypin agrarian reform, it was private publishers and agricultural societies who were most active in the dissemination of new ideas and knowledge. Almost a third of all private periodicals active in 1916 had been founded between 1907 and 1911. It is only natural that the majority of the surviving periodicals were quite young in 1916. Still, the zemstvos had proportionally more newly-established titles than any other group: 57.5% of all the zemstvo agricultural periodicals had been founded after 1911 (in contrast to some 42.2% of private editions). Now let us remember that these statistics discarded all titles that had vanished by September 1916. Still, they accurately detect periods when the efforts of a certain group were persistent enough to make the then established periodicals survive in higher proportions (compared to any other period or any other group). See: V. V. MORACHEVSKII (ed.), Spravochnik po sel’skohoziaistvennoi pechati, xxvi.

59 For instance, in 1910 there were printed 2,400 copies of the issues 8-10 of the magazine Nuzhdy derevni (Village Needs), 2,500 copies of the issues 6 and 7, and only 2,200 copies of the issue 23. See: Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. 102 Departament politsii; D-4; Op. 119; d. 237; O proizvedeniiah povremennoi pechati, izdavaemyih professional’nymi organizatsiami; ll. 19, 24, 43. Ranging from 800 to 3,000 copies per issue (10,000 copies of Derevenskaia gazeta and 8,000 of Khutorianin were rare exceptions), the average run for an agricultural periodical was somewhere between 2,000 and 2,500 copies per issue.

60 One third of them (101 titles) were monthly publications, usually targeting specialists and well-educated landowners. Another third was split more or less equally between weekly and fortnightly editions (55 and 67 titles, respectively) of a rather popular nature. Few dailies and a number of journals with one to ten issues a year comprised the last third.
and dozens of special monographs that appeared every year). The intensity of public discourse on agriculture in late Imperial Russia was obviously very great. If professional periodicals were read predominantly by specialists, there was an intermediate range bridging the world of professionals and that of the broad public. These consisted of a considerable number of items on agrarian themes in general periodicals, reaching even those readers who were not professionally engaged in agriculture. There are statistics available on the number of publications on agricultural issues that appeared every year in late imperial Russia. According to the data collected by A. D. Pedashenko, the peak of public interest in agriculture occurred in 1913 when more than 23,500 articles and essays on different aspects of the agrarian question were published in various periodicals – a new piece on agriculture appeared every 22 minutes! The seemingly permanent growth of public interest in agriculture was brought to a halt by the outbreak of the war, but it was not until 1916 that the steady decline in the number of publications turned into a virtual collapse.

The Politics of Self-Organization

This newly emerged “agricultural segment” of the public sphere served not just as an information resource. A debate involving both agricultural experts (economists, scientists, and

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61 We can only indirectly assess the number of actual readers of the agricultural press. Not all issues of journals and magazines reached the readers; at the same time, many periodicals were subscribed by collectives, such as zemstvo boards, cooperatives, or village libraries, hence any single issue was read by a number of people. The larger part of the agricultural periodicals was distributed via subscription and hence did not miss their readers. In 1906, 83.42 % issues of the magazine Vestnik obshestvennoi veterinarii were distributed (95.42 % of them were distributed by subscription). The same year, all issues of the magazine Veterinarsyi feldsher were distributed (88.60 % by subscription). See: Vestnik obschestvennoi veterinari, no. 11-12 (1907), columns 393, 396. In 1909, the annual revenue from subscription to the magazine Batumskoe sel'skoe khoziaistvo was ten times higher than the revenue from retail sale (153.25 rubles vs. 15.75 rubles). See: Batumskoe sel'skoe khoziaistvo, no. 1 (January 1910), 3. In 1912, out of 2,400 copies of the second issue of the Kazan magazine Trudovoi soiuz, only 100 were left in the office (4.17 %). See: Trudovoi soiuz, no. 2 (1912), 14. Thus we may hypothesize that on the average, between 90 and 95 % of the copies reached readers. Collective subscribers built up significant demand for agricultural periodicals. For instance, the Ekaterinoslav province zemstvo in 1911 spent 600 rubles for several hundred annual subscriptions to the magazine Khutorianin. See: Samarskii zemledelets, no. 1 (January 15, 1911), 19. The ”Birsk Union of Credit and Savings Associations” allocated 100 rubles for subscriptions to cooperative literature and periodicals in 1916. See: I. ST-OV, Uchreditel'noe sobranie Birskogo soiuza kreditnykh i ssudosberegatel'nykh tovarishchestv, in: Vestnik kooperativnykh soiuзов, no. 12 (December 1915), 634.

62 For over 35 years, until his death in 1925, A. D. PEDASHENKO composed lists of all published pieces on agriculture, regardless of the source of publication: A. D. PEDASHENKO, Ukazatel’ knig, zhurnal’nyih i gazetnyih statei po sel’skomy khoziaistvu za ..., god, St. Petersburg/Petrograd. Pedashenko classified all agriculture-related publications into 22 categories, and with such a tight net it is not likely that many of those publications had escaped his attention. He also made lists of periodicals that published articles on the topic during a given year. Some of those periodicals appeared only occasionally on his list, for their interest in the topic was only temporary. Still, their presence is very important as an indication of public involvement in the discourse on agriculture.
agronomist-practitioners) and the general public outlined a set of objectives to be achieved and identified a range of practical measures that would serve achieving those goals. The progress of the campaign was meticulously monitored in general and special periodicals, and recommendations concerning the correction of the course and relationships with other actors of modernization (state agencies, political parties, competing public initiatives like cooperatives) were formulated. In a word, we witness a system of un-institutionalized yet coherent and sustained social activists policies aimed at social engineering that worked beyond (but not necessarily against) official institutions. In fact, state agencies could not match this spontaneous public movement in terms of the scale of mobilization or even sheer manpower. By 1913-1914 in the majority of provinces the coordination of “Stolypin reform” and resources were transferred to the zemstvos and their employees – rural professionals. Hence the relationships between the state and public self-organization were not necessarily conflicting, despite ideological controversies. The rise of public concern with the problem of peasant modernization owed much to a new policy of the state toward the “agrarian question”, even though the Stolypin reforms themselves were widely criticized in general and special periodicals. Between 1895 and 1913, the annual expenses of the Department of Agriculture had risen more than 12 times (while during the same period, the 34 oldest zemstvos increased their spending for various agricultural measures almost 18 times). The number of agricultural schools under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture had increased 4.5 times as had the number of pupils. The most immediate result of the government’s “turn to agriculture” was the increase in the positions available to the professionals in zemstvo service or the “third element” (counting bureaucracy as the first and members of zemstvo boards as second “elements” of Russian privileged society). The rate of the annual increase of agronomists in the state and zemstvo service was 31.5% in 1910, 55.2% in 1911, and 40.2% in 1912, fluctuating between 25.3% and 95% during the period between 1907 and 1914. Still, new positions opened at an even faster pace. In 1910, the Moscow Agricultural Institute was 400 graduates short in meet-

63 The role of the government in the preparing of a stage for broad public initiative is discussed in D. A. J. MACEY, Government and Peasant in Russia. Some discussion of the evolution of the government’s attitude toward rural professionals in connection with the state agrarian policy can be found in G. YANEY, The Urge to Mobilize: Agrarian Reform in Russia, 1861-1930, Urbana/IL, 1982; F. W. WCISLO, Reforming Rural Russia: State, Local Society and National Politics, 1855-1914, Princeton, 1990. On the connection of the Stolypin reforms and modernization activity of agricultural specialists, see: K. MATSUZATO, Stolypinskaia reforma i rossiiskaia agrotekhnologicheskaia revolutsiia, in: Otechestvennaia istoriia, no. 6 (1992), 194-200.

64 V. V. MORACHEVSKII (ed.), Agronomicheskaia pomoshch' v Rossi, i, ii.

65 Agronomicheskii zhurnal, no. 8 (1913), 171; N. A. ALEXANDROVSKII, M. M. GLUKHOV, N. F. SHCHERBAKOV, V. N. SHTIEIN (eds.), Mestnyi agronomicheski personal, sostoavshii na pravitel'stvennoi i obshchestvennoi sluzhbe 1 ianvaria 1914 g. Spravochnik, Petrograd, 1914, i.
ing all the requests from local agronomy agencies. Although the government employed only one third of all agronomists, it played an important role in stimulating zemstvos to hire more rural specialists. As a result, by the beginning of World War One, there were altogether about 15,000 agricultural specialists in the vanguard of the modernization campaign, backed by a strong public involvement in the “agrarian question”. Without going into the details, we may describe their primary duties as communication with the villagers and the teaching of new techniques and the use of new instruments. They were to compel the villagers to see themselves not as just as rural folk, but as agricultural producers.

Though insignificant numerically in the sea of rural Russia, almost the entire group emerged over the incomplete decade after 1905. The movement was united by a common ethos and may be described as a social generation. Even in the highest heights of the profession, the new generation of agricultural specialists was overrepresented. By 1914, one-third of the 150 top agricultural specialists directing government or public agricultural assistance at the provincial level had graduated after 1905. The educated modernizers’ immediate partners in the countryside were “new” peasants, more dynamic and responsive than the conservative bulk of villagers. We can estimate the number of these “new generation peasants,” who not only adequately responded to the agricultural specialists’ modernization efforts, but actively participated in their work. These peasants composed the majority of the voluntary correspon-

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67. From 1910 on, the Department of Agriculture every year doubled the sum of money granted to zemstvos and agricultural societies to cover the salaries of rural specialists. There was a catch, for these grants were given only on condition that the recipient institution would match the expenses for agronomy personnel ruble for ruble. In 1910, the Department of Agriculture allocated only 24,000 rubles to subsidize zemstvo agronomists, but by 1911 this sum had grown to 220,000 rubles, by 1912 - to 500,000 rubles (of which 350,000 were allotted specifically to the precinct agronomists), by 1913 - to 1,000,000 rubles (of which 631,000 went to the precinct agronomists). See V. V. MORACHEVSKII (ed.), Agronomicheskaia pomoshch’ v Rossii, 167.

With an average annual agronomist’s salary of about 1,500 rubles, the government grant helped to sustain only 32 zemstvo agronomist jobs in 1910, but approximately 1,000 jobs in 1913 (the average salary of agronomists had increased to over 2,000 rubles by that time). Although quite aware of the potential trap in the government offer, even the most conservative zemstvo boards could not avoid the temptation of receiving extra money.

68. 4,402 agronomists, rural specialists and instructors in zemstvo and 2,369 in state service (not counting 1,982 agricultural elders who had only primary education), 1,374 zemstvo veterinarians, 2,900 state veterinarians, and 2,638 zemstvo veterinarian assistants. M. M. GLUKHOV, V. V. ZARETSKII, V. N. SHTEIN (eds.), Mestnyi agronomicheskii personal, 556-559; V. V. KOROPOV, Istoriia veterinarii v SSSR, Moscow, 1954, 172, 184.


70. In the words of S. SEREGNY, “Socially and culturally, these ‘conscious’ peasants remained more closely tied to the village than many teachers of peasant origin and as such occupied a strategic position as intermediaries between the rural community and outsiders.” See: S. J. SEREGNY, Peasant Unions During 1905, in:
dents of the zemstvo statistical bureaus. Their task was to report a few times a year about the prospective and actual harvest, the prices of land, grain, its transportation and, in some provinces, even the dynamic of the local markets.\footnote{71} This alone made the voluntary correspondents the most economically conscious part of the peasantry, thinking in terms of market conjunctures and regarding agriculture as a phenomenon of “production” rather than as an element of the traditional peasant way of life. Zemstvo common practice to reward the voluntary correspondents with agricultural periodicals and popular brochures only reinforced the position of village correspondents as an “outpost” of rural modernization. Thus, a group of tens of thousands of peasants, the voluntary correspondents, constituted the basis for the productive efforts of the agricultural specialists and the bulk of peasant readers of agricultural periodicals.\footnote{72} The booming rural cooperative movement\footnote{73} and agricultural courses\footnote{74} were the expanding frontline of the new encounter and dialogue, negotiating a new status for modernizers and creating new position among the peasantry vis-a-vis rural professionals. Thus in a single year, up to 12,000 agricultural specialists and their assistants were able to reach a very significant section of the peasantry.

The results of these public campaigns are measured not by the percentage of people who changed their legal status or the terms of their property ownership, but by changes in thinking and in the psychological climate. If the peasants adopted even a small proportion of the rec-

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\footnote{71} V. V. MORACHEVSKI\ II (ed.), Spravochnye svedenia o deiatel’nosti zemstv po sel’skomu khoziaistvu (po dannym na 1909 god), 35, 127, 175, 568. Some zemstvos provided correspondents with special notebooks with questions to be answered during a year, and a timetable for them. The Kazan zemstvo notebook for 1915, for instance, included 64 questions, which were more or less evenly distributed from January to December. See: Zapisnaia knizhka korrespondenta statisticheskogo otdelenia na 1915 god, Kazan, 1914, 6-8.

\footnote{72} In 1909, the 14 oldest provincial zemstvos alone had almost 17,000 full-time village correspondents. V. V. MORACHEVSKI\ II (ed.), Spravochnye svedenia o deiatel’nosti zemstv po sel’skomu khoziaistvu (po dannym na 1909 god), xxx. This edition provided information about the statistical organizations of 22 out of 34 zemstvos, with altogether had over 19,000 voluntary correspondents. The total figure of correspondents must be somewhere beyond 30,000, for such “peasant-dominated” provinces as Viatka or Onnets must have had many hundreds of correspondents. There is indirect evidence that Pskov province alone had over a thousand correspondents, although the exact figure was not reported. See ibid., 424. On peasant libraries see: SEREGNY, Zemstvos, Peasants, and Citizenship, 295, 309 et al.

\footnote{73} In absolute figures, in 1906-1911, 4,807 rural consumer societies were registered, 6.3 times more than all other types of consumer cooperatives altogether. A. MERKULOV, Kooperativnoe dvizhenie v Rossii, in: Vestnik kooperatsii, no. 4 (1912), 130.

\footnote{74} Between the First Russian Revolution and World War I, the funding for such educational activities increased almost 40 times. In 1913, some 1,580,782 peasants attended 43,763 one-day lectures in 11,762 villages. During the same year, almost 100,000 peasants studied in 1,657 short-term courses, and in 1914, there were 2,500 courses planned (because of the war, only half of them actually took place). See: A. LAZARENKO, Rasprostranenie sel’skokhoziaistvennykh znaniy vneskol’nym putem, in: Sel’skokhoziaistvennoe obrazovanie, no. 10 (1915), 485, 487, 490, 493.
ommended improvements in their technique, experimented with crop rotation schemes, changed the traditional calendar for agricultural work, or made their first steps in marketing their products, the efforts of rural professionals (agronomists, economists, educators) were productive. While administrative measures seem radical, fast, and unified, they cannot change the economic man, and consequently, the pattern of economic and social development.

From Russians to Peasants… and Back?

Even before the war crisis and revolutionary upheaval put an end to the project of making a new economic man – the peasant – by means of public initiative in the countryside, the initial program of turning “Russians into peasants” had reached its limits. The very success of peasant mobilization made the initially irrelevant problem of “Russianness” an acute one. Russians were being turned into what kind of peasants? To reach rural population not speaking Russian, agricultural specialists with the more or less eager support of the zemstvos introduced educational courses and publications in local languages; first, in Ukrainian and then in Tatar. Agricultural periodicals in the Russian Empire were published in a dozen languages and some national groups were even more active in the promotion of “agro-journalism” than were the “Russians” (i.e. not just “ethnic” Russians, but all those embracing Russian imperial culture). Some agricultural societies and cooperatives, the spearheads of agricultural modernization, were predominantly non-Russian in their composition, to the point that Russian language was often used only for official reports and correspondence. Many agronomists, training courses for peasants, and cooperatives in Ukraine operated de facto in Ukrainian and by 1917 local activists had become determined to make Ukrainian language the official lan-

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75 In 1912, about three quarters (73.14%) of all periodicals were published in Russian, and we find exactly the same proportion of Russian-language publications (73.12%) among the agricultural periodical press. This means that the “Russians” were equally responsible for the growth of the general and the special agricultural press. On the contrary, some nationalities (Jews, to some extent Poles) showed much lesser interest in agriculture than in other topics, while others (Estonians, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians) were much more enthusiastic about agro-journalism than ordinary. I. V. VOL’FSON (ed.), Gazetnyi mir: Adresnaia i spravochnaia kniga, 2nd edition, St. Petersburg, 1912, columns 522-523, 525. Thus, the average percentage of all periodicals in Yiddish was almost three times higher than the figure for the agrarian press. And quite the opposite, Lithuanian was used twice as often in agrarian periodicals than it was in the general press. This indicates a higher degree of the Lithuanian (and also Estonian and Ukranian) national intelligentsia’s involvement in the agrarian question, than was common among many other nationalities.

By 1917 the share of non-Russian periodicals decreased dramatically (about three times), largely due to the German occupation of Poland and the closing of German-language editions. However, the pre-war dynamics suggested the gradual increase in the number of non-Russian publications. V. V. MORACHEVSKII (ed.), Spravochnik po sel’skohoziaistvennoi pechaty, xxxiii.

76 In 1909, the Batum Agricultural Society included 140 members, 113 of which were Turkic agriculturists with a very poor (if any) command of Russian language. See: Batumskii sel’skii khoziain, no. 7 (1909), 196.
The establishment of agricultural schools with instruction in native languages became a powerful factor for the consolidation of local elites and their upward mobility, as a huge demand for agricultural specialists catapulted people with even just primary vocational training into lower middle class positions, making them influential within the district or even within the provincial-level social networks. The success of education initiatives in local languages (particularly, adult education programs and libraries) triggered a chain reaction. The enthusiastic response of the peasantry to the activity of rural professionals gave the latter a feeling of a growing national unity, but not necessarily one that was “imperially Russian”. The elite and often latent nationalism of intellectuals participating in the public modernization campaign found its “people”, who were now ready to comprehend the ideology of nationalism. At the same time, villagers who got accustomed to thinking about global and abstract phenomena of “production”, “market”, or “international relations” (during the war) became the social basis for emerging mass peasant nationalisms, affecting in turn the ideology and worldview of intellectuals.

Thus, in the context of the Russian Empire’s multiethnicity, the universal processes of modernization and development of civil society had a peculiarly national dynamic. The truly massive public modernization campaign in the countryside initially gave secondary importance to the task of integrating peasants into “a nation” and had been more concerned with the making of a “new peasant” as a new economic man. As a result, Russians did begin becoming “peasants”. But at the peak of the campaign’s success, it met its most serious challenge. The notion of “Russianness” came to be questioned by a mobilized and increasingly self-conscious “new peasantry”. As it turned out, the successful integration of the peasantry into a large society

77 Cf.: So stranits soiuзnoi pechati, in: Vestnik kooperativnykh soiuzov, no. 2 (February 1917), 50.
78 Cf. just one case: in 1906, 19 young Bashkirs graduated from the Belebei three-class agricultural school, representing all layers of Bashkir society. Only half of them were of the peasant estate, while two of the students were nobles (apparently, quite dumb; one of them spent 6 years in a 3-year school prior to graduation). Those who reported their subsequent occupation earned between 300 and 600 rubles a year (as much as medical assistants or primary school teachers earned). Some Belebei graduates filled the ranks of zemstvo clerks, thus changing the social balance in the zemstvo. However, most of them became managers of zemstvo warehouses and experimental agricultural farms, instructors of creameries, etc. See: Otchet po Belebeevskoi, Ufimskogo Gubernskogo zemstva, nizsshei sel’skokhoziaistvennoi shkole 1-go razriada za 1907 god, Ufa, 1908, 186-189. We know details about 15 years of the subsequent career of at least one graduate of the Belebei agricultural school. The son of a petty civil servant, Sultan-Girei Taichinov received a zemstvo scholarship to study at the Belebei school, from which he graduated in its first class in 1899. Then he entered zemstvo service, becoming a lecturer on agriculture for the Tatar-speaking audience, an agronomist assistant, and finally, in 1911, the Belebei district agronomist. In 1914 he was residing not in the district center Belebei, but in the village of Buzdiak, apparently his native place. See: Otchet po Belebeevskoi, pp. 177-179; N. A. ALEXANDROVSKII, M. M. GLUKHOV, N. F. SHCHERBAKOV, V. N. SHTEIN (eds.), Mestnyi agronomicheskii personal, 375.
79 SEREGNY, Zemstvos, Peasants, and Citizenship, esp. 300-303.
produced nationalist pressures that an old and vague “imperial nation” could not accommodate as a political nation of democratic representation nor as a federation of national territorial units. Although its collapse in February 1917 owed much to the newly emerged national and nationalist movements, we will never know whether the Russian ancien régime could have accommodated these new popular ethnic nationalisms and democratic “imperial” nationalism if there had not been the First World War and the subsequent revolution. World War I and the revolutionary upheaval of 1917 also interrupted a decade of Russia’s rural professionals' modernization efforts, which makes it difficult to assess the results of this movement quantitatively, although the very unprecedented degree of peasant mobilization in 1917-1921 could be explained by the success of previous decade’s public modernization campaign.

The European historical patterns and historiographic models turn out to be quite applicable to and relevant in the Russian case, though not in the form of some aggregated “universal” “European” scenario but as a set of individual cases and differentiated processes and practices. In its turn, the story of Russian modernization campaign in the countryside in the early 20th century provides an insight into the nuances of Western European modernization and nation-building: it highlights the problem of a dialogue between an educated elite of modernizers and a broader population, the complexity of overlapping processes of creating “a national body” and “a new economic man”, and the conflict between the homogenizing economic discourse and the differentiating nationalist perspective.
The Most European Science in Russia: 
Defining the Empire Anthropologically

MARINA MOGILNER 
(Journal Ab Imperio, Kazan’)

If we would embark on the task of composing a catalogue of major notions that define the intellectual experience of Europe of the mid-19th to the first half of the 20th centuries, the notion of “race” would be among the first to come to mind. Indeed, this notion and the science of physical/racial anthropology had become central for Western European culture in the mid 19th century and lost its influence only after World War II. During this time an inherently inexact and ambiguous term, "race", was reconnected with another major European concept – the concept of “nation”. In the words of Nicolas Hudson who studied the genealogy of the European usage of “race” from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment into the early 19th century,

the re-union of "race" and "nation" had such important consequences because of the way these terms had been redefined during the Enlightenment. "Race" now meant more than just a "lineage" or even a variation of the human species induced by climate or custom. It meant an innate and fixed disparity in the physical and intellectual make-up of different peoples. "Nation," in turn, was more than a group of people living under the same government. It was the very "soul" of personal identity, the very life-blood churning through an individual speaking a particular dialect in one of Europe's innumerable regions. From the often violent coupling of "race" and "nation," re-fashioned in these new forms, were spawned the most virulent forms of nineteenth-century racism, and finally the political barbarities of our own century.¹

In modern post-colonial scholarship, the notion of “race” and the science of physical anthropology has been linked with yet another defining European experience – the experience of colonialism. From this perspective, from the mid 19th to the turn of the century anthropology was reconceived as an imperial science for “white Europeans” to use knowledge in order to manipulate cultural distances, to observe and distance other, distinctly different non-European races.²

The mental map of scholars who study both paradigms – the “racialising” of nation and Orientalism – until recently had excluded Russia. The debates about the so-called “Russian orientalism” and the notion of “race” in modern Russian political and cultural discourse, characterize the very latest stage of the historiographic redefinition of Russia as a part of European modernity. The issue under consideration is whether we can apply to Russia the models and paradigms that were designed to understand and represent Western European modernity. Speaking about Russian orientalism and racial nationalism (or more often – racial anti-Semitism of the 20th century), scholars not as much study as reinterpret Russian state policy, religious policy, Orientalism as an academic discipline in the Russian Empire, Russian ethnography, etc. This reinterpretation can be very fruitful and lead to opening up new, previously unstudied historical topics and even fields. At the same time the very goal of redefining the Russian experience as European requires a certain typification and unification of European patterns of development, the creation of some “normative Europe”.

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However, “Europe” had been imagined by Western Europeans as much as it was imagined by Russians and in this sense we can measure both Westerners’ and Russians’ “Europeaness” by their own standards and by their imagined Europes and modernities.

The science that existed on the margins of the official Russian academic world – Russian physical anthropology of the mid-19\textsuperscript{th} to the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century – is a very good case in point, for it “professionally” worked with such an archetypical modern European notion as the notion of “race”, but applied it to the Russian imperial context. Russian physical anthropologists – a community of professionals (doctors and teachers) and academics (university professors) – developed a common identity of belonging to the most modernized and European science of their time and shared a very specific sense of modernity and Europeaness. Their story is yet to be written; today many Russian anthropologists are known to researchers either as ethnographers or geographers, some are treated as a part of the foreign academic milieu: for example, in Efron’s pioneering book “Defenders of the Race”, the Russian Jewish anthropologist Samuel Weissenberg is described as primarily German in his intellectual, political and cultural appearance. Efron ignores the specifically Russian context and implications of Weissenberg’s scholarship as being secondary to the historical understanding of his anthropological agenda. Yet Weissenberg was actively involved in the grand project of Russian anthropology – the anthropological cataloguing of the empire. As a renowned anthropologist, Jewish ethnographer and activist he also participated in the construction of Russian-Jewish identity within the borders of the Empire (as against the cross-border Ashkenazi or Ost-Juden identities); a native of Elisavetgrad, he applied for German anthropological scholarships and published in German academic journals, yet his major anthropological agenda and his application of anthropological methods that he learned in Germany cannot be explained from the perspective of German anthropological discourse (or, as Efron does, from the perspective of German Jewish anthropological discourse). And Weissenberg is just one case of many…

In this paper I will draw a picture of Russian physical anthropology as a scholarly discipline and an academic community. I will discuss self-visions and self-descriptions of Russian anthropologists, their methods and major achievements, their grand project of anthropological description of the Empire. Then I will pose a question of how the western “power-knowledge” paradigm and the Foucault-inspired vision of modern practices of population management summed up by Peter Holquist in the formula “to count, to extract and to exterminate” can be applied to the case of Russian anthropology. At the end I will bring the examples of alternative (in the line of racialising the nation) use of academic anthropology in Russia and
bring the discussion to its last point which is about the imagined Europe and “European science” constructed by the Russian anthropologists as the ideal for their Russian anthropological utopia.

The Myth of Origin

When, in 1900, Russian anthropologists started their own scholarly journal – *Russkii Antropologicheskii zhurnal* – they felt confident enough to reflect on the history of Russian anthropology which at that time, by their estimations, was 40 to 45 years old.5 The early stages of this history were directly linked to western European anthropology with the first Russian anthropologists been referred to as the “pupils of Linnaeus” rather then members of the Imperial geographical society or ethnographers. Their German origin and foreign scholarly culture (they wrote in Latin and German) were also stressed (Karl von Ber, Middendorf, Kastern, Shrenk, Grubber were named among the first Russian anthropologists).6 At the same time, the most natural predecessor, Russian ethnography, was considered a problematic source for Russian anthropology. While in 1900 the leading Russian anthropologist, Moscow university professor D. Anuchin, credited the Imperial Russian Geographical Society and its Ethnography division for “occasionally collecting anthropological data”,7 in 1916 he noted skeptically that taking ethnography as the predecessor seriously means going back into history to the time of the Primary Chronicle. This is pointless and wrong, Anuchin assumes, since Russian ethnography had never studied “physical characteristics of [human] tribes” before the works on the human brain by academician Fon Ber appeared in the 1850s.8

The *Russian Anthropological Journal*, the mouthpiece of the Anthropological division of the Moscow-based Imperial Society of Lovers (*Lubitelei*) of Natural sciences, Anthropology and Ethnography, contrary to traditionally *Trudy – Papers* published by closed corporate academic societies, was intended for a broad academic and non-academic audience. Russian

5 In 1902 Prof. A. A. IVANOVSKII, one of the leading Russian anthropologists, calculated the age of Russian anthropology as being around 40 or 50 years. Ал. ИВАНОВСКИЙ. Об антропологическом изучении инородческого населения России, in: РАЖ. 1902. Кн. IX. № 1. 113

6 Russian anthropologists customarily stressed the German origin of the first Russian scholars in the field as well as importance of French, German and other European examples of the anthropological societies for the Moscow anthropological division of the Imperial Society of Lovers of Natural Sciences, Anthropology and Ethnography. As a typical example see: Д. АНУЧИН. Беглый взгляд на прошлое антропологии и на ее задачи в России, in: РАЖ. 1900. кн. 1. 34-35.

7 Among the anthropological “activities” of Russian ethnographers ANUCHIN mentions “the collection of data on physical anthropology (Mainov, Schapov) and prehistorical archeology (Poliakov, Merezhkovskii)”. Ibid. 36.

Anthropological Journal was very outspoken in equating the history of Russian anthropology with the history of the Moscow Anthropological Division. “The history of Russian anthropology begins with the foundation, on the initiative of Prof. A. I. Bogdanov, of the Anthropological Division of the Society of Lovers of Natural sciences”, declared Anuchin in one of his articles. ⁹ Al. Ivanovsky called Professor of zoology of the Moscow university, A. P. Bogdanov, “the first apostle of anthropology in Russia” who transmitted it from French to Russian soil. ¹⁰ Ivanovsky hinted that Bogdanov was inspired by the French anthropological society founded in 1860 and directly transplanted French anthropology into Russian – Moscow – soil. This was the right predecessor for Russian anthropology, not local ethnographic and geographical societies.

The pre-Moscow stage of Russian anthropology was painted in the journal as either non-existent or dependent on direct foreign influence and participation. The very fact noted by the same Anuchin that by 1864 – the time of the Division’s foundation – “beside Bogdanov himself, there were no specialists [in anthropology] in Moscow”, did not challenge his major assumption about Petersburg or any other possible pre-Moscow anthropological past. ¹¹ This was, indeed, striking, especially in the case of St. Petersburg – the major locus of Russian imperial sciences – geography and ethnography. In the dominant anthropological communal discourse formed and reflected by the RAJ, St. Petersburg emerged as just one of the centers of Russian anthropology alongside with Derpt, Kazan, Kyiv, Khar’kov, Siberia (due to the ethnographic activities of the exiles) and a few others. Moscow, on the contrary, was the only and the most natural center of attraction and influence for all these “anthropological provinces”. Such rhetoric persisted even after the establishment of two academic anthropological societies in St. Petersburg: the Russian Anthropological Society of the St. Petersburg University (1888) and the Anthropological Society of the Military-Medical Academy (1893). ¹² Yet, even before this, thanks to an enthusiast of physical anthropology from the Military-Medical Academy, Prof. A. I. Tarenesky, St. Petersburg became an actual

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⁹ Ibid. 9.
¹⁰ Ал. ИВАНОВСКИЙ. Об антропологическом изучении инородческого населения России, in: РАЖ. 1902. Кн. IX. № 1. 113.
¹¹ BOGDANOV started kranimmetrical research of the archeological materials as a way to conceptualize the “great Russian anthropological type”. In 1865 he published “Материалы для антропологии курганного периода в Московской губ.” He translated into Russian Paul BROCA’S instructions for anthropological observation. It was Bogdanov who recruited first Moscow anthropologists and helped to establish a department (kafedra) of anthropology in Moscow University.
¹² Russian Anthropological Society of St. Petersburg University, established in 1888 and the Anthropological Society of the Imperial Military Medical Academy, established in 1893.
leader as regards the quantity of anthropological dissertations defended there by the pupils of Tarenesky.¹³

These obvious facts, as well as generic connection to and intellectual legacy of St. Petersburg were consciously downplayed by the group of anthropologists centering around the Moscow Division and the RAJ. They invented their own “myth of origin” in order to separate themselves from the old Russian imperial science that presumably projected the “imperial vision” and relied on descriptive and often ideologically biased methods. The new community of anthropologists that united academics and professionals outside academia searched for a common European past for itself and pretended to participate in the community of European anthropologists on equal terms. A colonial-like pattern of communication with Western European anthropology ended up with the establishment of the Moscow division. Now the mission of Russian anthropology, besides “our own national self-cognition”, consisted in “broadening the limits of human cognition in general, of cognition of humanity’s bodily and spiritual variations, their mutual interconnections and correlations, their dependence on the environment and time, etc.”¹⁴ German anthropologist Rudolf Virchow was cited as saying that the general progress of anthropology depends on Russia which holds the keys to the major problems of modern European anthropology.¹⁵ Thus, the symbolic (and actual) transfer of the center of Russian anthropology from Petersburg to Moscow was a step toward modern Europe, as it signified the universalist stance of the new science, its ultimate “objectivity” and its actual newness, its distance from the old Russian imperial science.

**Anthropological modernity**

Existing on the margins of academia (which was not initially a conscious choice but rather the result of a very low level of institutionalization of the new science)¹⁶, using a scholarly

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¹³ Professor A. I. TARENETSKII was one of the leading Russian medical anthropologists who promoted an anthropological approach in the modern Russian military science. Many medical-anthropological, sanitary-anthropological and ethnographic-anthropological dissertations were defended under his tutorship. Among them: the anthropological description of Ossetians by N. V. GIL’CHENKO, of Buryat – by I. I. SHENDRIKOVAKYI and M. T. POROTOV, of Arminians – by I. K. TVAR’IANOVICH, of Bashkirs – by D. N. NIKOL’SKYI, of the Jews – by M. P. IAKOVENKO etc. These dissertations are preserved and catalogued in the Library of the Medical Military academy.

¹⁴ Д. АНУЧИН. Беглый взгляд на прошлое антропологии и на ее задачи в России, in: РАЖ. 1900. кн. 1. 40.

¹⁵ Ал. ИВАНОВСКИЙ. Об антропологическом изучении инородческого населения России, in: РАЖ. 1902. Кн. X1, № 1. 112 (112-125).

¹⁶ Russian anthropologists routinely complained about an inadequate level of institutionalization of their science. Even the very rare anthropological textbooks in Russia treated this issue among the most important. For example, the textbook of E. G. LANDAU featured a list of countries where anthropology was taught in the universities (Germany, Italy, Great Britain, Switzerland, France, Austria, Hungary, Spain, Japan, etc.) In Russia, according to this textbook, anthropology is “flourishing” only in Moscow and St. Petersburg
journal as a means of empire-wide professional communication within the virtual community of anthropologists, rejecting any national or religious biases and allowing into the community representatives of all peoples of the empire, stimulating inorodtsy anthropologists to study Russian people as well as their own (and vise versa), positioning themselves as a part of the cultural world obsessed with self-cognition, Moscow-oriented anthropologists (actually, the majority of Russian anthropologists) were creating their own anthropological utopia, a peculiar kind of anthropological modernity.

Obviously, they were measuring, calculating and systematizing. In this sense, they represented a modern type of scholarship. Taxonomy, at the same time, was not an end in itself. Typically of the scholarly discourse of the late 19th century, Russian anthropology was searching for the laws of historical development, the basic causalities: as Ivanosvsky put it, “modern physical anthropology is not any more satisfied with a simple description and assertion of a fact; it aspires not only to discover morphological variations of the mankind, but also to explain the causes of their emergence”.

Anthropology was “a natural history of Man”, and as such provided a new modern scientific umbrella for old disciplines that were to be modernized through their incorporation into anthropology. In Russia this evolution from being one of the sciences exploring the history of humanity, alongside with “history proper, the history of culture, ethnography, sociology, geography, geology, etc.”, to self-perception as a mega-science encompassing three fields – “physical anthropology, pre-historical
archeology and ethnology” (and the latter included the study of folk culture, the history of primitive religions, law and art and comparative linguistics), took less than two decades.\textsuperscript{20} The methods of study were universal: the language of numbers, formulas and graphs did not know state borders. Theoretically, there were no special provisions for the study of Russians as against Tatars or Jews, and in fact, anthropologists studied not peoples, but the variations of this or that anthropological trait within the population (of a volost’, a gubernia, a region, a country…). The anthropological utopia was, in a sense, the utopia of numbers, of the endless accumulation of anthropological data: “Let us imagine that everywhere in Russia, in different big and small centers observers-anthropologists are dispersed; they collect – according to a certain system and with certain methods – data about the variations of a [racial] type in the surrounding area, data about the distribution among the nearby population of the hues of skin, hair, stature, body proportions, the forms of head and face, morphological deviations, physiological and pathological distinctions”. The data were to be placed on the maps, and organized into graphs, diagrams and tables.\textsuperscript{21} Medical doctors and local teachers were the utopian “observers-anthropologists” who acted under the guidance and with the assistance of the Moscow Anthropological Division.\textsuperscript{22} Obviously, the accent on professionals, on the technological side of the enterprise revealed the modern utopia that hardly reflected the realities of the turn of the century Russia. Compared to their Western European colleagues, Russian anthropologists felt the disadvantages of living in the under-regulated and in this sense – undermodernized state that did not provide the anthropological community with the systematic population statistics. They explained that anthropology was a science of culture and thus a privilege of “cultural countries”, where one could rely on such institutions as mass conscription, mass schooling, the systems of industrial control, social medicine and charities to get the needed quantitative data for anthropological analysis and comparison.\textsuperscript{23} In Russia, Anychin was the first to use military data on the height of conscripts to compose a map of height distribution within the Velikorusskii population and tried to find correlations between the variations of height and other anthropological traits. But in most cases Russian anthropologists had to rely on themselves in collecting primary data – hence the utopia of thousands of anthropologists working literarily in every corner of the Empire compensating for the underdevelopment of the modern Russian state.

\textsuperscript{20} Д. АНУЧИН. На рубеже полутора- и полустолетия. 4.
\textsuperscript{21} Д. АНУЧИН. О задачах и методах антропологии, in: РАЖ. 1902. Кн. IX. № 1. 72, 73. (62-88).
\textsuperscript{22} See ANUCHIN’S speech at the VIII Congress of Russian medical doctors: Д. АНУЧИН. О задачах и методах антропологии, in: РАЖ. 1902. кн. IX. № 1. 63-88.
Russian anthropologists were no less concerned with the impact of urbanization, industrial revolution, etc. on the development of human nature. Regardless of the fact that Russia definitely could not hold “the keys” to this particular problem which was most intensively studied by American and British anthropologists, Russian anthropologists felt natural to pose the theme of “degeneration” as equally important for Russia. Even participating in the “degeneration” of civilization, their Russia was becoming more modern.

It is very tempting to declare all this preoccupation with systematization, classification and tables as a classical case of systematization thinking of the intellectuals-experts – the “taxonomy” phenomenon described by Foucault. But does it really help us to understand the type of modernity shared by the Russian anthropological community (if we do not really intend to declare anthropology an “archaic” science)? Anthropology was, indeed, a new science, especially in Russia, and its fixation on taxonomy could be easily explained by a real necessity to collect and accommodate a lot of individual data. Foucault’s “taxonomy” model acquires more explanatory power when viewed through the prism of the analysis of genesis, which is, according to Foucault, embedded in taxonomy. One of the major late 19th century anthropological dilemmas of polygenesis versus monogenesis of humankind could indeed turn anthropological taxonomy into a potential source of population manipulation policy – another well-known feature of modernity.

The case of Russian anthropology is one of many cases that show how careful a historian should be when accessing the Russian phenomena that seemingly easily qualify as “modern practices” of indirect manipulation. Recent historiography gives us interesting examples of this kind of superficial “recognition”. Probably the strongest argument connecting the turn of the century taxonomy and the population manipulation policy is that made by Peter Holquist. In the title of his Foucault inspired article “To count, to extract, to exterminate” he fixed the inevitable connection between the act of population counting and the act of direct state sanctioned violence – the extermination of the population (Holquist studied Russian military statistics and the colonial practices of the Russian military). In his article those who “count” directly represent the state that “exterminates”, and such a conclusion is predictable given the focus of his analysis. A less deterministic and in a way simplistic scheme of Russian

23 Ал. ИВАНОВСКИЙ. Об антропологическом изучении инородческого населения России, in:РАЖ. 1902. Кн. IX. № 1. 32; Д. АНУЧИН. На рубеже полутора- и полустолетия. 5.
24 М.ФУКО. Слова и вещи. Археология гуманитарных наук. Пер. с фр. В. П. ВИЗГИНА, Н. С. АВТОНОМОВОЙ. Вступительная статья Н. С. АВТОНОМОВОЙ, СПб., 1994.
modernity usually presents it as a peculiar “social contract” between the under-modernized but always-ready-for-direct-violence state and cunning, though actually powerless, modernized intellectuals producing different discourses of manipulation. They supply the state with the “discourses”, while the state empowers them with real potential. Simply speaking, when a Zemstvo statistician or an anthropologist counts, measures and classifies a population, the existing “social contract” of mutual state-intellectual empowering turns their acts, regardless of their actual intentions, into means of constructing a controlling and [potentially] violent modern state.

The case of Russian anthropology illustrates how misleading this scheme may be. First of all, the Russian state was itself a very complex organism whose functioning depended on different groups, administrative and political forces with often competing understandings of modernity and modernization. But most importantly, the society actively modernized itself, compensating for the state’s inability to satisfy its needs and aspirations and often refused any “social contract” with this state. Russian anthropologists wanted to have a more efficient and modernized – “cultural” in their own language – state, but they were very careful in preserving their anthropological taxonomy from being used by the state or exploited by any state project. This was one of the reasons (though not the exclusive one) why they were never called by the state “to action”, i.e. there were no attempts by the state to “privatize” anthropology and put it into the service of Russian national, or imperial or some modern sanitary project. Russian anthropologists successfully utilized well-developed early 20th century Russian channels of obshchestvennost or civil society. Anthropology in Russia even became an alternative venue for a pseudo-academic career for those who were deprived of this opportunity by the state. Two leading Russian Jewish anthropologists, Samuil Weissenberg and A. Elkind, used the Moscow Division, the RAJ and the informal anthropological network in general to build up solid academic reputations and enter the world of academia from the back door, so to speak. While Weissenberg never abandoned his medical practice in Elisavetgrad,26 Dr. Elkind, under the tutorship of Anuchin, defended his dissertation on Jewish anthropology and got an academic degree from Moscow University. In 1916 he became the editor of RAJ, which was the peak of his “alternative” academic career. Naturally, Russian anthropologists had their own political views and ideological biases, but the anthropological discourse in which they participated was consciously cleaned up from any extra-scholarly, in their understanding, considerations. Not only political discussions, but also

26 WEISSENBERG neither moved to Moscow, nor emigrated to Germany, where he was known as a distinguished anthropologist. In other words, his “alternative” anthropological career did not involve actual relocation to the centers of his science.
value judgments were censured on the pages of RAJ (which does not mean that we cannot deconstruct these texts as ideological). When Weissenberg, writing about the Caucasian Jews, allowed himself such a judgment, he was reproached by a fellow anthropologist Kurdov for being not quite objective and scientific. Russian anthropological taxonomy was kept value free, and there was no other hierarchy except the hierarchy of figures and the alphabetical order hierarchy. This is especially evident in the case of Russian Jewish anthropologists, almost all of whom participated in the Jewish sanitary project either in its Zionist version, or later on within the framework of the OZE. At the same time, they never allowed this kind of “applied” anthropology in their “academic” writings. Being latecomers in the European anthropological community, Russian anthropologists had the advantage of learning from others’ mistakes. In a sense, their anthropological modernity was more modern than the European one, for they retained the ideal of a value-free, objective and universal science. They could live with this illusion because the semi-modernized Russian state did not actually need their modern discourses to redefine itself as a modern manipulative state.

**Anthropological description of the Empire**

Western European anthropologists of the turn of the century directed their efforts at studying the “uncivilized people” outside Europe as well as civilized European populations, the natural scale for the study of which was provided by the nation-state: French anthropologists were studying the racial outlook of the population of France, German anthropologists were doing their research within the borders of the German state, etc. Russian anthropologists living in an empire, demonstrated very little interest in “colonial” anthropology and were inspired by the European anthropological project. Being European for them meant, among other things, having Russia on the anthropological map of Europe. They seemingly easily adopted the scale of the empire to the normative European nation-state principle of anthropological grand-projects. In fact, accepting as a legitimate framework the borders of the Russian empire and studying, measuring, cataloging and classifying its different peoples, Russian anthropologists carefully avoided the core-periphery or a more explicit colonial model. Instead they were fascinated with the picture of interactions and successive changes of racial types on a huge territory “from Poland in the West to the Amur region and Kamchatka in the East, from southern people (*narodnostei*) of Trans-Caucasus, Middle Asia and the borderland Chinese
lands to the abandoned (zabroshennye) on the Far North lopary, samoedy, tunguzy and chukchi. Within these wide limits multiple physical types succeed each other…”

What actually could be distilled from hundreds of individual texts of Russian anthropologists is the vision of the “empire” that can be metaphorically presented as a huge patch-work quilt, every scrap of which was painted with a number of fusing colors. The general number of colors was fixed for the whole quilt, only their proportions and combinations varied. Since nobody in the Russian anthropological community rationalized this vision and explained it in political terms (this would have been against the high scholarly code of the community), we can also speculate that their political ideal was some kind of Rossiiskaia nation within the common historical borders of the empire. In any case, advancing the project of the “anthropological exploration of Russia”, Russian anthropologists inescapably acted within the imperial context, but in their “exploration” they used the language and the format of European turn of the century nation-state anthropology. They recognized how difficult and complex the task of anthropological exploration of the Russian Empire was, but they never questioned the very nation-state principle adopted from the West. The only problem they saw was the problem of Russia’s size and unprecedented inner diversity, but this problem was not of a methodological nature and only stimulated their taxonomist zeal: the “ethnic composition of the Russian population is characterized by such a degree of diversity that has no parallels in any western-democratic state – the diversity of physical types and cultural stages. To break this composition down to its component parts, to choose among them the most and less important, to find their similarities and differences, to establish the level of their kinship…” seemed to be a huge, but a realistic task.

The map of a nation-state where the outer borders made the natural limits of anthropological enquiry and the inner borders were drawn by the anthropologists according to their vision of the population’s “physical type” or “types”, was the most adequate graphic model of nation-

27 Д. АНУЧИН. Беглый взгляд на прошлое антропологии и на ее задачи в России, in: РАЖ. 1900. кн. 1. С. 41. Nathaniel KNIGHT in his dissertation (Constructing the Science of Nationality: Ethnography in Mid-Nineteenth Century Russia / Ph.D. dissertation; Columbia University, 1995.) made categorical statement about the Russian ethnography that failed to produce the “colonial other”. Russian ethnographers studied all peoples of the empire including Russians and thus did not share in European racial discourse. Knight made general conclusion about the redundancy of the category of race in the history of modern Russia. Focusing only on ethnographers, Knight did not study anthropologists actually working with the concept of race and with European race discourses. More importantly, he views ethnography (and anthropology) as a colonial science and did not consider its evolution on the European continent under the impact of nationalism.

28 “Антропологическое изучение России”: А. ИВАНОВСКИЙ. От Антропологического Отдела Императорского Общества Любителей естествознания, антропологии и этнографии, in: РАЖ. 1900. кн. 1. 1.

29 Ал. ИВАНОВСКИЙ. Об антропологическом изучении инородческого населения России, in: РАЖ. 1902. Кн. IX. № 1. 112.
state European anthropology and definitely the most logical form of representation for the anthropological taxonomy in the age of nations and nationalism. In fact, the most adequate analogues to the exemplar maps cited by the Russian anthropologists – the maps of relative recurrence of the dark-haired types in Germany, Belgium and Switzerland (Ranke), the map of distribution of height of the male population in France (according to Broca), the map of relative distribution of the dark-haired types in France (according to Topinar), the map of distribution of the figures of cephalic index (according to Collignon and Houze), etc.\(^{30}\) – would have been, in the Russian case, the map of Siberia, or the map of inner Russia or any other map of a relatively small historical region with an ethnically more or less homogeneous population. But the state-nation model adopted by the Russian anthropologists to their imperial setting presupposed the natural limits of their ideal maps – the existing borders of the Empire. D. Anuchin, the leading Russian (Moscow) anthropological voice, invited his followers to carry out an “anthropological photography of Russia, which is a project similar to topographic or geological photography, statistic survey, the investigation of soils, or – and this analogue is better – to the collection of observations about the elements of climate that are gathered by a net of meteorological stations; on the basis of these data the conclusions are made about the climate of the whole country…”\(^{31}\) Not surprisingly the main form of graphic representation of data in each of the fields cited by Anychin – topography, geology, the study of soils, meteorology – was a map.

While the outer borders of the anthropological map of Russia were set up “historically”, the inner borders depended on the focus and scale of a particular research. However, there was a general disparity between the actual prevailing anthropological practice of studying the regions (the Western Region,\(^ {32}\) the Caucasus,\(^ {33}\) the Volga region,\(^ {34}\) etc.)\(^ {35}\) – the proto-nation-states, and a popular theoretical premise according to which the smallest administrative unit for the anthropological research of Russia was the volost’. The idea of studying racial variations volost’ by volost’ was, of course, born out of the Russian anthropological utopia, but it was justified on the grounds of a critical assessment of the uezd or gubernia-scale

\(^{30}\) Their analysis see in: Д. АНУЧИН. О задачах и методах антропологии, in: РАЖ. 1902. Кн. IX. № 1. 72-81.

\(^{31}\) Д. АНУЧИН. О задачах и методах антропологии, in: РАЖ. 1902. Кн. IX. № 1. 72.

\(^{32}\) См., напр., Ю. Д. ТАЛЬНО-ГРЫНЦЕВИЧ. Поляки, in: РАЖ. 1901. Кн. V. № 1. 1-30; Idem. Польская антропологическая литература (с портретами И. Майера и И. Коперницкого), in: РАЖ. 1900. Кн. IV. № 4. 76. See also: Элькинд."Евреи".

\(^{33}\) See works by KURDOV, DZHAVAHOV, WEISENBERG.

\(^{34}\) See, for examples, the works by N. M. MALIEV.

\(^{35}\) For details see: Ал. ИВАНОВСКИЙ. Об антропологическом изучении инородческого населения России, in: РАЖ. 1902. Кн. IX. № 1. 114-115.
anthropology: typically, these types of studies gave so many variations of physical characteristics that it was impossible to postulate any dominant “physical type”. For example, studying the racial outlook of the Velikoruskii population of Russia, anthropologist V. V. Vorob’ev examined 325 men born in the Riazan gubernia. He failed to find any pure “physical type” among the group and concluded that the predominant gubernia Great Russian racial type was the “mixed” one (60%). Similar examples can be multiplied.

Yet, we should not forget that the volost’ – uezd – gubernia – region hierarchy at the beginning of the twentieth century was the most popular scheme of obshchestvennost’/Zemstvo network-building (the project of volost’ agronomists, the discussions about the volost’ Zemstvo, etc.). It was, actually, the modernist project of nation building bottom-up, a project of self-organizing obshchestvennost substituting for the state. In this sense, Russian anthropological discourse recoded the language of social mobilization into the language of scholarship and constructed volost’ as the elementary unit of the ideal anthropological map of Russia. At the same time, the volost’ argument could have been an unconscious reaction to the inadequacy of the nation-state model for the anthropological research of Russia: the imperial borders did not allow for the construction of the ethnically homogeneous and racially more or less fixed “state-nation”, the volost’ borders, at least, allowed for a possibility of locating a more or less definite “physical type”.

The model of nation-state within the Russian context lacked the nation. The anthropology of Russians only superficially resembled the anthropology of Germans or of the French, for the symbolic and geographical boundaries of Russianness were not clear. Russian anthropologists preferred to use such categories as Velikorusy, Malorusy, but the favorite one was the least precise – the “Slavic population” of the empire: the “…modern Slavic population of Russia”, wrote a leading expert in the anthropology of Velikorusy, V. V. Vorob’ev, “is not only mixed, but it varies according to different places of habitation; it is composed of different racial elements, or of the same elements which interact differently in different regions.”

Anthropological examination not only fragmented the “Russian nation” to the level of volost’ “type”, but also explicitly postulated the presence of “physical traits characteristic of the peoples (narodnostei) of other anthropological groups” within the Slavonic anthropological

36 Д. АНУЧИН. О задачах и методах антропологии, in: РАЖ. 1902. Кн. IX. № 1. 82.
37 В. В. ВОРОБЬЕВ. Об антропологическом изучении славянского населения России, in: РАЖ. 1902. Кн. IX. № 1. 103-109.
38 В. В. ВОРОБЬЕВ. Об антропологическом изучении славянского населения, in: РАЖ. 1902. Кн. IX, № 1. 104-105.
39 Ал. ИВАНОВСКИЙ. Опыт антропологической классификации населения России, in: РАЖ. 1903. Кн. XV-XVI. № 3-4. 153, 155.
Anuchin risked to study “Russians” (russkii narod), but the method was a “comparative anthropological analysis that has to explicate the racial composition of this people, to establish its types and shows their relation to the types of West and East…”40.

The project of anthropological description and cartography of the empire received its most ambitious expression in the works of Aleksei Arsenievich Ivanovsky, a graduate of Moscow university and a holder of the Doctor of Philosophy degree (Doctor philosophiae at atrium, 1894-1895) from the University of Leipzig where he specialized in geography (under the tutorship of Professors Fr. Ratzel and Gettner) and anthropology (with Prof. Em. Schmitt). His first dissertation at Moscow University – “About the anthropological composition of Russian population” – brought him an MA in geography. Prior to the defense he had to pass three magisterial exams: in geography, in meteorology and in anthropology. In 1913, after the successful defense of the dissertation “World population. An attempt at anthropological classification”, he became a Doctor of geography. Such educational background made Ivanovsky a perfect candidate for the anthropological synthesis on the imperial scale.

The comparative method of anthropological classification invented by Ivanovsky was based on a number of major racial “indicators” (pokazateli) such as the color of hair and eyes, the height and the form of the head, “height-longitudinal” skull index, facial index (a ratio of the maximum width of the face to its length), nasal index (a ratio of the maximum nasal width to nasal length), the length of the body, length of arms and legs, etc. Having calculated these indicators for all population groups studied by Russian anthropologists within the limits of the empire, Ivanovsky coded them and established three levels of racial kinship between all the population groups/narodnosti: the highest level of kinship had a ratio of differences between the “indicators” less than 1; the second level – less than 2 and the third – no more then 3.41

The classification itself was organized in alphabetical order starting with Afghani (afgantsy), followed by Aisors, Armenians, Bashkirs, Buriats, Byelorussians…, Great Russians and then the other peoples in alphabetical order up to the Iakuts (Yakuts) at the end of the list. The Russian alphabet was the only organizational principle of Ivanovsky’s classification. Overall it produced an impression of the absence of pure “races” (except Jews – but this is a special topic for discussion) that could have been used as an “objective” base for constructing a nation. The level of racial heterogeneity among the Slavic group was simply unprecedented. Ivanovsky distinguished the “Slavonic anthropological group” that included Great Russians,

40 Д. АНУЧИН. Беглый взгляд на прошлое антропологии и на ее задачи в России, in: РАЖ. 1900. кн. 1. 41.
41 А. ИВАНОВСКИЙ. Опыт антропологической классификации населения России in: РАЖ. 1903. Кн. XV-XVI. № 3-4. 107-165.
Little Russians and Byelorussians (yet excluded the Little Russians of the Kyiv gubernia and the Kuban’ Kazaks), Poles, Lithuanians, Kazan Tatars, Bashkirs and Kalmyks. As a result of such a grouping, one of the major terms balancing the Russian imperial order – “inorodets” – lost any sense: if Tatars belonged to the “Slavonic racial group”, how could they be viewed as literary ino-rodsty?

However, Ivanovsky’s disintegration of the Russian population did not stop here. The groups making the Great Russian narodnost’ demonstrated only the third level of racial kinship. At the same time, Great Russians measured at a gubernia level showed the highest level of kinship with Poles, and only the second and third degrees of kinship with Byelorussians. However, compared to the Great Russians, the Little Russians were diversified even more. “Regional differences of the Little Russian type express themselves in such a sharp way that cannot be found either among the Great Russians, or among the Byelorussians” wrote Ivanosky. “Little Russians of the Kyiv gubernia stay absolutely lonely, Little Russians (kozaks) of the Kuban’ district enter an entirely different group (the Osetians’) and only Little Russians of the Volyn’ gubernia possess the III degree kinship with the Little Russians taken as a group and with Byelorussians”.

And all this diversity of types and kinships, established on the basis of thousands of measurements and calculations, was put on maps. Ivanovsky’s immense efforts resulted in a classification that was, with some reservations, adopted by the anthropological community and provided a general scholarly framework for the realization of the Russian anthropological utopia. It remained an expression of the ideal of objective, total and universal science, whose language and form of representation were “European”. However, actual European anthropology at that time was becoming increasingly monopolized (in different forms) by the nation-states and the language of science was quickly turning into the language of new social (sanitary projects in Great Britain and Germany) and national politics. The ideal Europe as a world of a modern universalistic and humanistic culture (the ideal of human self-cognition is, of course, a great humanistic ideal) kept inspiring the anthropological community of the country whose European status, as well as membership in the community of cultural nations, were questionable for many Europeans. In Russia, the grand-anthropological project designed under the influence of Western nation-state anthropology, did not provide for the construction of either a “soil and blood” type of

42 Ibid. 153.
43 Ibid. 153, 155.
44 Ibid. 156.
Russian nation, or the three-partied Russian nation, or the imperial vision of the Russian core and inorodcy periphery.

This is not to say that there were no attempts by other agencies beside the state to use anthropology and the category of race in politics, especially in the beginning of the twentieth century with its rapid modernization, the emergence of mass politics, the rising importance of the “national question” in the empire, etc. In this respect, the most interesting cases were Russian Jewish anthropology in its connection to the Zionist and Diaspora national projects, and the racialization of Russian popular nationalist discourse. Both topics remain understudied and the question of whether new political discourses influenced the integrity of the dominant scholarly anthropological discourse and changed the “power-knowledge” balance in Russian anthropology is still unanswered.

Among the cases of direct application of racial anthropology by the ideologists of Russian nationalism, probably the most interesting is the case of Ivan Alekseevich Sikorsky, Professor of Kiev St. Vladimir University, a recognized psychiatrist and neurologist, whose scholarly works were translated into European languages and acknowledged internationally. Today he is mostly known as a medical expert in the Beilis trial who testified in favor of the ritual murder version.\(^{45}\) Sikorsky’s nationalist vision has not been seriously studied, even though he was one of the modernizers of Russian nationalism and consciously worked with the category of race.\(^{46}\) Writing about the Russian nation and nationalism Sikorsky posed as an academic anthropologist and tried to build a corresponding scholarly reputation.\(^{47}\) The documents from the Kyiv archives tell the story of his and a few other Kyiv university professors’ attempts to found an academic anthropological society in Kyiv.\(^{48}\) As a university professor he tried to

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\(^{45}\) For more see a documented publication: Дело Мендея Бейлиса. Материалы Чрезвычайной следственной комиссии Временного правительства о судебном процессе 1913 г. по обвинению в ритуальном убийстве / Сост. Р. Ш. ГАНЕЛИН, В. Е. КЕЛЬНЕР, И. В. ЛУКОЯНОВ; Вступ. статья Г. М. РЕЗНИКА. СПб., 1999.


\(^{47}\) See the following of SIKORSKY’S works: “Черты из психологии славян”; “Данные из антропологии”; “Русские и Украинацы”; “Характеристика черной, желтой и белой рас в связи с вопросами русско-японской войны”; “Антропологическая и психологическая генеалогия Пушкина”; “Экспертиза по делу об убийстве Андрюши Ющинского”; “Знаки вырождения”. In.: Русская расовая теория до 1917 года / Под ред. и с предисл. В. Б. АВДЕЕВА. Москва, 2002.

teach the anthropological ABC to his students and even published a catalogue of his home library that contained a relatively big number of anthropological works, mostly foreign, to make them accessible to his students.49

Quite in line with the spirit of the epoch of “nations and nationalisms” he redefined the empire along the lines of the nation-state model with the Russian nation constructed as a majority (a historical amalgam of Great Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians), a core population surrounded by the racially inferior inorodtsy population (to get such a result he interestingly ignored the existence of Volga Tatars living in the midst of the Russian “core” nation). The initial unity of the Russian nation had been formed on the stage of its racial existence (Sikorsky insisted that Jews were stuck on this pre-historical stage) and currently, on the stage of a national existence, remained the elementary basis for the more sophisticated historical, cultural and psychological unity. Russians, in Sikorsky’s interpretation, were “Aryans”, representatives of the higher race. Thus, using the authority of academic anthropology, he introduced the models of racialized national discourse and racial hierarchy. He used the same models that were consciously rejected by the Russian anthropological community even though on the practical level they allowed a solution to many burning issues of modern Russian politics: they helped to adjust the archaic empire to the nation-state standards; and they made the national claims of inorodtsy look irrelevant since inorodtsy were “objectively” destined to be absorbed by a higher racial and cultural entity. Most importantly, only such reading of anthropology allowed one to construct the “Big Russian nation”, for the category of race was something much more fundamental than any “linguistic” or “cultural” nationalism. And this reading was “European”, as was the discourse of the Russian anthropological community of the turn of the century. However, Sikorsky had never been allowed into the anthropological community, and his name was never mentioned on the pages of RAJ.50 On the other hand, Sikorsky tried to limit his “scholarly” references to quotations from foreign anthropologists and very limited and biased quoting of Russians; Sikorsky’s unique (for Kyiv) anthropological library did not contain RAJ or published anthropological dissertations defended in Moscow or St. Petersburg.51


50 To be more precise, since 1889 SIKORSKY was a member of the Russian Anthropological Society of St. Petersburg University. However he did not participate in its activities and never published in its periodicals and collections. See: Протоколы заседаний Русского Антропологического Общества при Императорском СПб. Университете за 1889 г. / Под ред. Секретаря общество С. Н. Данилю. СПб., 1890. 1-12, 13.

After a short break *RAJ* was resumed in 1916. In the editorial the newly appointed editor, A. Elkind, wrote that the popularity of anthropology as a science was to grow with the spread of culture. Even the realities of the European war did not challenge the basic paradigm of Russian anthropology – the paradigm of a universalistic modern culture and Europe as its major locus. Probably, such was the paradox of the “catching-up development” that many historians tend to understand as a disadvantage. In recent historiography the “catching-up” metaphor is forced out by the metaphor of “telescoped development” which implies two things: first, the stages of development that in their original context took a lot of time to evolve, in the Russian context lacked this time, mingled and distorted each other; and secondly, that Russians did not actually experience many processes (capitalism, industrialization, etc.) that they fiercely criticized, dismissed and reconsidered together with the “modernized” world. It seems that Russian anthropologists knew – both from the experience of their own country and from the foreign experience – what they were criticizing and rejecting, they had less time compared to their western colleagues, but they also joined the movement at its advanced stage and were wise enough not to “invent the bicycle” – an authentic Russian anthropology. They used the language and methods of European anthropology and designed their grand-project according to the European recipe. And they did not “distort” the recipe. Interestingly enough, they managed to extract from it its major components and saved them from what they considered as distortions: from the manipulative state, from the constructivist nationalist projects, and from the vulgarization of the scientific method. They synthesized an anthropological modernity that was based on the ideals of universal culture and objective science – an instrument of human self-cognition and human perfection. In this sense Russian anthropology was more “European” than its inspiration – the archetypal European anthropological science.

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Making Politics, Undoing Empire: Political Reform in Russia at the Beginning of the 20th Century

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A Historiographical Note

The growing interest in nationalism, history of nationalities and multinational society in studies of Russia has recently led to the redefinition of many core issues of Russian history. Historians discovered that the development of the Russian state, society, and culture was complicated by the fact that the Russian Empire was not a Russian national state but rather a highly heterogeneous space, in which the degree of integration of different nationalities and the level of development of national consciousness varied. Yet, despite many similarities with Western type colonialism, the Russian Empire remained committed to upholding the political integrity of the territory and population, which makes it a peculiar continental subtype in history of world colonialism. To complicate things further, the Russian Empire lacked a developed ideology of colonialism in the sense of systematic reflection on multinational composition of the state and identifiable boundaries that separated the imperial center from

the periphery. Instead, Russian political representations asserted the national character of the *russkoe* state (at least in the 19th century, but one can trace this thread even in the 18th century under the cover of imperial fascination with spatial expansion and national variety of population and Europeanization of elite’s culture). This image was shared both by the bureaucratic elite and the educated society, which otherwise could not agree on fundamental political and social issues of Russian development. The described historical situation created a pair of conflicting interpretations of the history of the Russian Empire. One view, put forth by Boris Mironov, suggests that the history of Russia and the history of empire must be two separate narratives. He contends that histories of non-Russian nationalities constitute a separate historical experience. A different view, whose advocates range from A. Kappeler to G. Hosking, suggests that the whole fabric of Russian history has to be understood through the lens of empire and that it is impossible to mechanically separate the history of empire from Russian history. Thus A. Kappeler considers the main thrust of his pathbreaking book “Russia as a Multinational Empire” in “de-centering the Russo-centric narrative” of the history of empire and bringing back the histories of non-Russian nationalities. Stressing a different aspect of Russian history, G. Hosking contends that the weak sense of Russian national identity may be explained with the help of the predominance of empire-building over nation-building.

Historians have not yet resolved this paradox and it is possible to suggest that this paradox cannot be resolved in the present framework of discussion. Despite divergent interpretations advocates of both perspectives perceive the question in essentialized terms, using the categories of empire and nation as if they were ontological realities independent of historically conditioned meanings and perceptions. The underlying point of my argument is that we can explore the paradox without resolving it, taking the discrepancy between the *fact* of multinational composition of the Russian Empire and the dominant perception of the Russian Empire as a Russian national state as one of the main features of Russian imperial history. To be sure, different historical periods displayed different balance between the fact and perception which turns out to be dependent on historical circumstances, in particular, on

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2 B. N. MIRONOV, Sotsial’naia istoriia Rossii perioda imperii (XVIII-nachalo XX vv.). Genezis lichnosti, demokraticheskoi sem’i, grazhdanskogo obshchestva i pravovogo gosudarstva. Vol. 2, St. Petersburg, 1999. This view is reflected in the structure of Mironov’s book. The national question is located in separate chapter, while chapters on development of Russian society and state do not reflect the multinational composition of the Russian Empire, even though they occasionally refer to the influence of this multinational character on the development of “Russian history,” be it the composition of the noble estate or the issue of reforms of the political regime, B. N. MIRONOV, Sotsial’naiia istorii Rossi.

the development of national consciousness of non-Russian nationalities, crises of the imperial center, and the intensification of the encounter between different nationalities in the imperial space.

In what follows I suggest to look at the history of political reform in the Russian Empire at the beginning of the 20th century as this period presents a crucial episode in the history of “discovery of empire.” The context of public politics intensified the encounter between various nationalities, Russian government, and society. Political reform and the ensued participation of empire’s population in public politics made the imperial heterogeneity of Russia vividly present. This period was also an important phase in radicalization of both the non-Russian national movements and Russian nationalism.

**Political Participation and National Mobilization**

Political changes of 1905-06 comprised the limitation of the power of samoderzhets, the opening up of the space of public political competition (though with significant restrictions for the borderland territories), the introduction of elections and the representative body – the State Duma and the State Council. The political reform was the key demand of the liberal opposition. Summing up the political desiderata of the constitutionalist movement of the Zemstvos in an article in the mouthpiece of liberal opposition - Osvobozhdenie, P. Miliukov asserted that Russia was doomed to move along the path of all European countries that is to have constitution and parliament. While outlining the desired political reform, Miliukov framed it in national terms: the plan of this political reform should unite “all russkoe educated society”; the parliament should be “the people’s representative body free of estate divisions”; “the natsional’nyi representative organ cannot be substituted with the organs of local self-government in the task of political reform.”

The fact of the multinational composition of the russkoe gosudarstvo was brought up in Osvobozhdenie. The lead article of the first issue of Osvobozhdenie by P. B. Struve mentioned that the political reform will “bring freedom to all groups of Russian society … and all nationalities of our raznoplemmnogo state will be granted equal rights and the opportunity to develop their national cultures without restrictions.” Yet, the cognizance of the fact of multinational character of the Russian Empire did not alter the liberal rhetoric of national liberation and did not significantly change opposition’s plans for political reform. In the same article Struve continued that though the life of non-Russian nationalities is miserable, the life of the Russian people, “the great nation” is much more miserable for it “created the vast and mighty state” and remains subjugated to

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4 [P. MILIKULOV], Ot russkikh konstitutsionalistov, Osvobozhdenie 1 (1902): 7.
“egoistic bureaucracy.”⁵ The perceived unbalance between the needs of the non-Russian nationalities and those of the “Russian people” and the heat of political debates made Struve defend Russian liberalism by asserting that “it is senseless and irresponsible to claim that Russian liberalism is indifferent to the national idea. It is devoted to the *russkii* people … [it] acquires power and influence only as a democratic movement … and the national essence of Russian liberalism is encapsulated in its democratic potential.”⁶

Despite the deep political difference between the monarchy and the liberal opposition the rhetoric of the granting of political reform by Nicholas II revealed the same nation-centered framework of thinking about the reorganization of the empire’s political space. The imperial manifesto of October 17th of 1905 stressed the duty of the Duma to work for the political pacification of the country (*rodina*), highlighted the link between the *Rossiiskoe* state and the well-being of the people (*narod*), and projected the image of the Russian parliament as a national representation (“elected from the people”).

The history of institutionalization of the imperial representative organ reveals both the awareness of the government and the monarch about problems of creating a parliament in the midst of political crises of the multinational empire and their determination to imbue this new organ with a Russian national spirit.⁷ Drafts for the Bulygin Duma and later revisions stressed the need to create an organ that would cooperate with the government. This meant that the electoral system was supposed to give the majority of seats in the Duma to the most loyal elements of society. However, the definition of political loyalty of population was not an easy task at the beginning of the 20th century. Some participants of the meetings at Peterhof and Tsarskoe Selo insisted on the traditional recipe for political stability, i.e. the reliance on the estate system with the leading role to the Russian nobility.⁸ The proposed system of representation had the advantage of precedent, because the estate system of election was employed in the Zemstvos. Using the same system for imperial parliament would have created a favorable impression of continuity of the development of Russian political organization. Yet, the Russian liberal movement destroyed the long held belief of the

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⁵ Osvobozhdenie 1 (1902): 1.
⁶ Osvobozhdlenie 15 (1903): 249.
⁸ This proposal was advocated by Count Bobrinskii and Count Naryshkin. The same idea was reflected in the plans for political reforms drafted by Goremykin.
government in political loyalty of the noble estate. At the Peterhof meeting Great Prince Vladimir Aleksandrovich exclaimed: “The noble estate is divided! … the Dolgorukovs, Trubetskoy, Shakhovskoy, Kuz'min-Karavaevs and Petrunkeviches all belong to the nobility!” The participation of many nobles in the Zemstvo opposition movement made the Russian monarchy and the government seek a different social base for assuring political stability.

The answer to this question was found in the mythology of dynastic nationalism, which was created by the Russian monarchy in response to the series of political crises of the 19th century. This mythology portrayed Russian peasantry as naturally loyal to the Russian monarchy and asserted the existence of ethnic ties between the Russians tsars and narod. This political mythology made the authors of the electoral law modify the earlier draft by defining the right to vote on the basis of property and tax qualifications in order to allow the masses of Russian peasantry to be represented in the Duma (the communal holding of land was defined as a property qualification). As a result the electoral rights were extended to the lower classes of the Russian Empire. Consequently, the right to vote was given to non-Russian nationalities with incomplete social structures that is those who lacked own nobility.

The danger of implementing the democratic franchise in a multinational environment was noted by the conservative critics of the electoral law. A. A. Naryshkin, a participant of the Peterhof meeting, warned that another prerequisite for the political loyalty of the Duma was its russkii composition. He insisted that that the electoral law should assure “sufficient representation of the interior gubernias, whose population greatly contributed to the creation of the rossiiskoe state.” This view construed non-Russian nationalities as being subversive to the existing political order. The origin of this view stemmed from the history of the Russian Empire in the 19th century, but more significantly, it was determined by the events of the 1905 revolution, which displayed the ubiquity of unrest in the borderlands of the empire. Yet, despite the apparent reservations about enfranchisement of non-Russian population the electoral law did not contain any restrictions against the non-Russians up until the revision of the law by P. Stolypin in 1907.

The records of the Special Committee for Elections to the State Duma demonstrate why the political motivation to privilege the Russians in the Duma did not make way to legislation and
practices of the election of the first and second Duma. The major obstacle was the lack of administrative and legal mechanisms of differentiating between the Russians and non-Russians. The organization of imperial space was based on the principle of administrative-territorial divisions and the principle of estates. The existing territorial divisions were rarely homogenous in ethnic terms. The distinction mentioned by Naryshkin between the inner gubernias and borderlands roughly but not completely coincided with the ethnic distribution of Russians and non-Russians in the empire. The system of estates did not have an ethnic criterion for separation of the empire’s population along the national lines, either. Remarkably, the existing legal taxonomy also did not allow the rigorous separation of the Russians from the non-Russians. The variety of non-Russian population of the empire was addressed through separate “national questions” (Jewish question, Polish question, Armenian question, Muslim question), which presumed that problems of each nationality or confessional group should be tackled in an individual manner. The binary opposition between the Russians on the one hand and inorodtsy (in this sense including all non-Russians) on the other was a result of political struggle in the first two State Dumas.12

A more important obstacle on the way of division of the constituency along the national lines was the prevailing centralist culture of the imperial bureaucracy. Not withstanding the remaining administrative heterogeneity of the empire, the Russian government since the 18th century strove to attain the ideal of administrative uniformity.13 The beginning of the 20th century was marked by the assault on the remaining administrative and political autonomy of the Grand Duchy of Finland.14 Charged with the task of creating electoral procedures for the whole of the empire, the Special Committee sent series of memos to the local authorities, asking for information about the social structure of local population and peculiar features of each administrative unit. The ensued correspondence demonstrates the unwillingness of central authorities to grant special electoral procedures to individual administrative units, even though the committee admitted that individual profiles of administrative divisions (such as Western gubernias or Cossack regions, not to mention the Central Asian territories) varied greatly.

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For example, the governor of Estland, A.A. Lopukhin, in a communication to the Special Committee insisted on significant modification of the electoral procedures for his province due to its peculiar character.\textsuperscript{15} Lopukhin objected to the rule that allowed his gubernia to send only one representative to the State Duma: “[this gubernia] is the most cultured province in the Russian empire … but sends only one representative as the most backward Olonetskaia gubernia, which contradicts the principle of equal representation of population of different regions.” He went further to warn that should the electoral system remain unchanged the political stability of the empire will be undermined. Lopukhin gave two reasons for this gloomy forecast: (1) the “unfair” distribution of the right to vote which privileges the peasant population; (2) the fact of the multinational composition of the gubernia. In respect to the latter Lopukhin noted that the local population consists of the Russian, German, and Estonian peoples and the main conflict develops between the Germans and the Estonians. Due to this conflict there can be no compromise between the two. So, whoever is elected the interests of the state will be damaged: “Either the neglect of the interests of the people (that is – Estonians, A.S.) will cause the revolutionary movement in its milieu or the victory of democracy will demolish all the results of the cultural work of the noble estate.” Anticipating that under the present electoral law, which privileged lower classes of society, the Estonians will win the elections, Lopukhin blackmailed the Special Committee, pointing to the fact of the spread of social-democratic movement among the Estonians and portraying the Germans as being “the defenders of the order and autocracy” and “sharing the ideals of the Russian people.” Yet, the Lopukhin’s claims did not persuade the Special Committee, which remained strongly attached to the ideal of uniformity of the state or, which is also very plausible, did not want and lacked time to change the guidance for elections approved by the tsar. Ironically, conservatism and the centralist culture of the imperial bureaucracy resulted in multinational composition of the first and second State Dumas. These Dumas appeared to be a vivid illustration of the multinational character of the empire and the oppositional potential of non-Russian nationalities.

The introduction of electoral politics and parliament was a major new factor in shaping national identity in the empire.\textsuperscript{16} The importance of public politics for the development of

\textsuperscript{15} The Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA). F. 1327, op. 2, d. 1. Delo osobogo deloproizvodstva (MVD) po vyboram v GD v okrainykh guberniakh Evropeiskoi Rossii. L. 33-37.

non-Russian national movements is supported by the fact that several leaders of new national states after 1917 gained their first political experience in the State Duma. Those figures included Ia. Tennison, A. Topchibashev, A. Lednicki. Yet, far more important was the principle of political representation and the practice of elections. The former created the institutional framework (political parties, national branches of the all-empire political parties, and national fractions in the Duma) for shaping and projecting the image of national community on the side of national elites. The practice of elections made it imperative for people to act in large groups as long as the outcome of elections in gubernia circuits was determined by simple majority of votes.

In the situation of an ethnically mixed population the ethnic markers became the easiest tool of consolidation and mobilization during the elections. In his memoirs Vasilii Shul’gin, a prominent Russian nationalist, describes the machinery of elections to the first and second Dumas in the Ostrozhskii uezd of Volynskaia gubernia. The elections to the first Duma was won by the Poles, who constituted the cohesive group of noble landowners. During the elections to the second Duma a team of Russian landowners headed by Shul’gin decided to overcome the domination of Poles by consolidating the voting rights of minor landowners – mixed peasantry with the prevailing Little Russian element. Parcels of land owned by those peasants were not enough to qualify for the right to vote individually but when put together they could constitute a large number of voters. Shul’gin and his team campaigned among these minor landowners, pointing to the danger of Polish domination, as a result of which the electors, Little Russian peasants from the Ostrozhskii uezd, came to the gubernia elections in Zhitomir with a clear cut group identity: “… on the one hand they were against the Poles and the Jews (electors from the towns – A.S.), on the other hand they wanted as many as possible Duma seats for themselves.”

The principle of representation introduced the link between the political action and the social collectivity whose interests are represented in a political action. In the situation of weak party and civic organizations and multinational population this principle made the imperial parliament a snapshot of the variety of existing group identities. The variety of national, confessional, and regional fractions of the first two Dumas reflected the varying levels of development of national consciousness and the peculiarities of definitions of nationhood and

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group identity in different traditions. The Polish Koło was the most organized and the most persistent national fraction during the whole period of the parliamentary experiment.\textsuperscript{18} The membership in this fraction was defined on the basis of territory (the former territories of *Tsarstvo Pol’skoe*) and nationality (parties, representing the Polish nationality in the Duma). Despite the aspirations of this fraction to represent the entire Polish population of the empire, other representatives of the Polish nationality from the North and South Western gubernias joined in the first State Duma the fraction of “autonomists,” holding the view that they “represent not only the Polish population … but also the whole region (*krai*) with the mixed population.”\textsuperscript{19} Other national and group identities that appeared on the snapshot included Lithuanians, Estonians, Ukrainians, Muslims, Cossacks, and Siberian regionalists. Some of them actualized their regional or national identity only during the gatherings of the autonomist fraction, otherwise voting in general sessions of the Duma with the “political” fractions, such as the Kadets, Octobrists or Trudoviks. Representatives of the Jewish nationality and the Caucasus did not constitute separate parliamentary groups and became part of general “political” fractions.

However, the parliament not only reflected the variety of national, confessional, and regional identities but also was a powerful experience of fostering national consciousness and of consolidation of national movements. One can discern the general trend of changing the imperial configuration of Russia’s parliament even in the period from the first to the second Duma. The drift was toward the formation of more ethno-centered parliamentary fractions, which resulted in splits and break up of regional and confessional groups. The fraction of autonomists did not resume its activity in the second Duma due to the fact that all Polish deputies (with insignificant exceptions) preferred to enter the Polish Koło for consolidated defense of the Polish national autonomy. Similar processes were happening in other regional and confessional fractions.\textsuperscript{20} This trend may be explained with the help of the impact of elections in multinational regions, which reified the ethnic boundaries in mixed administrative regions. But it also can be understood as an outcome of the principle of representation and peculiar composition of the first and second State Duma. The idea of representation created an impression of equal standing of all non-Russian nationalities of the empire due to the fact that all present operated with the same rhetorical model of “own people” and that neither of them (including the Poles) could claim superiority in the context of an ethnically mixed Duma.


\textsuperscript{20} D. USMANOVA, Musul’manskaia fraktsiia.
The Polish Koło attempted to put the Polish question in the privileged position at the very beginning of the session of the first State Duma. They submitted an overview of the history of relationship between the Russian part of Poland and Russia to the special commission on the text of the reply to the Throne Speech and demanded that the question of Polish autonomy be included into the reply to the Throne Speech of the Emperor. However, the commission refused to include a special mention of the Polish autonomy into the text of the reply. The official text stated the Duma “represents all classes and nationalities of Russia, it is united in the aspiration to reform Russia and create a political order that would assure peaceful coexistence of all classes and nationalities … .” Thus the Duma preferred to frame the Polish question as part of the problem of reform in a multinational state. P. Miliukov later lamented about this approach to the problem of empire: “National questions could complicate the process of reaching a compromise on social and constitutional questions, which were our main goal. The difference in aspirations and claims of representatives of different nationalities could be blurred in a general formula … [this was] a way to raise the claims of those nationalities which were less prepared for the autonomy.” Thus, the principle of representation created the situation of the transfer of the nation-building experience, of which the Polish case was the most advanced model. This was reflected in the very name of the fraction of autonomists, which attempted to put forth the notion of national-territorial autonomy as a general claim of all non-Russian nationalities.

Imagining the political reform in 1902, P. Miliukov remarked that “liberal forms of organization of political life have little to do with the national culture as is the case with alphabet, printing machine or electricity. These are simply the forms of higher culture, flexible enough to accommodate different national content.” He continued his prognosis by adding that “as it was the case in other countries the representative organ in Russia will inevitably assume a peculiar character, the one that would reflect the individual features of Russian culture and political life.” In a way he was right for the parliamentary experiment in Russia reflected the peculiarity of political life. He proved wrong in thinking that this parliament will be like representative organs of Western European national states as he overlooked that parliament was being created for a multinational empire. New political institutions not only reflected the multinational character of the Russian Empire but also became crucial factors in formation of national identities and national mobilization.

21 RGIA. F. 1218, op. 1 (I), d. 4. Po sostavleniu adresa Gosudarstvenoi Dumy v otvet na privetstvennoe slovo Gosudarstva Imperatora. L. 1-5.
23 Osvobozhdenie 1 (1902), 11.
The reform or coup of 1907 by P. Stolypin provided one possible answer for the problem of managing multinational empire with a parliamentary regime. The decree on dissolution of the Second Duma stated that one of the weaknesses of the first two Dumas was the lack of the Russian-minded core. The new electoral law introduced national curia that severely restricted participation of non-Russian nationalities in elections. This was an attempt to create a Duma that would fit the image of Russia as a national state. Yet, the system of Stolypin was a transitional one, combining elements of archaic empire and nationalizing state. This combination proved to be volatile. It antagonized non-Russians while retaining the centralized structure of the state. It was predicated on the existence of unified Russian nationalism, which was problematic in view of the confrontation of the government and liberal opposition over the definition of Russianness. It retained the system of political representation and participation that aided the Russian national mobilization and created perilous conflicts between the dynastic regime and Russian nationalism.

**Russian Liberals Encounter the Dilemma of Political Reform in Empire.**

The history of the Constitutional-Democratic party in the context of political reforms of the Russian Empire demonstrates a different approach to the problem of management of multiethnicity and highlights a different dimension of the impact of public politics on the development of a multinational society. The history of this major liberal party also reflects the process of “discovery” of multinational society in Russia. Viewed from the perspective of the history of empire, the Constitutional-Democratic party appears to be an interesting case. The party crystallized out of oppositional organizations, which represented the reform oriented members of Zemstvo and city self-government and modern professions.24 Due to the influential role of latter (otherwise called intelligentsia), the

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party received the nickname “the brain of the nation” and was able to act as an intellectual (though not always political) leading force of the first two State Dumas. Though the party comprised a plethora of groups with divergent political orientations, it was able to avoid splits, stay on the political stage throughout the period of 1905-1917, and retain the commitment to liberal political reform and democratic social program. The Kadets (a nickname after two initials of the official party name) represented themselves as a party of a constitutional and democratic (social reformist) political orientation. The party, they argued, could claim the support of the whole society regardless of the existing social divisions. Thus, the Kadets projected themselves as representatives of the whole “political nation” imagined within the framework of the Russian Empire.\(^\text{25}\)

The rhetoric of inclusive “political nation” was an important issue for the liberal opposition at the beginning of the 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century. Intellectual leaders of the liberal movement were well aware of the weakness of the social base of Russian liberalism. Observing the history of liberal tradition in Russia, P. Miliukov noted its cultural and social exclusivity and claimed that new Russian liberalism should necessarily combine the constitutional and democratic (social) program. The latter was needed to create an inclusive political community, i.e. the mass social support for successfully confronting the entrenched system of autocracy. The evocation of the notion of political nation was an important tool for discarding the accusations in social marginality and “noble feud” made by the government.\(^\text{26}\) More importantly, it was a reaction of Russian liberals to the attempts of the Russian monarchy and government to embark on populist politics in order to create a mass support for the existing political order. Miliukov perceptibly observed this novel trend in the official politics and called it “revolutionary autocracy” and “populist autocracy.”\(^\text{27}\)

Linguistically, the liberals’ inclusive image of political community was rendered by two concepts: “people” (narod) and “nation” (natsia). Those concepts in liberal parlance did not have explicit ethnic connotations in contrast to the language of the monarchy. Rather, they were a ramification of the ideology of Western liberalism, particularly from the period of the

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\(^\text{25}\) Following the present configuration of the electoral law Kadets excluded Finland from consideration.


1848 revolutions, expressing the sense of civic community defined by political principles. Speaking metaphorically, Miliukov put it as “Russia of Leo Tolstoy … the Russia of our “intellectuals” and of the people … the one [that] spells liberty.”

The political nation was imagined by liberals as being formed under the guidance of Russian intelligentsia, the most cultured and westernized element of Russian society. A revealing picture of the relationship between the people and the intelligentsia was drawn by Miliukov: “If there is no intelligentsia, there is no nation. What is available is an atom, a democratic material that can be molded into anything to someone’s liking. Only a people with links to intelligentsia had a chance of becoming a nation.”

The reference to Russian intelligentsia and Russian literature demonstrates that though the liberal concept of political nation did not have explicit ethnic connotations there was an implication that it would be formed around the dominant high culture of the empire.

The inclusive (“democratic) vision of political nation forced liberals to construct their social base and later the Constitutional-Democratic party in the framework of the whole of the empire, which meant the inclusion of representatives of various non-Russian nationalities. This was a peculiar stance among the parties, which claimed to be empire-wide political organizations and remained committed to legal political activity. Other parties of this type either claimed to be exclusively Russian (in the spirit of the Soiuz russkogo naroda) or selectively included the representatives of ethnic groups loyal to the existing political regime, such as the German groups of the Union of October 17th. However, the Kadets did not envision the problem of managing a mass political organization with multiethnic structure.

Sharing the spirit of progressivism, they believed that ethnic (sic. -- plemennye) differences cannot be more important than political affiliations. They often compared ethnicity with estate divisions and relegated both to the realm of social archaisms to be superceded by “higher forms of social and political organization.” Their elitist perspective and legalist culture

28. P. MILIUKOV, Russia and Its Crisis, London, 1962, 15. The text comes from the lectures of Miliukov given upon the invitation of the Charles Craine Foundation to the US (Chicago and Boston) in 1903 and 1904. The first edition was published in 1907. The invitation to develop a course on current Russian situation gave Miliukov a unique opportunity to systematically reflect on the ideological foundations (his term) and strategy of the Russian liberal movement. The lectures combine parts of Miliukov’s earlier Russian language publications (Lektsii po istorii kolonizatsii, Ocherki po istorii russkoi kul’tury, Glavnye techeniia russkoi istoricheskoi mysli v 18-19 stoletii) and the analysis of the current political situation and political actors. Parts of the latter were incorporated into Miliukov’s later political writings and published in Russian in Osobvozhdenie (the organ of the Russian liberal opposition published abroad) and in various political periodicals inside the Russian Empire after 1905. However, the English (and later French) editions of Russia and Its Crisis are unique as they demonstrate the textual laboratory of modern liberal political language and intimate interconnection between positivistic scholarship and modern politics. This quote and the rest of the text was “thought out and written” by Miliukov in English.

allowed to have only two exceptions: the Tsardom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Finland, who had the legal precedent of constitutional autonomy and developed high cultures. The program of the Constitutional-Democratic party stipulated the goal of seeking the status of political autonomy for those parts of the Russian Empire. The rest of national questions were covered by the program of cultural autonomy, taken by P. B. Struve from the doctrine of Austrian Marxists. Overall, Russian liberals approached the threshold of political transformation with the idea of the possibility of creating a homogenous political space in place of the Russian Empire and instituting a national parliament, whose activity would not be compromised by the multiethnic character of the represented society. This perspective was reflected in Kadets refusal (with individual dissenting opinions) to accept the program of federalization of Russia until 1917. It was also reflected in their blueprint for the party building, which presumed high centralization and unification under the leadership of St. Petersburg and Moscow groups. By the time the elections to the first Duma were under way P. B. Struve could still claim that “consolidated organization of the party and strict discipline are necessary conditions for further advances of the struggle for democratic reform of Russia.”

The practice of public politics in the imperial setting proved surprise and turned out to be contradictory to the liberals’ precepts. Not withstanding the rhetoric of political nation, the organization of the party on the territory of the whole empire and deep down the volost’ level of the administrative ladder was a challenging task. In a way this was a test for the existence of cohesive civic structures of imperial society. As the documents of the party’s central Committee demonstrate, Kadets were much more successful at party building in the interior gubernias which had the Zemstvo self-government and large urban settlements with universities and city self-government. However, the party was also able to reach to the borderland regions with significant non-Russian population. These included North Western and South Western gubernias, Caucasus, and the Volga region. The extension of the party to those regions was a result of the reliance on national organization and personal networks which was the case, for example, with the establishment of party branches in North-Western gubernias. The crucial aid was provided by the Union for the Attainment of Jewish Equality and the Polish diaspora of Moscow and St. Petersburg. The organization of election of Kadet candidates from those gubernias was only possible as a result of alliances with other political

parties, though, officially, the Constitutional-Democratic party stood aloof on the political stage.

The mosaic of national and regional variations in the party structure soon led to reconsideration of the principles of the party building. It has to be noted that these revisions were done in the ad hoc manner without discarding the official principles of the party charter and program. Contrary to the party’s principle of uniform structure of regional committees there were appearing ethnic fractions in local branches of borderland gubernias. The first exception was made for the regional committee of Vil’no gubernia, which was dominated by the Jewish group of Constitutional-Democrats. Subsequently, another novelty was introduced. Due to demands of borderland committees the Central Committee approved of organization of trans-regional (oblastnoi) party groups. Sometimes this measure was necessitated by peculiarities of the imperial administrative organization – the existence of general-governorships. But sometimes it was a concession to the geographic distribution of national groups of population (which was not reflected in the administrative structure of the empire) or the demands of diaspora groups-proxies of Kadets’ expansion, as was the case with the inclusion of Bessarabia into the Odessa circuit.33

These modifications were also done in regard to the party’s political platform. The most outstanding case was the temporary change of the official name of the party from Constitutional-Democratic to Constitutional-Monarchist in the Kiev branch. The first official consent for the revision of the party political program was issued for the branches of Western gubernias. These branches were allowed to campaign on the basis of inviolability of land property as this was the “regional” historical tradition of not only landlords but also peasants.34 To understand how the Constitutional-Democratic party looked differently through the imperial prism one has only to remember that the principle of alienation of private land was the core political demand of the official party line in the first two Dumas.

The erosion of the initial principles of the party building was not only the result of the “objective” impact of the multinational empire. The logic of mobilization of local population and the lack of civic structures made the leadership of the party seek available networks for expansion. The liberal view of elections as pedagogical tools for educating the citizens led to the practice of translation of party propaganda literature into the languages and dialects of the empire (Yiddish, Latvian, Little Russian, Tatar, German, Armenian, Lithuanian, Mongol,

33 Vestnik partii Narodnoi Svobody, no. 12 (May 25, 1906).
34 Vestnik Partii Narodnoi Svobody, no. 10 (May 11, 1906): 2; no. 14 (June 8, 1906): 4. See also the minutes of the Agrarian Commission of the 1st Duma in “Protokoly agrarnoi komissii pervoi Gosudarstvennoi Dumy (Zasedania s 7 iunia po 8 iulia 1906g.),” RGIA, f. 1278, op.1, d. 223.
Estonian, Moldavian among others) and the adaptation of highly intellectualized documents to colloquial language of the masses. The process of adaptation frequently altered the political message of propaganda. The novel logic of public politics altered the initial blueprints of national liberalism.

Non-Russian national activists were able to legitimize their particularistic agenda within the Kadet party with the help of the inclusive concept of political nation and the declared democratic approach to the political problems. Iu. Akchurin (Akchura), a representative of the Kazan’ Tatar groups of Constitutional-Democrats, was the first representative of non-Russian party groups, who attempted to redefine the mission of the party. In a long intervention at the second congress of the party (January, 1906) he suggested that “the Constitutional-Democratic party is not only the party of the oppressed people (naroda) … but also the party of oppressed peoples (narodnostei). The mere composition of this congress proves this view.” He went on to suggest that the party leadership should be more attentive to the needs of non-Russian nationalities and proposed significant revisions to the party program. Among them Akchura declined to accept the obligatory usage of the state language and the universality of norms of civil law, such as the equality of sexes. Fearing the possibility of unification of legal and cultural spaces under the contemplated liberal regime, Akchurin said that “… even under the centralized-autocratic regime the Muslims enjoyed a sort of autonomy in respect to religious and civil issues.”

The same flexible rhetorical structure of the liberal political language allowed A. Lednicki to mastermind the fraction of autonomists in the first Duma contrary to the general line of the party against federalization. Lednicki could successfully defend his case within the party: “There were different approaches to the resolution of the national question in the State Duma. Some were nationalistic that is concerned only with individual nationality. Others were democratic, i.e. concerned with the resolution of all national questions together.”

The dynamics of the development of the Constitutional-Democratic party structure in the borderlands between the first and second Dumas was similar to the reconfiguration of the representation of non-Russian nationalities in the State Duma. The impact of electoral politics disadvantaged multinational political coalitions. Branches of the Kadet party in ethnically mixed territories were marginalized or broke into the national curia even before they were introduced by the imperial decree in 1907. Several national groups, including the Poles and the Tatars, distanced from the party due to its ambiguous identity as the party of “people’s

35 S’ezdy i konferentsii … , 159-161.
36 A. LEDNITSKII, Natsional’nyi … , 2068.
freedom” and the party of “oppressed peoples” and because of the unwillingness of Russian liberals to put non-Russian national questions (including the principle of federalization) into the forefront of their political agenda. At the same time the doctrine of Russian liberal nationalism was taking shape on the right wing of the party, culminating with the formal resignation of P. B. Struve from the ranks of Constitutional-Democrats.37

Yet, an examination of the party’s imperial structure suggests a more complex picture than simple segregation of the political space of the empire into national segments. Some nationalities or, to put it more accurately, parts of those nationalities remained actively involved in the party life. Those typically included members of middle classes, which were acculturated into the dominant Russian culture and integrated into the imperial “civil society.” The claims of those groups did not radicalize and exceed the program of civil equality and cultural autonomy offered by the Kadets. One example is the continued affiliation with the Kadet party of politically moderate Jewish groups. Other examples include diaspora groups. The case of the Baku committee of the Constitutional-Democratic party may serve as one such example.38 It was dominated by the Armenians with representatives of other minorities of the Baku gubernia (Russians and Georgians). Despite the fact that the Armenian population was dispersed in three Trans-Caucasian gubernias only Baku had an organized group of Constitutional-Democrats of Armenian origin. The social status of the leaders of this group ranged from clerics, through members of liberal professions to entrepreneurs. The Baku Kadets lost the elections to the first two Dumas to the consolidated political alliance of Muslims. They were also involved in what was a rare case of confrontation between candidates to the State Duma of different nationality nominated by the same Constitutional-Democratic party. The Armenian Kadets defended themselves before the Central Committee by pointing to the fact that their Muslim adversaries simply used the support of the party to get elected. In the Duma those successful nominees joined the separate Muslim fraction and generally opposed the Kadet political program.

Under the first Russian electoral law the Armenian Kadets invariably lost elections to the dominant Muslim population. The electoral law of June 3rd created more favorable conditions for representation of this diaspora group. According to this law the local (tuzemnoe) population was divided into two groups: Muslims and other inorodtsy. In the latter curia


38 GARF. F. 579, op. 1, d. 800. Otchet chlena moskovskogo gorodskogo komiteta kad partii I.T. Amirova o poezdkhe v Baku po porucheniu TsK partii.
Armenian Kadets had a chance to win the election to the third Duma. Yet, even in this favorable situation they found themselves marginalized. This time they encountered resistance from within their own nationality. Their opponents represented the Armenian Social-Democrats and Dashnaktsutiun party (a revolutionary party that operated across the imperial border, their political program claimed liberation of Armenians from the Ottoman empire, autonomy for the Russian part of Armenia, their social program was close to the Russian Socialist-Revolutionaries). At the critical moment of electing the deputy, Social-Democrats (both Armenians and Russians) and Dashanks united and voted down the Armenian Kadet. Social-Democrats opposed the Kadets, following their definition of this party as the party of bourgeoisie. Dashnaks fought the Armenian Kadets because they considered them as half hearted Armenians due to their affiliation with the Russian party and a strong attachment to the alien Turkic city. According to a Dashnaktsutiun’s representative, Armenian Kadets were not worth of the status of “the single representative of a million strong Armenian population of the Caucasus in the State Duma.”

Baku Armenian Kadets remained organized and active throughout the parliamentary period. This was a rare case of longevity among the local branches of the Constitutional-Democratic party. Due to their peculiar standing in social and national hierarchies of the empire Baku Armenian Kadets may be called an “imperial nationality.” Their integration and dispersion in the imperial society was thorough enough to create contacts and affinity with the Russian liberal party and to be satisfied with the party’s program of cultural autonomy. Yet, their sense of national identity was strong enough to make them strive to represent the interests of the Armenian nationality in the context of political contestation in an ethnically mixed borderland. It seems that Armenian Kadets were the ideal match for the liberal concept of civic and political nation. Their character of “imperial nationality” not withstanding, they were a marginalized and anyway were a rarely occurring case in the Russian Empire. And the empire itself proved to be by far more heterogeneous to fit the liberal concept of civic and political nation.