

THE FOREIGN FACTOR AND THE PROCESS OF NATIONAL EMANCIPATION IN RUSSIA'S WESTERN BORDERLANDS

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The appearance of national states is understood as the successful outcome of the process of national emancipation among small European nationalities. This process, often mechanically interpreted as the creation of individual states was always the aim of the national movement, the fulfillment of the “national dream”, the “centuries of yearning”. It was realized through a combination of internal processes during which, as a produce but also as a component of the process of industrialization, the modern Central and Eastern European nations were formed during a propitious international situation. Such a situation occurred in Europe with the creation of a power vacuum in the Ottoman Empire during the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, and immediately thereafter in the Habsburg and Tsarist monarchies at the close of the First World War at a time when the national movement was in its final, mass phase. The thesis of the national movement as an ancient struggle for political independence thus cannot be applied everywhere; rather, it was determined by time and place.²¹⁶ When the old supranational

²¹⁶ M. HROCH, *V národním zájmu* (In the National Interest), Prague 1996, 105–106.

empires, with their feudal survivals, collapsed under the burden of military defeat or the negative economic and social impact of the war which showed up the internal weaknesses, the newly formed modern nationalities with complete (or nearly complete) structures were able to offer an alternative to the old multi-ethnic empires. At this moment the significance of the foreign factor grew, as an opportune constellation of international forces combined with the support of the victorious powers interested in the maximum weakening of their enemy or its de facto extinction, was a condition for the internationalization of the problem and the assertion of a variety of national states. Political and military support from the great powers was of such vital importance for the new states that their very existence appeared to their enemies to be the work of the enemy great powers who had imposed their political and military hegemony in the region by using the national movements and their struggle against the incumbent holders of power. Such a view of the problem, relying purely on the arithmetic of power without taking into account modernizing changes leading to the creation of civil societies of an industrial type and constituted on the national principle,²¹⁷ was characteristic of the departing old elite. But Soviet historiography applied this view in its interpretation of the genesis of the independent Baltic states as the result of anti-Soviet intervention by western imperialists, whose aim was to suppress the revolution and create a “cordon sanitaire” against it where they could establish their economic hegemony.²¹⁸ Similarly, Polish historians of the time considered the rise of the Lithuanian state to be the fruit of “German intrigues”.²¹⁹ We find a similar judgment concerning the origins of Czechoslovakia (as the “child”, the “favorite” of the Allies) in an effort to minimize the role of the domestic resistance movement.

²¹⁷ See A. GELLNER, *Národy a nacionalismus* (Nations and Nationalism), Prague 1993, 7–8.

²¹⁸ *Istoria Latviskoi SSR*, 2nd ed., Riga 1971, 446, 484 ff. *Istoria Estonskoi SSR*, Tallinn 1987, 124–132. V. SIPOLS, *Taynaya diplomatiya*, Riga 1968, 59.

²¹⁹ P. LOSSOWSKI, *Konflikt polsko-litewski 1918–1920*, Warszawa 1996, 35.

The question of the importance of the great powers in the establishment of the new states also arose in the discussions within the new political elites over which group played the decisive role. A clear example was the controversy between supporters of President Masaryk, stressing the importance of the foreign resistance which he led, and the representatives of the domestic resistance, who emphasized their own role and the coup of 28 October 1918 as the key factors. In Poland an analogous argument between Dmowski and Pilsudski concerned the role of Allied diplomacy and military aid in the creation of the country's borders.

Although the international factor played the most significant role in the closing phase of the process of national emancipation, it was also present in various forms also in earlier phases of the national movement. It bore on the demands for political independence which appeared quite soon in some cases as part of the political program in the phase of national agitation, as the patriots attempted to link their cause to international politics. This occurred primarily where the national program appealed to an earlier independent political existence, perhaps combined with religious differentiation and suppression. Such cases included movements of the "insurgent" type – the Balkan movements and those in Poland, Norway, and with certain reservations, Ireland.²²⁰ Help extended by the great powers to the various national movements against the Ottoman Empire were closely connected with their particular interests, establishing their influence in the Balkans and securing what they could of the legacy of the "sick man on the Bosphorus". Support for resistance to Ottoman oppression arose from religious and ethnic similarities which enabled Russia especially to appear in the role of protector of the process of national emancipation among the Bulgarians and Serbs, partly also the Greeks and Rumanians. Russia's opponents in the international power game were Great Britain, which attempted to prevent the penetration of Russian influence to the Mediterranean,

²²⁰ M. HROCH, *Evropská národní hnutí v 19. století* (European National Movements in the 19th Century), Prague 1986, 365–366.

France, which was similarly motivated up to a point, and especially the Habsburg Monarchy, which had territorial interests in the Balkans and was joined at the end of the 19th century by Germany which just before the First World War supported the creation of an Albanian state, together with Italy, to counter Serbian expansion. Great power intervention in the formation of the Balkan map and the creation of small, quarrelsome national states gave rise to the pejorative term "Balkanization". But great power support in the creation of national states did not automatically ensure their permanent influence, as the new political elites attempted to escape from too close an embrace by their protector, as may be seen for example in the abandonment of pro-Russian orientation by Bulgaria and, for a time, Serbia.

The Nationalities of the Western Borderlands of Russia

But can international influences also be traced in the case of national movements among the "non-historical" nations, such as the Latvians, Estonians or the Finns, who remained outside the interest of international politics until the end of the First World War? The Latvians and Estonians found themselves in a special situation in that, like the Finns or the Lithuanians, they lived under a double domination – regional and imperial. The Latvians and Estonians lived in three Baltic provinces (some Latvians also lived in eastern Lettland, Latgale, which was part of the gubernium of Vitebsk), where their political overlords were the Baltic German landowners. The Swedish nobility and intelligentsia occupied a similar position in Finland and the Polish noblemen in Lithuania. At the same time, the territory formed part of the Russian empire. Finland, attached in 1809, had its administrative autonomy guaranteed by the monarch, and its peasants enjoyed personal freedom. The kingdom of Poland (Congress Poland) had even greater autonomy. The Baltic gubernia or provinces came under the administrative authority of St. Petersburg, although the Tsars granted the German Baltic nobility

certain privilegia, including freedom of religion for the Lutheran church, the inviolability of their landed property, an autonomous administrative system based on the regional diets and staffed by the local nobility, a German system of justice and German as the administrative language. The diets controlled education, communications, taxation, the Lutheran church and legislation.²²¹

Within the Habsburg Monarchy, the Slovaks and the Croats represented an analogous situation in which ethnic groups lived under a double domination, in this case Hungarian and Austrian.

Conditions of Incorporation in Russia and the Attitude of the Nobility

In the first phase the only partner of the Tsarist officials was the old nobility, who were obliged to reconcile themselves to annexation by Russia, and with varying degrees of success they became integrated into the conditions of the Tsarist monarchy. In the interests of a rapid pacification of the new western territories the Russian rulers offered the estates extensive privileges as a guarantee of autonomy – in Estonia and Livonia in 1710 and a century later, in 1809 in Finland, which contrasted sharply with the earlier Swedish centralism. While the Baltic German and Swedish-Finnish nobility assumed important posts in the Tsarist bureaucracy, army and diplomacy, the Polish aristocracy – after exerting episodic though far from insignificant influence over Alexander I at the beginning of the 19th century, proved unable to preserve the autonomy of Congress Poland, at that time the most extensive under Russian administration. Unsuccessful uprisings in 1830–31 and 1863–64 brought about a crisis in Russian attitudes towards

²²¹ On the Baltic German conception, focussing on the defense of historical estates privilege and autonomy see R. WITTRAM, *Baltische Geschichte*, Munich 1954. M. HAETZEL, *Der Abbau der deutschen ständischen Selbstverwaltung in den Ostseeprovinzen Russlands 1855–1905*, Marburg-Lahn 1977. For the view of Latvian Soviet historiography, M. Duhanovs, *Baltijas muižniecība laikmetu maiņā*, Riga 1986. On the Baltic gubernia in the framework of the Russian empire, *Nacionalnye okrainy Rossiskoy imperii: stanovlenie i razvitiye sistemy upravleniya*, Moscow 1997, 187–196.

the Poles, now regarded as rebels seeking to reverse the Russian advance and threatening the stability of the western borderlands. Further prominent factors included the Polish devotion to Catholicism as a rival religion and the domination of Polish magnates over the Ukrainian and Byelorussian Orthodox peasantry.²²² Amid the harsh repression launched by the Tsarist authorities, European public opinion was firmly on the side of the Poles, and the appeals of France and Great Britain for moderation only stimulated Russian nationalism.²²³ On the other hand, the Russian measures received the support of Prussia.

The privileges of 1710 conferred by Tsar Peter I, who had taken Estonia and Livonia from Sweden, have been characterized as “legal agreements drawn up in the spirit of Medieval covenants between estates and rulers”.²²⁴ They formed the legal basis of the autonomy of the Baltic provinces within the Russian imperial system down to the beginning of the 20th century, and they were confirmed by successive rulers until the accession of Alexander III. The Baltic estates had influential spokesmen at the Russian court, and since their incorporation they acted as a reservoir of personnel for the Russian bureaucracy, diplomacy and army whose absolute loyalty was highly prized by the Tsars. The Baltic nobility also acted as mediators with the European nobility. Although this bastion of conservatism was somewhat eroded under the pressure of Russian unification, it was able successfully to defend its administrative institutions and the noble monopoly within the local diets. The social conflict between the Baltic German estate holders and their Latvian and Estonian peasants compromised the position of the Baltic estates at the imperial court and was used by the Russian bureaucracy to justify centralizing intervention in the Baltic gubernia and to call into question the legitimacy of aristocratic privileges.

²²² E. THADEN, *Russia's Western Borderlands 1710–1870*, Princeton 1984. T. WEEKS, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863–1914*, Northern Illinois University Press 1996, 74–80.

²²³ D. GEYER, “Funktionen des russischen Nationalismus 1860–1885”, in H. A. Winkler, ed., *Nationalismus*, Königstein 1978, 173–186.

²²⁴ R. Wittram, *Op. cit.*, 133.

In Finland the peasants were free and formed one of the estates, and relations between the political elite, most of whom were Swedish-speaking (though there were a growing number of Finnish background) and the peasantry were not adversarial. Social stability in the land was strengthened by the reliability of the conservative political elite at the imperial court. Finland, existing as a separate entity since its incorporation in 1809, was the only frontier area to preserve, and from the 1860's even to extend, its autonomy. No longer a backward province of Sweden, it became one of the most advanced regions of the Russian empire and found itself in immediate proximity to the political center.

In contrast to the Polish nobility, the Baltic German aristocrats served as mediators between Russia and the European courts, and their bureaucratic efficiency and loyalty were much appreciated by the rulers. Despite the russification of the Baltic provinces in the years before the First World War, the feudal diets remained at the head of local administration without undergoing reform.

The character of these relations was significant for the national movements as well, since it influenced the attitude of the political center toward the regions and their noble elites, which in turn had its impact on the indigenous non-dominant ethnic groups. For example the repression following the second Polish uprising had the effect of delaying the beginning of the phase of national agitation among the Lithuanians.

Intellectual Interest in National Cultures and the Response from Abroad

Part of our investigation involves the question of how the European public was able to learn anything about the non-dominant ethnic groups of the Russian western frontier. In the first half of the 19th century the participation of Latvians and Estonians in Phase A of the national movement was minimal, and the role was assumed by Baltic German scholars. The Latvians were first introduced to the

European public by the *philosophe* Garlieb Merkel, whose book entitled "The Latvians, Particularly in Livonia, at the End of the Philosophical Century" and published in Leipzig in 1796 vividly described the plight of the unfree peasantry and became a significant document in the struggle to end serfdom. With its abolition the book lost its currency, but Merkel continued to write, was often cited and became an inspiration for Latvian patriots. In the first half of the 19th century the interest of German linguists in the archaic Baltic languages and folk poetry was responsible for drawing European attention to the Latvians and Lithuanians. This is borne out for example by the early Czech edition of Lithuanian folksongs – *dain* – by Ladislav Čelakovský two years after the appearance of the German edition by L. Rhesa in 1825,²²⁵ or the article by Erazim Vocel on the Estonian national movement in the Journal of the Bohemian Museum.²²⁶ The Lithuanians were known thanks not only to philological and ethnographic interest but also to Polish romantic writers such as Mickiewicz and Kraszewski, supporters of land patriotism. Lithuanian scholars and writers were also active and were recruited primarily from the ranks of the small landholders.

Although European awareness of Finland and its people, mediated by Swedish speaking scholars, was far greater, Finland remained outside the sphere of political interest after the Napoleonic wars. Finnish culture and folklore became more widely known in the mid-1830's with the publication of Lönrot's reconstruction of the national epic the *Kalevala*, which was translated into a number of languages.²²⁷ Unlike the Latvians and Estonians, who lacked an intelligentsia at this point and whose interests were represented in a paternalistic way by German scholars, there was a larger proportion

²²⁵ L. ŘEHÁČEK, "Baltistika na pražské universitě" (Baltic Studies at the University of Prague), in *Praha-Vilnius*, Prague 1981, 45–51.

²²⁶ E. Vocel, "Učená společnost estonská v Derptu" (The Estonian Learned Society at Derpt), ČČM 20, 1846, 264–278. K. Havlíček, "Cizozemci v Rusích" (Foreigners in Russia), ČČM 20, 1846, 95–132. See V. Macura, *Znamení zrodu* (An Omen of Birth), 2nd edition, Prague 1995, 160–165.

²²⁷ T. CIEŚLAK, *Historia Finlandii*, Wroclaw 1983, 140.

of Finns among the educated classes. A fair amount of literature appeared in Finnish, although it was not considered a language of "higher culture".

International Aspects of the National Movement

In the first phase the non-dominant ethnic groups did not exceed the role of object. As a subject, the modern nation began to be defined with the creation of an intelligentsia which formulated a national program based on language. A few patriots who were only just formulating the national program and looking for support did emerge as spokesmen of the nation, but their legitimacy was far from assured and their ethnic group continued to be regarded as victims without much of a future to be fought over by the dominant nations. It remained to be seen whether the Latvians and Estonians would be germanized or russified and the Lithuanians russified or polonized.

In formulating their program some groups of patriots attempted to place their nation in a broader context in order to overcome their current weakness and isolation. Latvian patriots thus stressed their kinship with the Slavs and the Russian ambience as a defense against germanization,²²⁸ even though their intellectual world and way of life were far more influenced by German culture than Russian. Estonian patriots sought to stress affinity with the Finns, who served as a cultural model and offered inclusion in the wider Finno-Ugric context. Among the Lithuanians, the impulse to emphasize kinship with the Slavs faded as they sought to escape Russian domination as well as Polish social and cultural hegemony. It was replaced by reminiscence of past greatness, especially the Medieval Lithuanian state under Grand Duke Witold stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea. On a practical level Lithuanian patriots followed and sought help from more advanced national movements such as those of the Finns, Czechs and Bulgarians.

²²⁸ K. BIEZBÁRDIS, *Der Sprach- und Bildungskampf in den baltischen Provinzen Russlands*, Bautzen 1865, 4-5.

The search for connections with other nations was not limited to the intellectual sphere but had a practical dimension as well. In cases of double domination the external factor cannot be limited to international influences and their role in the formation of the national movement, for here the foreign factor operated within a single state when the patriots took advantage of tensions between the local political elite and the Tsarist bureaucracy to act in partnership with the imperial government or with the Russian liberals. Where there was no tradition of political independence or where the geographical integrity of the land was seen as an obstacle to the development of the ethnic nation, as was the case among the Latvians and Estonians, the demands of the patriots aimed to reduce local autonomy and further integration with Russia. Tsarism acted to some degree as an external pressure and the Russian liberals became the patriots' intellectual and political allies.²²⁹ International political events were not strongly reflected in this phase of the national movement, but the international factor was brought to bear in relations between the local political and cultural elite and the state. The autonomy enjoyed by the Baltic gubernia, whose diets were occupied until the 20th century exclusively by the Baltic German nobility, represented an obstacle to the Latvian and Estonian national movements because of its social impenetrability. Thus from the 1860's to the beginning of the 1880's the patriots pressed for the introduction of the Russian system of elections for the local administration, which was more liberal than the Baltic feudal system. Although the Young Latvian and Young Estonian pro-Russian attitude has been deplored as tactical rather than principled,²³⁰ it is important to take into account the hopes pinned on the liberal reforms of Alexander II and the possibilities they offered to the Latvian intelligentsia and the emerging class of Latvian entrepreneurs for integration into the imperial context.²³¹ The ideologue and

²²⁹ R. J. MISIUNAS, "The Russian Liberals and the Baltic Lands 1861–1917, in *National Movements in the Baltic Countries during the 19th Century*, Uppsala 1985, 85–110.

²³⁰ G. APALS, *Jaunlatviešu kustības raksturs 19. gadsimta 50. un 60. gados (1856–1868)*, doctoral dissertation, Riga-Stockholm 1993, 77.

²³¹ A. ŠVĀBE, *Latvijas vēsture 1800–1914*, Uppsala 1958, 417 ff.

organizer of the Latvian national movement Krišjānis Valdemārs defined the role of his countrymen as Russia's "Dutchmen" on the Baltic. His pragmatic approach accented the economic self-realization of the Latvians, and in russification he saw no obstacle to the development of Latvian national life.²³² It should be remembered that the new Latvian and Estonian intelligentsia, thanks to the Baltic Germans' hold on the local gubernia, were obliged to seek careers in the context of the Russian empire. In their reaction to the socially conservative system, therefore, they sought allies among the Russian liberals, tried to establish contacts at court and among the high officials of the state administration in order to break the hegemony of the Baltic German estates.

The unification of Germany played a significant role in relations between the Baltic provinces and the center. The German national movement (like the Italian), though unfolding under different conditions, served as an inspiration for European national movements generally. In regions where the modern nations in the process of formation were attempting to emancipate themselves from German culture and the old German-speaking elites, the reaction took on a mirror image. The appearance of a strong state changed the balance of forces on the European stage. For Chancellor Bismarck good relations with Russia were axiomatic, and except for the episode in 1865 when he characterized Russian religious policy in the Baltic provinces as barbaric, he pointedly expressed his lack of interest in the Baltic Germans and remained impervious to pressure from German liberals for intervention on their behalf.²³³ The crystallization of a new great power on the Baltic, however, raised the question of the German character of the Baltic gubernia.²³⁴ The administrative consolidation and cultural russification introduced from the 1960's

²³² P. Lazda, "The Phenomenon of Russophilism in the Development of Latvian Nationalism in the 19th Century", in *National Movements in the Baltic Countries during the 19th Century*, Uppsala 1985, 129–135. A. PLAKANS, *The Latvians*, Stanford 1995, 95.

²³³ M. HALTZEL, *Der Abbau der deutschen ständischen Selbstverwaltung in den Ostseeprovinzen Russlands 1855–1905*, Marburg 1977, 54.

²³⁴ S. IKSAKOV, *Ostzejsky vopros v russkoi pečati 1860-kih godov*, Tartu 1961, 30.

were part of the modernizing reform of the Russian state but also a response to the fact that Russia was no longer alone on the Baltic. While Alexander II failed to take notice of the Slavophile campaign against the autonomy of the Baltic gubernia, the situation changed with the rising influence of Russian nationalism at the court of Alexander III in the 1880's, when intensive cultural Russification was launched in the Baltic provinces. In response the Baltic Germans were unable to present a united front. The erosion of autonomy and the russification prompted some politicians and intellectuals to emigrate to Germany,²³⁵ where they worked to arouse interest among the German public and sought in vain to enlist the Berlin government in their cause. Meanwhile, however, despite their waning influence, the Baltic German aristocracy retained its conservative loyalty to Tsarism, while the urban middle classes profited from an expanding economy.²³⁶

Even before the unification of Germany, the operations of the British fleet in the Baltic and its artillery bombardment of the Finnish coast, including Helsinki, during the Crimean War, obliged the Russians to strengthen their military presence. The weakening of Russia and the looming crisis prompted some of the Swedish-speaking emigrants from Finland to consider reunification with Sweden and the creation of a Scandinavian Union.²³⁷ The question of Finnish neutrality came up for discussion. As a country Finland remained loyal. The leader of the Finnish national movement Johan Wilhelm Snellmann rejected the projects of the Swedish émigrés and emphasized his loyal stance, in an attempt to eliminate the Swedish nobility as the traditional partner of the Tsarist administration and replace it with a Finnish variant. In the escalating conflict between proponents of Finns and Swedes Snellmann was able, with the support of Russian officials well aware of the need for a counter-

²³⁵ The proportion of Germans in the population fell along with their numbers. From 1881 to 1897 the numbers fell from 180,423 to 152,936. See M. Haltzel, *Op. cit.*, 73.

²³⁶ D. KIRBY, *The Baltic World 1772-1993*, London-New York 1995, 177-179. A. HENDRIKSSON, *The Tsar's Most Loyal Germans*, Boulder 1963.

²³⁷ D. Kirby, ed., *Finland and Russia 1808-1920*, London 1975, 44.

weight to the pro-Swedish movement, to have Finnish officially declared an equal administrative language. A further success was the Tsar's assent to calling the first Finnish parliament since 1809, which began to function regularly in September 1863. Alexander II was motivated not only by the need for reform but also by foreign policy and a desire, amid the diplomatic isolation caused by the suppression of the Polish uprising, to present to the world an attitude of toleration towards his imperial possessions. The growth of Finnish autonomy and Russian acquiescence in the de facto economic independence of the country (with its separate customs and monetary arrangements) increased its stability along with its political ties to the court, but it also called forth opposition from the Slavophile liberals. Finland had become a distinct economic entity.²³⁸ Finnish autonomy was regarded by the Slavophiles as a threat,²³⁹ while for the non-Russian peoples it became a model.

The case of Lithuania after the suppression of the second Polish uprising was quite different. The Tsarist repression against the Polish nobility, the intelligentsia and the Catholic church sorely afflicted Lithuanian society and provoked a belated rise of national agitation. In order to isolate Lithuanians from Polish influence, the Tsarist authorities permitted the sale of land to the peasantry after the abolition of serfdom under more advantageous conditions than prevailed in Russia and provided stipendia for the sons of Lithuanian farmers at Russian universities. But along with these concessions came a prohibition of Lithuanian books in Roman type in 1864-65, and later in German script as well. Lithuanian patriots attempted without success to soften the repression with protestations of loyalty. In 1884 an attempt by Jonas Šliupas to lift the ban on printing by expressing moral solidarity with Russia, loyalty to the Tsarist regime, and rejection of Polish influence was rebuffed by the authorities. The Russian press welcomed the emancipation of the Lithuanian national journal *Aušra* (Dawn) from Polish cultural influence but feared that a

²³⁸ V. POCHLEBKIN, *SSSR - Finlandiya*, Moscow 1975, 110 ff.

²³⁹ O. JUSSILA, "Finland from Province to State", in: *Finland: People, Nation, State*, London 1989, 85-101.

lifting of the prohibition would contribute to renewal of a “Polish-Latin spirit” in Lithuania. Moreover it viewed *Aušra* as a result of Prussian anti-Russian intrigue and insisted that the paper was being financed by Chancellor Bismarck.²⁴⁰

Russian absolutism with its strict censorship prevented the emergence of a free press. Thus publication abroad became important for the oppressed nations and the Russian opposition alike. The Swedish-Finnish anti-Tsarist movement of course found opportunities in Sweden. During the 1860's a series of works by Latvian and Estonian patriots appeared in the German lands, and one of its aims was to win over the German liberals. Numerous publications defending Baltic autonomy also appeared in the German lands, while at the same time the opposing Slavophile faction also took the opportunity to publish beyond the reach of Tsarist censorship. Thus the first part of J. Samarin's *Okraiina Rossii* appeared in 1868 in Prague. The significance of publishing opportunities outside the control of the traditional provincial elites is also to be seen in the example of the Young Latvian paper *Peterburgas Avīzes*, published in St. Petersburg where the censor was the Young Latvian ideologue K. Valdemārs.

But for the Lithuanian movement publication abroad was of prime significance. Lesser Lithuania, a region of East Prussia with a Lithuanian-speaking population, became a publishing center from which books were smuggled in large quantities into Tsarist Lithuania. But such activity had little influence on the Prussian Lithuanians, who remained loyal subjects of the Prussian king. The period of intensive cooperation, when Prussia, focussing on German unification, tended to accommodate Russian wishes, ended in the mid-1870's.²⁴¹ The Tsarist government sought to combat anti-Russian propaganda by diplomatic means, while the chief interest of the Prussian police was concentrated on threats to the social system in general – anarchists

²⁴⁰ J. OCHMAŃSKI, *Litewski ruch narodowo-kulturalny w XIX wieku (do 1890 r.)*, Warszawa 1965, 148–150.

²⁴¹ V. MERKYS, *Knygnešiu laikai 1864–1904*, Vilnius 1994, 341–357.

and socialists as well as Polish conspirators. Beginning in the 1870's, the second most important publication center for Lithuanian organizations after Prussia was provided by Lithuanian immigrants in the United States. The importance of publishing abroad is suggested by the fact that between 1865 and 1904 69 percent of Lithuanian books were published in Lesser Lithuania, 20.3 percent in the United States and 3.6 percent elsewhere in Germany. Thanks largely to the Lithuanian emigration in the New World modern political and cultural ideas began to penetrate into Lithuania at the end of the century. Lithuanian émigrés in western Europe and the United States also initiated the independent Lithuanian ethnographic exhibition at the Paris World's Fair in 1900, at which they were for the first time presented as a separate ethnic entity.

The Mass Phase of the National Movement

When the inspection tour of Senator Manasein in 1882-83 prompted the Tsarist bureaucracy to exploit regional antagonisms in its campaign for unification and russification and to ignore the demands of the national movements, there was no longer any incentive for them to seek accommodation with the regime, and Tsarism became an obstacle for them. While the Latvian and Estonian elite were able to profit from growing opportunities for careers in the imperial service, some of the conservative Latvian leaders drew closer to the Baltic Germans. The politically suppressed nations were becoming internally differentiated in the 1890's as social problems took on greater urgency. Russification in the Baltic provinces slowed but did not stop the Latvian and Estonian national movements, whose democratic wing added criticism of the regime and demands for social change to their national program. The old conception of a national monolith gave way to a more differentiated political scene. Currents of political opinion sought ideological allies in Russia and abroad according to their place in the political spectrum. Thus for example the worker's movement looked for to German, Russian or

Polish Socialists, while the Liberals cooperated to a degree with the Russian Constitutional Democrats, the Cadets. At the beginning of the new century the radical left first voiced the idea of independence, but did not go beyond speculation.

The revolution of 1905 allowed the ventilation of the demands of the suppressed peoples of Russia, but the resolutions adopted by Baltic national congresses limited themselves to demands for autonomy and the democratization of political conditions in Russia.²⁴²

The situation in Finland developed quite differently. The dismantling of autonomy, carried out from the end of the 1890's by Governor Bobrikov, abetted rapprochement among the various political currents in the country. The more conservative Old Finns attempted to keep the conflict a purely Finnish affair and sought a solution through "appeasement", while the more radical Swedish and Young Finnish liberals favored joining with other national movements in Russia and searched for allies beyond the borders of Russia. The Finns appealed to European public opinion and seized every occasion to bring their conflict before an international forum and to internationalize the question of Finnish autonomy. Publicity abroad was organized by the Committee for Foreign Propaganda founded by the leading Finnish lawyer Leo Mechelin. One of the results was a petition addressed to Tsar Nicholas which was signed by a thousand European prominent figures in European cultural and intellectual life. The Finnish pavilion at the Paris World's Fair of 1900, mentioned earlier, offered another opportunity to increase Finnish visibility. Finnish politicians set out to create the image of a culturally distinct and economically mature land within the west European cultural framework which was being threatened from the east. Fears inspired by Russification led some extremists to consider emigration

²⁴² U. GÉRMANIS, "Die Autonomie und Unabhängigkeitsbestrebungen der Letten", in *Von den baltischen Provinzen zu den baltischen Staaten 1917-1918*, Marburg 1971, 1-68. E. MOTIEKA, "The Great Assembly of Vilnius, 1905", *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, I, 1996, 84-96. T. RAUN, *The Revolution of 1905 and the Movement for Estonian National Autonomy*, Princeton 1969.

and the establishment of Finnish colonies in Canada or Cuba. The Russo-Japanese war was seen as an opportunity to take advantage of Russian weakness. Radical Finnish politicians lent their support to Japan, while one of their leaders K. Zilliacus even passed secret information to the Japanese attaché in Stockholm and became a central figure in distributing Japanese subsidies to the anti-Tsarist resistance.²⁴³

When, after a temporary halt during the revolution of 1905, the Russian government renewed the campaign of unification in the years before the First World War, the Finns reactivated their foreign policy. In 1910 they convened a panel of international experts in London to judge the Russian measures. While the Finns never became as well known in western Europe as the Poles or the Hungarians, their struggle to maintain their autonomy certainly did not pass unnoticed. It is of course necessary to differentiate between the interests of the Swedish public (Stockholm was the center of Finnish emigration) and those of Britain or Germany. Finnish foreign propaganda did not achieve the goal of stopping the Russian campaign, but as far as the European public was concerned Finland became established as a distinct political entity which was joined to but not identical with Russia.²⁴⁴

The Russo-Japanese war also presented other national movements with the chance to intensify their activity. The Polish Socialists, in their unrelenting struggle against Tsarism, also became beneficiaries of Japanese subsidies, as were the Georgian Socialists and Russian Socialist Revolutionaries. But Japanese interest in supporting national and social movements as a means of weakening its enemy was limited to financial support for propaganda, terrorist attacks and espionage for the duration of the war.²⁴⁵

The Russo-Japanese war exposed important destabilizing factors in the Tsarist monarchy – the opposition of the non-Russian nations

²⁴³ R. ŚWIETEK, *Lodowa ściana: Sekrety polityki Józefa Piłsudskiego 1904–1918*, Cracow 1998, 314.

²⁴⁴ J. PAASIVIRTA, *Finland and Europe: International Crises in the Period of Autonomy 1808–1914*, London 1981, 178 ff.

²⁴⁵ R. ŚWIETEK, *Op. cit.*, 344.

against nationalist oppression, and the social-revolutionary movement – which the German and Austrian secret services and general staffs began to exploit as they made plans for a joint offensive against Russia. As early as 1871 the Chief of the German General Staff Helmuth von Moltke considered the possibilities offered by an uprising of Finns, Caucasian peoples or Poles. A renewed Polish state would stand as a bastion against “half-Asiatic” Russia. In 1906 Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg suggested the idea of a reconstituted Poland to Kaiser Wilhelm but ran into opposition from conservatives well aware of the dangers it presented, so that it was left for further consideration to the Austrians, who were less averse to the prospect of an independent Poland.²⁴⁶ However, support for the movements of dissatisfied nationalities remained confined to espionage purposes down to the outbreak of war.

The Internationalization of the Question of Oppressed Nations during the First World War

During the First World War the opposing sides began to make use of the national movements to the detriment of their enemies. But it is necessary to distinguish between the utilitarian military uses of dissatisfaction (such as the Czech Legions, Pilsudski’s Polish Legions, the Finnish Huntsmen) at the beginning of the war, and the complicated path leading to international support for the dissolution of the old multinational monarchies which had after all been one of the constants of European politics.

The fall of the Tsarist state at the end of the First World War presented an ideal situation for bringing about the independence of the peripheral regions. In 1917 there was a fundamental change in the general atmosphere with the recognition of the right of nations to self determination, whether in the forms suggested by Woodrow Wilson or the Russian Bolsheviks. Thus new elements were added to

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 555–561.

international politics. The liberation of Central and Eastern European peoples from oppression became a watchword of the movement toward democratization but the goal was subordinated to concrete political interests. While the recognition of Finnish, Polish or Czechoslovak independence was not long in coming, the western powers hesitated over Latvia and Estonia until January 1921 and Lithuania to the end of 1922.

The mobilization was accompanied by promises to the minority peoples. At the beginning of the war the political leaders of the Baltic peoples loyally supported Tsarist war aims, while the demands of several of the national movements were integrated with Russian nationalist goals – for example the annexation of Prussian Lesser Lithuania. The political leaders associated participation in the war with the fulfillment of further national demands as well – the division of the Baltic provinces according to the national principle and the granting of autonomy. The war offered an opportunity to activate the national movements on the basis of organizations caring for war refugees. The Tsarist administration exploited German-Latvian antagonisms in the formation of Latvian units in the summer of 1915, the first to be set up on the national principle. The old socially determined antagonism, deepened by the revolution of 1905, together with the motive of defending the land against the enemy, strengthened national cohesion, so that the Latvian units became among the most reliable in the Tsarist army.

The national movements were used by both sides in their effort to weaken the enemy. The central powers concentrated their attention on Russia as the weakest member, socially and nationally, of the allied camp. As part of its plan to revolutionize and eliminate Russia Germany supported the formation of the Finnish Huntsman units and the Polish Legions under Pilsudski. Under the direction of the German secret service the League of Foreign Peoples was set up with the aim of drawing world attention (and especially that of President Wilson) to national oppression in Russia. The League succeeded in attracting support from representatives of the Lithuanian émigré community (Juozas Gabrys), the Finnish (Hermann Gummerus), the

Ukrainian (Volodymir Stepanskivsky), the Estonian Polish (Michal Lempicki) and the Baltic Germans led by Friedrich von der Ropp, who played a central role in forming the organization and convening its Lausanne congress in June 1916. Despite the participation of the agent who was to represent Estonia, the antagonism between Latvians and Baltic Germans on the one hand and Estonians and Baltic Germans on the other, it was impossible to secure the representation of both Baltic nations.²⁴⁷ The activation of the League corresponded to the decision not to return the German-occupied territory for the duration of the war and to secure the border of East Prussia by creating a Polish-Baltic buffer zone, expressed in a speech by Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg to the Reichstag on 5 April 1916. In this context a Polish state was proclaimed in November 1916. In the summer of 1917 the German occupation authorities agreed to the formation of a Lithuanian representative institution, the Lithuanian Council, in 1917 for liaison with the local populace. A second motive was the effect on the international stage, as the move was presented as “liberation” from Russian oppression rather than the run-up to annexation by Germany, to be preceded by the formation of a Lithuanian puppet state as a counterweight to the Polish state set up on formerly Tsarist territory. The Lithuanian strategy differed from the approach of other Baltic nationalities not only because of the German occupation. Leaders of the strong Lithuanian-American community had already demanded the internationalization of the Lithuanian question in the autumn of 1914 and recognition of the autonomy of a Lithuanian-Latvian federation. In 1915, before the German occupation, they, along with their émigré countrymen in western Europe, demanded complete independence.²⁴⁸

The February revolution in Russia partially satisfied Latvian and Estonian demands for national autonomy while also easing tensions

²⁴⁷ S. ZETTERBERG, *Die Liga der Fremdvölker Russlands 1916–1918*, Helsinki 1978. See also the German anti-German reaction and the vision of post-war Eastern Europe by T. G. Masaryk, *Nová Evropa*, Brno 1994.

²⁴⁸ A. TARULIS, *American-Baltic Relations 1918–1922: The Struggle over Recognition*, Washington 1965, 2 ff.

with the Finns. The Bolshevik revolution went even further in the recognition of the right to national self-determination and extended full autonomy to non-Russian nationalities. Recognition of the right to national self-determination did not mean automatic agreement with the idea of independence, which was fully subordinated to the needs of social revolution. In practice the Bolshevik government recognized only Finnish independence. The Bolshevik revolution in Russia had a fundamental impact on the decision to seek political independence, in that it called into question the legitimacy of the central government. Opposition to the Soviet system on the part of nationalist leaders representing the spectrum from the conservative right to reformist socialists led to the proclamation of Estonian independence on 24 February 1918 and of Latvian somewhat later, on 18 November, because of the German occupation. A further factor was the Peace of Brest-Litovsk and its addendum of August 1918 by which the Soviets were obliged to give up Poland, Lithuania, the Baltic, Finland and the Ukraine.²⁴⁹

Towards the end of the war, then, there were three possible types of development: a conservative type favored by the central powers (plans to form vassal monarchies in the former border territories); the Allies' plans for political democratization (though not necessarily, as the aim was to retain Russia in the struggle against the central powers); and Soviet Russia with its plans for social revolution. The measure of success of each variant was the strength of its backer, for the dominant power determined the character of the region. The Russian center was able to retain the culturally identical regions of its western border (Ukraine, Byelorussia) but not those nations with a different identity. While the White Russians categorically rejected any separation of the border regions (the more liberal currents accepted at most the independence of Poland and Finland), the Soviet government, after the failure to spread the revolution, concentrated

²⁴⁹ The breakup of the Russian empire was a more protracted and painful process than that of the Austrian Monarchy. See M. ENGMANN, "Consequences of Dissolving an Empire: the Habsburg and Romanov Cases", in *Emancipation and Interdependence*, Uppsala 1994, 21–33.

on stabilizing the Russian heartland. For tactical reasons, motivated by the need to deprive anti-Soviet groups of their bases, it concluded peace agreements in 1920 which recognized the independence of the new states and gave up all claims to them.

Allied support was clearly the decisive factor in the origin and preservation of the Baltic states. The Allies gave de facto recognition to the national governments even before the actual formation of the states (the Estonian in May 1918, the Latvian a week before its birth on 18 November 1918, although neither had any power), in order to prevent annexation by Germany, and later through direct military support they halted the spread of revolution and union with Soviet Russia.

This support was conditional, determined by the global interests of the great powers. It also varied. Britain adopted a positive attitude toward the Baltic states because of its economic interests in the region; it could also profit politically from Russian losses on the coast. France, giving preference to a global political approach, only gave up on a Russian restoration in the autumn of 1920. London supported the independence of Lithuania against Polish aspirations, which were supported by France.²⁵⁰

The case of Finland also depended on the support of the dominant power, although here the internal political factor played the most important role. The civil war was an internal conflict in which German intervention contributed to the victory of the Whites. The change in the balance of forces in Europe, however, led to the suppression of the Germanophile conservative current represented by

²⁵⁰ E. ANDERSONS, "Die baltische Frage und die internationale Politik der Alliierten und assoziierten Mächte bis zum November 1918", in *Von ...*, 255–274. *Ibid.*, "Die baltische Frage und die internationale Politik der Alliierten und assoziierten Mächte 1918–1920", in *Von den baltischen Provinzen zu den baltischen Staaten 1918–1920*, Marburg 1977, 327–377. K. JANNSSEN, "Die baltische Okkupationspolitik des Deutschen Reiches", in *Von den baltischen ...*, 1917–1918, 217–254. H. VOLKMANN, "Das Deutsche Reich und die baltischen Staaten 1918 bis 1920", in *Von den baltischen ... 1918–1920*, 378–408. For the attitude of the United States, A. TARULIS, *American-Baltic ...* O. HOVI, *The Baltic Area in British Policy 1918–1921*, Helsinki 1980. K. HOVI, *Cordon Sanitaire or Barriere de l'Est?*, Turku 1975.

P. Svinhifvud and the emergence of a republic. The Allies then recognized Finland de jure at the beginning of May 1919, once they had received assurances of a pro-allied stance and a democratic development in the country.²⁵¹

Conclusions

In conclusion I shall try to summarize in several points the conditions for the rise of the national states on the western borders of the Russian empire. International events were not strongly reflected in the first two phases of the national movement, although the international factor made itself felt in relations between the local political and cultural elite and the state.

The foreign factor exerted influence only indirectly, as in the foregoing example – an unsuccessful military conflict exposed the weakness of the old multinational monarchy (the thesis of expansive foreign policy as a means of resolving or drawing attention away from domestic problems, though in this case with the opposite effect), and caused an escalation of internal tensions, leading to efforts at reform. The crises at the end of the 1850's and in 1905, which Russia overcame, were not accompanied by such foreign pressure that the legitimacy of the central authority was compromised in the region under study.

One of the preconditions for the emergence of a national state was the existence of a political leadership with mass support (which did not exclude the possibility of various kinds of national state). The public was activated when it felt itself under threat (from war, or economic or social crisis) and accepted the authority of the national

²⁵¹ J. PAASIVIRTA, *The Victors in World War I and Finland. Finland's Relations with the British, French and the United States Governments in 1918–1919* Helsinki 1965, 79–109. *Ibid.*, *Finland and Europe: The Early Years of Independence 1917–1939*, Helsinki 1988, 160–166, 109–215. E. SUNDBÄCK, "Convenient Buffer between Scandinavia and Russia", *Great Britain, Scandinavia and the Birth of Finland after the First World War. Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 42, 1994, 355–375.

political leadership in place of the traditional hierarchy. It is necessary to remember the role of the national and social consensus and the necessity of meeting the demands of social groups – for example, at first the Bolsheviks enjoyed strong support from the Latvian soldiers, the rural and industrial proletariat and the poorer peasantry, but also among the intellectual left, who were satisfied with autonomy within the Russian framework. Failure to meet demands for land reform and revolutionary excesses reduced their support. Authority did not depend merely on the measure of national support stratified socially and sometimes also territorially (for example the weak national awareness displayed by the Prussian Lithuanians). The authority of the national leadership transforming itself into a state institution was increased if it was able to gain the support of representatives of other ethnic groups living on the same territory (for the Lithuanians, Jews and Byelorussians). As a rule there was a sharp conflict between the old and emerging elites (the suppressed peoples against the Russian state, but also Latvians and Estonians against the Baltic Germans, and Lithuanians against Poles). Only in Finland did an external threat play a role, i.e. in unification before the First World War, and later the threat of the Bolshevik revolution became an element serving to integrate the elite. The civil war, however, divided Finnish society socially and its effects were felt into the 1930's.

The growth of dissatisfaction with the old system because of its weakness and the deep crisis of the multinational empire served to set the mechanism of independence in movement. The political, social and economic attractions of the center and the character of the ties of dependence of the periphery were of significance. For example, the economic separation of Finland met no obstacles. On the other hand, the existence of the Baltic states without economic ties to Russia was unthinkable for most.

In the absence of a favorable international situation which contributed to the paralysis of the traditional dominant powers and negated the legitimacy of the center (separated by another state, coup d'état), the above mentioned factors had no chance of coming into play. The development of the national movement toward an

independent state may be understood as a historically complex process leading from the role of an object of events to that of an international political subject. An important role was played by the level of interest on the part of the dominant power in weakening a competing state (which envisions making use of the dissatisfaction of suppressed peoples for military aims, espionage, support for the opposition in an effort to create domestic instability, support for demands for autonomy). This, however, did not yet mean approval of separation. More important was the decision to seriously weaken or even definitively destroy the enemy empire (by supporting the national movement even to secession, the decision to build a new international system, the influence of Wilson's ideas). The function of internal destabilization, however, could also be performed by the social movement.

In order for the new state to be recognized, it was important to have at least some of the attributes of statehood in place, at least in elementary form, before the proclamation of the state – the existence of a tradition of statehood, autonomy, or some manifestation of active resistance (for example an independent army, a partisan movement or other military or paramilitary organization) such as existed among the Czechs or Poles. Peoples with a tradition of statehood were more readily accepted when their cause was presented as a renewal of statehood, while the states formed by the “non-historical” peoples aroused misgivings long after the war (Latvia, Estonia). It was also important to convince the appropriate power of the new state's prospects: its stability, trustworthiness, and its “usefulness” in the new European constellation. Recognition could be held up by uncertainty over borders or quarrels with neighbors (such as that between Lithuania and Poland). Economic aspects were also of significance: economic viability, maturity, trade links, sufficiency of raw materials, etc. The vital necessity of the Baltic ports for Russia as a “commercial window” to Europe was the most widespread argument against secession. Diplomats also took into consideration the geographical extent and the population of the national state. It was necessary to overcome skepticism about the costs of maintaining

the new state and fears of “balkanizing” the region. Location was a further factor – at the periphery (Finland), at the crossroads of political and economic interests (Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia), as was the interest of the appropriate power in the role envisioned for the new state in the postwar international system – after the failure of hopes for a restoration of Russia more or less in its pre-war borders (defended for geopolitical reasons most ardently by France) the idea of the “cordon sanitaire” between Soviet Russia and Germany and its integration into international trade. The motif of the cordon sanitaire, dictated by political and economic considerations, later appeared as a mirror image in the Soviet approach during 1920-21.

Summary

This essay deals with the external influence on national movements demonstrated on the national-liberating process of the Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian, and Finnish national ethnics in the North-Western parts of the czarist Russia in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and its broader Eastern European and Central European context. The author based his typology on M. Hroch’s evolutionary phases of national movements division comprising of three stages: the stage of the scientific interest, national agitation, and mass movement development; and follows the level of the external influence in the particular stages. The most significant influence of the external can be seen in the last stage of the nation-liberating process, although it can be traced through all the stages. At the last stage, however, the external factor embodies a very important role as the activists of the suppressed ethnic attempt to draw international attention to the minority’s position, introduce it as a specific subject, and gain the international support against the status quo elite or state. There is a certain distinction between movements that could prove some kind of autonomy or historical tradition of statehood

(the Finnish and partly the Lithuanians), and ethnics that didn't share the same experience (the Latvians, the Estonians). The liberating attempts could only come true in case of a considerable weakening of the old power center and traditional elites, leading to power vacuum in the region. The second important precondition was to gain the support of the great European powers and convince them about viability of the newly formed national states and their usefulness for the post-war system. Such political and military support of the European powers proved to be of a decisive importance for arising national states, as the end of WW I demonstrated.

Translation: Frederick L. Snider