

# The German Fear of Russia

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Russia and its place within German History

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## Introduction

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler reflects upon the perceived failure of German foreign policy regarding Russia before 1918. He argues that Germany ultimately had to prepare for a final all-out war of extermination against Russia if Germany was to survive as a nation. Hitler claimed that German survival depended on its ability to resist the massive faceless hordes against Germany that had been created and projected by Frederick the Great and his successors.<sup>1</sup> He contends that Russia was Germany's chief rival in Europe and that there had to be a final showdown between them if Germany was to become a great power.<sup>2</sup> Hitler claimed that this showdown had to take place as Russia was becoming the center of Marxism due to the October Revolution and the founding of the Soviet Union. He stated that Russia was seeking to destroy the German state by launching a general attack on it and German culture through the introduction of Leninist principles to the German population. Hitler declared that this infiltration of Leninist principles from Russia was a disease and form of decay. Due to these principles, the German people had abandoned the wisdom and actions of Frederick the Great, which was slowly destroying German art and culture.<sup>3</sup> Finally, beyond this expression of fear, Hitler advocated that Russia represented the only area in Europe open to German expansion.<sup>4</sup> This would later form the basis for Operation Barbarossa and the German invasion of Russia in 1941 in which Germany entered into its final conflict with Russia, conquering most of European

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<sup>1</sup> Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1943, originally published 1926), 197.

<sup>2</sup> Hitler, 663

<sup>3</sup> Hitler, 258

<sup>4</sup> Hitler, 140

Russia and almost destroying its ability to challenge the German policy of *lebensraum*, the German government's policy of expansion and settlement. The result of this ideology was that Germany created a long and devastating ideological war in which the Nazis attempted the enslavement of Russia aimed at ensuring the permanent subjugation of Russia.

One part of this ideological campaign involved a rewriting of Germany's history. This revised version went back to the Teutonic Knights, a German crusader organization, where their crusades in the Eastern Baltic and East Slavic lands during the late medieval period were now portrayed as a civilizing factor in the East.<sup>5</sup> The Teutonic Knight's invasion occurred at a critical period in Russian history. Most of these lands had been overwhelmed by the Mongols and Tartars, who had just destroyed the grand principality of Kiev and had conquered most of Russia except for the city of Novgorod, which survived as a powerful city state in the northern Baltic region.<sup>6</sup> This turmoil and chaos was presented by the Nazis as a justification of the German invasion, which occurred in the form of the Teutonic Knights' invasion of Novgorodian territory, as the Germans restoring order to the East Slavic lands.

Soon after this, though, the Teutonic Knights were defeated by the Novgorodian army under Prince Alexander Nevsky, resulting in the slow decay of German power in the eastern Baltic region. The Nazis accounted for this by stating that this allowed the Slavic kingdom of Muscovy to begin to use the chaos resulting from the Mongol invasions to form a coherent and powerful state on Germany's eastern borders. This, they argued allowed for Russia under Peter

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<sup>5</sup> Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East: 1800 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 24.

<sup>6</sup> A. Lobanov-Rostovsky, "Russia and Germany: an Historical Survey of Russo-German Relations," *Russian Review*, Vol 2. no. 2 (spring 1943): 28.

the Great in the eighteenth century, to begin dominating the eastern Baltic after its defeat of Sweden in the Great Northern War and to look westward towards expansion into Poland and Northern Germany.<sup>7</sup> One problem with this was that it coincided with the rise of Prussia, which had begun in the early 1700's, as a result of the efforts of the Great Elector and his successors and their efforts to expand the Prussian army. Prussia, though, only started to become a formidable power in its own right as a result of its acquisition of the semi-autonomous Polish territory of East Prussia.<sup>8</sup> The result of this was that Prussia resembled a small fragmented state, until Frederick the Great's reign, which depended on the strength and size of its army to maintain its status as a great power. It also lacked the human, fiscal and natural resources to engage in an all-out war to achieve its goals. In contrast, Russia was experiencing a major growth in power due to the efforts of Peter the Great through his conquest of large areas of the Baltic and southern Russia. The consequence of this was that Russia represented a massive unified state that had the resources to engage in several all-out wars of conquest that increasingly seemed to be focused on Germany.<sup>9</sup> Prussia was therefore confronted with an organized and powerful state on its eastern border whose military power came from its large geographic boundaries as well as its larger population and material resources that it knew very little about.<sup>10</sup>

The consequence of this was that Prussia's eastern flank, the province of East Prussia, was now exposed to a militarily, territorially and economically superior power where there had

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<sup>7</sup> Rostovsky, 30

<sup>8</sup> Michael H. MacDonald, *Europe, A Tantalizing Romance: Past and Present Europe* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996), 108.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 13.

<sup>10</sup> Greta Bucher, *Daily Life in Imperial Russia* (West Port: Greenwood Press, 2008), 33.

not been one before.<sup>11</sup> This meant that during the eighteenth century a great fear began to develop within German high culture as it attempted to deal with the shock of being confronted with Russia's rapid rise as a great power. This shock allowed the Nazis to portray Russia as the great peril of the German race in which Hitler stated that the single goal of German foreign policy had to be focused on following the road paved by the Teutonic Knights. He argued that Germany had to embark on a journey to bring the seed of German culture to the lands of the east through the sword and allowed him to portray Russia as the place where Germany's future would be won or lost.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of modern scholarship dealing with Germany's relationship with Russia prior to the Nazi period, one of the most important sources that should be considered is Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius book, *The German Myth of the East: 1800 to the Present*. This source is important as it outlines Germany's political and intellectual relationship with Eastern Europe and in particular Russia. It examines how the relationship between German nationalism, nation building and expansionist policies in Eastern Europe all contributed to the development of Germany's thinking regarding Russia prior to the Second World War. It shows how these concepts led key individuals within the Germany government and academia to view Russia as a region of barbarism that had to be defended against.<sup>13</sup> This source is therefore significant to this study as it analyzes how the combination of the above mentioned concepts led to the

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<sup>11</sup> W.F. Reddaway, *Frederick the Great And The Rise Of Prussia* (London:W&J Mackay and Co, Ltd, 1904), 15.

<sup>12</sup> Liulevicius,174

<sup>13</sup> Liulevicius, 1

development of a German frontier myth within German high culture and to some extent popular culture.<sup>14</sup>

Another source that analyzes Germany's experience with Eastern Europe that should be considered is Michael Hughes' book, *Nationalism and Society: Germany 1800-1945*. This source is important as it supplements other histories that deal with the rise of National Socialism in Germany and its focus on Eastern Europe as a significant part of its propaganda. It does this through a focus on the roots of German nationalism and how it was shaped during the period of the *Kaiserreich* or German empire. It does this by focusing on the thinking surrounding the creation of the concept of a Germanic space that needed to be protected and expanded.<sup>15</sup> The last major source that should be considered is W.E. Mosse's monograph, *The European Powers And The German Question 1848-71: With Special Reference To England And Russia*. This source is significant due to its detailing of German-Russian relations over a critical phase of German history. It catalogues Russia's interests in Germany, particularly the Russian desire to maintain the status quo in Germany following the Napoleonic War. It describes how this led to friction between the various German governments, particularly Prussia and Austria. It is also important as it deals with the German reaction to the Russian policies and details how Bismarck used the Russian desire to maintain the status quo to Prussia's advantage. It shows how he did this through the taking advantage of Russia's internal difficulties and its desire to build a secure diplomatic front through its association with other conservative stable governments.<sup>16</sup> It

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<sup>14</sup> Liulevicius, 2

<sup>15</sup> Michael Hughes, *Nationalism and Society, Germany 1800-1945* (London, New York and Melbourne: Edward Arnold, 1988), 1-2.

<sup>16</sup> W.E. Mosse, *The European Powers And The German Question, 1848-71: With Special Reference to England and Russia* (New York: Octagon Books: 1969), 2.

provides a platform for examining how the German fear of Russia fit into Germany's drive for unification and how German/Russian interests conflicted during this period.

The problem with the examinations of these events is that that they tend to dwell on this phase of German foreign policy as separate from the decisions made by previous governments. They fail to analyse and explain why Nazi propaganda regarding Russia was believed and supported, and why the Nazi decision to attack the Soviet Union was considered necessary. There are multiple reasons for this, but one that is often overlooked is the wariness of Germany's previous governments towards Russia and how it became feared by Germany's leaders. The result of this is that there are very few sources that extensively examine German popular or high culture opinions regarding Russia prior to the Nazis rise to power in 1933. This is possibly the result of an inability to effectively measure the German population's attitude towards Russia and how German public opinion affected the decisions of the government but could also be due to the lack of chronological works on the subject. As a result, this paper will seek to further the work of Liulevicius by focusing on the development of German foreign relations with Russia as a means of understanding how a fear of Russia can be seen in Germany's political narrative. This paper will argue that a German fear of Russia was created within German high culture due to the brutality of the Seven Years War. It will then examine how this fear influenced the decisions of successive governments until the end of the First World War in 1918. This will be done through an examination of the reigns of Frederick the Great, Frederick William IV, the Chancellor Otto von Bismarck and finally the reign of Kaiser Wilhelm II, as these were the most significant figures who were engaged in the development of this fear. This allows for a clearer narrative of how the fear of Russia changed and was shaped

by the political events of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe. It will also examine the radicalization of this fear by the First World War, through its increasing emphasis on racial divisions and how this influenced the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which was imposed on Russia by Germany as a means of ensuring that it could no longer threaten Germany's eastern frontier.

## Chapter 1: Frederick the Great, the Seven Years War and the Creation of the Fear

Germany's modern interaction with Russia began to take shape during the Enlightenment period. This was partly the result of key enlightenment figures in Germany, including Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz. He argued that "the civilized nations of Europe had made one mistake after another and that Russia was a blank sheet of paper" that was ready to absorb the ideals of the Enlightenment. Leibnitz also stated that "Europe should seize the opportunity to make a fresh start with [Russia]," referring to the Teutonic knights earlier attempts to conquer the eastern Baltic.<sup>17</sup> He declared that Russia's rapid rise in power had created a new great power in Europe that was not bound by any earlier traditions of statehood. It represented a blank canvas that could be painted and influenced by the ideals of the Enlightenment to create the ideal enlightened state centered on reason and rational government.<sup>18</sup> Leibnitz even wrote several letters to Peter the Great encouraging him to push forward new reforms aimed at moving the Russian state in that direction. This followed Leibnitz's argument in his *Use And Improvement of the German Language* in which he had stated that education and language showcased the intelligence of a people. Therefore, Russia represented a blank sheet where the modernizing of its society and language could be tailored to fit the principles of the Enlightenment period. He argued that with Russia's rapid rise as a European power, it was not burdened by ancient customs, allowing for a possible mass education program that would allow

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<sup>17</sup> Hermann Schreiber, *Teuton And Slav: The Struggle For Central Europe*. trans James Cleugh (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965, originally published in 1961): 259.

<sup>18</sup> Ronald Calinger, *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz* (Troy: Edwin B. Allen Mathematics Memorial Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 1976), 24.

Enlightenment principles to develop, creating the ideal enlightened state.<sup>19</sup> Leibnitz concluded that the Germans had to emulate Russia's example of modernization through education to strengthen and showcase the dignity and majesty of the German nation.<sup>20</sup> This argument is seen in his statement that due to Russia's rise in the East, the Germans had to follow suit so that they could fully employ their supposed strength in military planning, engineering, and bravery that was to be used against foes from the East.<sup>21</sup> This suggests that Leibnitz was pleased with Russia's rapid modernization under Peter the Great but that he was also concerned about its new military might and the resulting danger to Germany that this posed.

This was not the only major view of Russia developing at this time. In Prussia, a fear and hostility towards Russia was beginning to develop. This had started with Frederick William I (the soldier king) who in his statement to his son Frederick the Great just before his death in 1740, advised that he should always avoid a war with Russia as it would lead to Prussia's destruction. As far as Frederick William was concerned, Russia was the one state in Europe that had the power to threaten Prussia's own rise and that it was the one power that Prussia needed to fear and avoid conflict with at all costs.<sup>22</sup> This viewpoint was not crystalized, though, until the reign of Frederick the Great and Prussia's participation in the Seven Years War. Frederick encouraged this through the use of the German fear of Russia as a propaganda tool that could be used against Russia. This view had arisen as part of Frederick's attempt to use the French

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<sup>19</sup> Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz, "On The Use And Improvement of the German Language," trans. Caryn and Bernhard Wunderlich in Ronald Calinger, *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz* (Troy: Edwin B. Allen Mathematics Memorial Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 1976), 65-84.

<sup>20</sup> Leibnitz, 65-84

<sup>21</sup> Leibnitz, 67

<sup>22</sup> G.P. Gooch, *Frederick the Great: The Ruler, The Writer, The Man* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1962, originally published 1947), 7.

philosophical knowledge he had acquired through his correspondence with Voltaire to his own advantage. It would become part of a general program by Frederick to enhance his dynastic power by making it appear that he was fighting against a new barbarian horde attacking from the east.<sup>23</sup> This is particularly seen in his labeling of the Russians as the “bearlike maniacs”.<sup>24</sup> Frederick had begun to develop this view following the occupation of Memel, which was on the eastern corner of the border between Russia and Prussia during the beginning of the eastern campaign of the Seven Years War. It had developed following the disorganized movements of the Russian army in its advance through Courland and Lithuania which caused Frederick to remark that the Russian army was a heap of barbarians that any well-disciplined troops would make short work of.<sup>25</sup> Frederick was already developing the German fear of Russia in terms of it being a harbinger of barbarism whose spread had to be stopped for civilization to continue. He used his contempt of the Russian army as a propaganda tool to spread a more general fear of Russia by colouring the Russian army’s actions in the most negative view possible.

This view towards the Russians deepened following the first major battle between Prussian and Russian troops, which occurred at the Battle of Gross-Jägersdorf. The battle had started as a result of Frederick’s ordering the Prussian commander in the East, Field-Marshal Lehwaldt and his force of 32,000 men, to immediately attack and defeat the advancing Russian forces under Russian Field-Marshal Stepan Fedorovich Apraksin.<sup>26</sup> Due to this, Lehwaldt immediately drew up plans for an attack and on 30 August, 1757 he fell upon Apraksin and his

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<sup>23</sup> Lonnie R. Johnson, *Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 111.

<sup>24</sup> Liulevicius, 37

<sup>25</sup> Franz A.J. Szabo, *The Seven Years War in Europe, 1750-1763* (Harlow: Person Education Limited, 2008), 81.

<sup>26</sup> Szabo, 82

forces, attacking the Russian army's northern and southern wings. The Russian response to this was an unconventional but determined defense of their positions. The battle revealed several key aspects about both sides, including the Russian infantry's ability to withstand enemy attacks. Despite this, the Russian army still fell into confusion when faced with the disciplined Prussian infantry firing with parade ground precision. However, the Russians still managed to hold the line with the Prussian assault collapsing under wave upon wave of Russian artillery and musket fire. Both sides retreated in the face of the horrific casualties that had been inflicted, even though the Russians had won and were only 50 kilometres from Königsberg.<sup>27</sup> This battle is important because although it was a military stalemate, it indicated to Frederick that the war would be won or lost in the east and that Russia was the most dangerous foe that he had yet to encounter. It also helped to develop the German fear of Russia as it shattered the Prussian belief that disciplined troops could easily defeat the Russian army, strengthening the fear of a massive horde that might sweep across northern Germany.<sup>28</sup>

The outcome of this was that soon after the battle, Frederick banned any analysis of it. This censorship had started with an attempt to stop the spread of information on Prussian losses as well as to stop any information on Prussia's military situation in East Prussia from making it back to its central provinces in Germany.<sup>29</sup> He was helped in his efforts at this juncture by the Russian army itself as it retreated back into Courland. The Russian army, fearing that the Prussians were pursuing them, enacted a policy of scorched earth in which every village they came upon was burned to the ground, its inhabitants slaughtered and any supplies

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<sup>27</sup> Szabo, 83

<sup>28</sup> Szabo, 84

<sup>29</sup> David Fraser, *Frederick the Great: King of Prussia* (London: Penguin Group, 2000), 362.

taken to help the retreat.<sup>30</sup> This event allowed Frederick to confirm the stereotypes of barbarism that he had already been building. He was able to represent the Russian army as a barbarian horde that was threatening to sweep across northern Germany.

This characterization, however, did not always have the effect he hoped for. A new Russian offensive began in January, 1758. The Russians captured the major cities and towns in East Prussia including Labiau, Tilsit and the seat of Prussian power in the region, Königsberg, with no resistance on the part of the Prussian army as it had already abandoned the province.<sup>31</sup> What proved to be more serious for Frederick, though, was the reaction of the population of East Prussia. Instead of putting up a fierce fight to the death as Frederick had ordered, the militia and East Prussian officials had instead accepted the Russian offer to no longer destroy any property if the population swore an oath of allegiance to the Tsarina Elizabeth and the Russian empire.<sup>32</sup> The citizens of Tilsit, clergy and Prussian magistrates hastened to pay allegiance to the Tsarina in a humiliating forerunner of what was to come. Soon after this, Königsberg sent a delegation to the Russian army to offer their capitulation, agreeing to immediately disband all militia units and hand over their posts to the Russian army. What proved especially humiliating for Frederick and his fledging propaganda campaign, besides his military situation, was the reaction of Königsberg's population to the Russian army's entrance into the city. Instead of being terrified and defiant in the face of the Russian occupation, thousands of people lined the streets cheering as the Russian army marched through the streets in full parade fashion with bands playing and bells ringing. The city looked like it was

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<sup>30</sup> Szabo, 90

<sup>31</sup> Szabo, 116

<sup>32</sup> Ludwig Reiners, *Frederick the Great: An Informal Biography*. trans, Lawrence P.R. Wilson (London: Oswald Wolff Publishers Limited, 1960), 191.

being liberated rather than occupied, flying in the face of Frederick's propaganda that Russian rule was nothing but a form of barbaric tyranny that had to be feared.<sup>33</sup>

These were not isolated events either, as the population throughout the rest of East Prussia proved just as cooperative and by 8 February 1758, the province was proclaimed to be under the administration of the Russian government. Frederick now had to face a concerted effort on the part of the Russian government to prevent his attempt at labeling Russia as a barbarian state, which he had hoped would allow him to draw France and perhaps Austria, which were allied to Russia, into a peace treaty.<sup>34</sup> The end result of this was that Frederick now believed that his eastern border were no longer secure, which would in time prove to be a defining characteristic of Germany's relations with Russia. Due to this, Frederick and his successors attempted to create a secure border that could withstand any perceived Russian offensive. It also meant that they would also have to deal with the questionable loyalties of the East Prussian population as Frederick now perceived it as more Russian than German, therefore adding to his perceived weakness on his eastern border.<sup>35</sup> Soon though, Cossack forces began incursions into Pomerania which resulted in whole villages being slaughtered, supporting Frederick in his campaign of portraying the Russian army as a barbarian horde bent on the destruction of European civilization.<sup>36</sup>

The Russians moved faster than Frederick had predicted, reaching the fortress of Cústrin which they bombarded with howitzers, turning the town surrounding the fortress into little

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<sup>33</sup> Szabo, 116

<sup>34</sup> Reiner, 191

<sup>35</sup> Liulevicious, 37

<sup>36</sup> Szabo, 155

more than a smouldering pile of ash.<sup>37</sup> The Russian actions gave Frederick evidence for Russian barbarism, therefore allowing the rank and file to absorb a fear of Russia as well as an increasing desire for revenge.<sup>38</sup> This is seen in a comment by the Prussian cavalry after the Russian army had retreated, declaring that they would give the Russians no quarter and that they were sharpening their sabres to deal a death blow to as many Russian soldiers as possible.<sup>39</sup> This statement shows that Frederick's efforts and the carnage of the war in the East were starting to work as Frederick's view of Russia was starting to become embedded within a new nationalist narrative of the war. It further strengthened the development of the German fear of Russia by connecting it to Prussia's struggle to withstand the turmoil of the Seven Years War.

The progress of this internalization of the German fear of Russia and the apparent need for revenge is first seen at the battle of Zorndorf. It started just before the battle when the Prussian troops were forced to march through acidic smoke and the smell of burning flesh as they discovered that the Cossacks had burned and massacred all the villages in the area, resulting in a thick cloud of smoke that mixed with the dust of the two armies.<sup>40</sup> Frederick proclaimed that "[Prussia] was on the brink" and that there was to be no mercy shown to the Russians based on their burning, killing and destruction.<sup>41</sup> This viciousness increased as the battle began and the Prussians found themselves having to fight at point blank range with cavalry charges in between, resulting in a blood bath in which the two armies disintegrated into

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<sup>37</sup> Szabo, 161

<sup>38</sup> Szabo, 162

<sup>39</sup> Giles MacDonogh, *Frederick the Great: A Life In Deed And Letter* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), 275.

<sup>40</sup> Fraser, 391

<sup>41</sup> Macdonogh, 276

drunkenness and bloodlust.<sup>42</sup> Frederick and many of his officers were appalled by the savagery of the battle but soon turned this to their advantage, arguing that Prussia had won a great victory against a savage and brutal enemy. He inflated the Russian casualty figures to portray a heroic victory against the “eastern savages.”<sup>43</sup> He also now claimed that war with Russia in the future had to be avoided at all costs, as he labeled Russia his most dangerous and savage enemy in Europe. This shows the beginnings of the development of the German fear of Russia in which Prussia had to avoid war with Russia at all costs due to the bloodshed that was taking place.<sup>44</sup>

This sentiment became even worse following the battle of Kundersdorf which turned into a slaughter of the Prussian army. In this battle, the Prussian army was not only defeated, but the losses were so great that Frederick claimed the war would soon destroy Prussia, asserting that out of an army of 49,000, only 3000 survived.<sup>45</sup> He maintained the barbarism of the Russian army by pointing out that he was only saved from being captured by the fact that the Russian soldiers were too busy slitting the throats of the wounded to advance further.<sup>46</sup> Fortunately for Frederick, Prussia was saved by a disagreement between the Russian and Austrian commanders that allowed him to recover enough to finish the war with a military stalemate. With the death of the Tsarina Elisabeth and succession of her nephew Peter, Russia quickly switched sides against its former ally Austria. This resulted in Frederick taking advantage of the new Tsar’s love of the Prussian army and administration, to create an alliance between

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<sup>42</sup> Fraser, 394

<sup>43</sup> Fraser 395

<sup>44</sup> Fraser, 396

<sup>45</sup> Macdonogh, 286

<sup>46</sup> Macdonogh, 286

the new Russian government and Prussia that would hopefully ensure that Russia remained neutral or an ally in any future war.

Despite the later alliance, these campaigns had a lasting impact on Frederick's and Prussia's opinion of Russia, though. After the Seven Years War, Frederick and other German intellectuals began to claim that Prussia could not afford to allow Russian troops into Prussian territory again, based on the destruction of property, loss of civilian life, and the casualties that the Prussian army had sustained. This is seen in Ernst Moritz Arndt's *Excerpt from Germania and Europe* in which he claimed that Russian troops could not be allowed onto Prussian territory again if Prussia was to build and maintain its new position as a great power.<sup>47</sup> He stated that the reason countries such as Britain and France were great powers was due to the fact that they had not had enemy forces on their soil for large periods of time. Germany would forever remain a second rate power if it continued to allow itself to be invaded and therefore it needed to have concrete geographical borders in order to survive and thrive.<sup>48</sup> Arndt's opinion reflects the lasting effects of the Russian campaign during the Seven Years War, including the growing fear that Prussia's eastern frontier was not properly fortified or loyal enough to withstand the growing military might of Russia. As a result, Prussian policies following the Seven Years War increasingly turned towards the strengthening of the state, particularly its eastern frontier through immigration as well as the destruction of Poland.

Frederick's plans for strengthening Prussia started with his massive immigration policies. In response to the East Prussians surrendering so easily to Russian forces, he sought to

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<sup>47</sup> Ernst Moritz Arndt, *Excerpts from Germania and Europe* (1803).

[http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=3595](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=3595) (accessed 13 October, 2012).

<sup>48</sup> Arndt

strengthen his eastern borders through the immigration of people from throughout Europe. He planned to use this immigration to dilute the perceived Slavic elements of the East Prussian population which Frederick believed was the lowest element that would do anything to place itself under Russian rule.<sup>49</sup> Frederick brought 300,000 people who settled into Prussia's eastern provinces, mostly from groups such as the Huguenots from France. He desired to create a strong Protestant population that would be loyal only to him, due to his willingness to accept religious minorities.<sup>50</sup> This shows his preoccupation with ensuring that Prussia possessed a frontier that could be used effectively to fight the Russian army. It also shows the effect of the war's destruction in the East on the Prussian leadership's psyche as it still felt vulnerable to attack from Russia in the East.<sup>51</sup> Frederick also began a policy of closer relations with Russia through the creation of a system of co-dependence between the two states, in order to acquire Polish territory that could be used to create an effective and natural border with Russia.

Frederick began this policy through the conclusion of a defensive alliance with Russia that was achieved through the encouragement of the new tsar's love of Prussia. It served to undermine the previous Russian hostility towards Prussia. However, this policy changed with the coming to power of Catherine the Great as she forced Frederick to establish clear goals towards the preservation of this new alliance over simply relying on the former Tsar's love of Prussia. These goals included the drawing of Russia away from its support of Austrian influence and the need to create a more stable frontier.<sup>52</sup> Frederick attempted to achieve these goals through the signing of an alliance with Russia that was to last eight years. This guaranteed for

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<sup>49</sup> Macdonough, 319

<sup>50</sup> Liulevicious, 38

<sup>51</sup> Macdonough, 320

<sup>52</sup> Herbert H. Kaplan, *The First Partition Of Poland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 34.

Frederick the possibility of mobility for the Prussian army, for if Prussia was attacked in any of its Rhineland provinces, its eastern frontiers would be secure. As a result of the alliance, Frederick began collaborating with Russia on its policies regarding Poland in the hope of expanding Prussian influence into Poland.<sup>53</sup> The effect of this was that Frederick now added another element to Prussia's relationship with Russia in which the Russian friendship became a means of ensuring that Prussia would not have to face a massed and organized attack on its eastern frontier as it had during the Seven Years War.

The key to this plan depended on Prussia ensuring its survival as a great power through expansion in Poland as a means of gaining a more uniform border in the East. Frederick did this by strengthening his opposition to reform in Poland through his alliance with Russia, encouraging a Russian invasion of Poland to ensure that Stanislas Augustus, a favourite of Catherine's, was placed on the Polish throne. Frederick also began a number of his own initiatives aimed at increasing Prussian influence in Poland. The first of these initiatives was an attack on the Polish governments' ability to control its gathering of revenue through the general customs toll. This toll had infuriated Frederick since its establishment and with the signing of his alliance with Russia, Frederick decided that it was time to act on his threats to take action through the implementation of a toll house and fort below Marienwerder on the Vistula River. Due to this, Frederick gained control over all trade vessels leaving and entering Poland. He ordered that any vessel that attempted to stay near the Polish side of the river was to be stopped by Prussian vessels and towed back to the Prussian side where they would be

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<sup>53</sup> Kaplan, 35.

forced to pay the toll, thus increasing Prussian influence in Poland.<sup>54</sup> He then agreed to dismantle the toll house and stop the seizure of vessels in exchange for the Polish courts abolishing the customs toll, thereby greatly increasing Prussian influence as all new forms of customs tolls now had to be approved by the Prussian government.<sup>55</sup>

Frederick soon became dissatisfied with his position in Poland though, due to Catherine's increasing influence amongst the 'Dissident' movement, groups of Polish nobles that opposed the reforms being enacted by Augustus, in Poland. This allowed her to bypass the discontented Catholic groups as well as minimize Frederick's influence in Poland, weakening his attempted control and the limiting of Russian policies.<sup>56</sup> This started with the launching of a set of new policies by Russia aimed at increasing its own influence in Poland through the creation of various semi-independent confederations that stood in opposition to the Polish Diet's and government's reform policies. This is seen in the creation of the Confederation of Thorn by the 'Dissident' movement in which the dissidents entered the town followed by Russian troops and proceeded to take control. All the gates were placed under guard and all the printing shops were invaded and placed under the censorship of Russian officers. It was then announced that the town was under Russian protection and that this was the will of the people.<sup>57</sup> In this way Catherine was able to begin enacting her policies as she saw fit, allowing her to bypass any involvement by the Prussians as it now supported Russian interests over those of Prussia.

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<sup>54</sup> Kaplan, 49  
<sup>55</sup> Kaplan, 49  
<sup>56</sup> Kaplan, 68  
<sup>57</sup> Kaplan, 71

The problem for Frederick was that it showed the Prussian alliance was doing nothing to curb Russia's growing power and ambitions. Frederick became increasingly worried about the Russian actions, as he was concerned about the possibility of foreign intervention in support of the Catholics in Poland. He feared foreign intervention would draw Prussia into another war with Russia. He wrote to the Russian court warning Catherine that Russia was becoming viewed by the other major powers as an aggressor and expressed doubts about his alliance with Russia as he stated that "If Russia involves me in this quarrel, my defensive alliance with [Russia] will change into an offensive one, and the difference between the two is very great."<sup>58</sup> In stating this, Frederick was expressing the Prussian fear of Russia's actions as it now looked to him as if he would be driven into another general war due to perceived Russian aggression and expansion. Frederick continued to support Russian policies though, due to his fear of losing Russia's friendship before his eastern borders were secure.<sup>59</sup> He was increasingly concerned about the Russian supported confederations and as a result, began seeking foreign assistance which he hoped could be used to restrain Russia through the threat of war. This is seen in the case of France and its dispatching of the Chevalier de Taules to the confederates with letters assuring them that France supported their efforts. As well, the French offered lines of credit and an assurance that, if they desired, French military officers would be sent to assist them.<sup>60</sup>

Frederick's fear of war became pronounced following the Porte in Turkey becoming impatient with the Russian lack of response to Turkey's forming of observation corps on the Polish border. Frederick was increasingly concerned that the Turks would soon send forces

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<sup>58</sup> Kaplan, 68

<sup>59</sup> Kaplan, 54

<sup>60</sup> Kaplan, 97

across the Polish border in support of the confederates, which he feared would bring in Austria and ultimately lead to another general European war.<sup>61</sup> Austria was also worried about the expansion of the conflict now arising between Ottoman Turkey and Russia and as a result, Frederick added another element to his relations with Russia. He attempted to combine his new friendship with Russia with cooperation with Austria, in an attempt to counteract Russia's growing military might. This action shows that the co-dependence being fostered between the two states was far more important to Prussia's security than Russia's.<sup>62</sup>

To deal with this and attempt to make Russia more dependent upon the alliance, Frederick now decided on a rapprochement with Austria as a means of checking Russia's growing ambitions and to contain the Russo-Turkish war.<sup>63</sup> The principle of this plan was to maintain the neutrality of Prussia and Austria and so contain any war between Turkey and Russia to along the Black Sea. Frederick hoped to gain this rapprochement through a meeting with the new Austrian emperor, Joseph II, which took place at Neisse in Prussian Silesia and lasted for three days. He was largely successful in his aims as both powers committed themselves to neutrality in the event that the Russo-Turkish war escalated and spread into Poland.<sup>64</sup> This shows that Frederick's earlier system of holding Russian aggression and expansion through the alliance was failing. It led him to seek a counter-weight to Russia that he hoped would lead to a more stable position for Prussia and allow it to manipulate Russian imperial policy more in Prussian favor.

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<sup>61</sup> Kaplan, 99  
<sup>62</sup> Fraser, 526  
<sup>63</sup> Kaplan, 109  
<sup>64</sup> Kaplan, 118

The failure of Frederick's system can also be seen in Prussia's attempt to reset its use of Russia for the purposes of expansion. This occurred when Prince Henry, the brother of Frederick the Great, visited St Petersburg, the Russian capital, seeking support for his plan of a general annexation of Polish territory as a means of stopping the unrest. He announced his intention to strengthen the Prussian frontier through the linking of East Prussia with Brandenburg. This was to be done through the conquest of West Prussia.<sup>65</sup> This plan can be seen as an attempt by Prussia to strengthen its position with Russia through a more aggressive stance within its alliance with Russia. The problem with this was that Frederick disagreed with the plan as he considered himself too old at that point to launch the military campaign needed to enact Henry's plan.<sup>66</sup> This shows that Frederick was still worried about enlarging Russia territorially as even with his system of co-dependence, he still considered Russia to be Prussia's most dangerous neighbour. It indicates that he was still developing a two sided relationship with Russia and that he was still unsure as to how to gain territory to protect Prussia's eastern frontier without strengthening Russia territorially and militarily at the same time.<sup>67</sup>

This changed following the Austrian reincorporation of the county of Spisz back into the Crown of Hungary's territory and the subsequent annexation of the areas surrounding it in 1769-1770. Frederick now began to consider the annexation of Polish territory a necessity as Prussia became increasingly entangled between Austrian and Russian expansionist policies. The result of this was to jar Frederick into action and commit to a program of dismemberment in Poland with Catherine in which Russia and Prussia negotiated for similar shares of Polish

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<sup>65</sup> Kaplan, 131

<sup>66</sup> Kaplan, 137

<sup>67</sup> Kaplan, 139

territory that they would receive from the dismemberment.<sup>68</sup> This shift in policy is seen in the engraving, “the Cake of Kings” in which Catherine the Great, Maria Theresa and Frederick are seen looking over a giant map of Poland as Frederick carves it up with a sword and Catherine divides up the pieces between the three of them.<sup>69</sup> This action shows the failure of the system of co-dependence as Prussia and Frederick were forced to support Russian policies in Poland instead of applying their own, leading to a system of dependency instead.

As a result, a convention was signed on 17 February, 1772 which announced Austria’s, Russia’s and Prussia’s decision to act as equals through the annexation of specific Polish lands into their respective empires.<sup>70</sup> What is particularly interesting about this is the amount to which Prussia was now dependent upon Russia’s expansionist ambitions in shaping its own expansion. This is clearly observed during the negotiations in which Frederick used Russia as the main reason why he could not accept the Austrian demands for large areas of Poland in return for Prussia receiving its desired portions.<sup>71</sup> Frederick was using Russia’s own desires for expansion and its war with Turkey as a means of ensuring that he would be able to link his provinces together. This manipulation allowed him to greatly increase the military’s defense of East Prussia by making it easier to rush troops from Brandenburg to East Prussia.<sup>72</sup> It also shows the extent to which Prussia was becoming reliant on Russia to further Prussian interests, showing ironically, that while Prussia was attempting to alleviate its fear of Russia through

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<sup>68</sup> Kaplan, 148

<sup>69</sup> Jean-Michel Moreau le Jeune., “Cake of Kings” Engraving. [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_image.cfm?image\\_id=2671](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=2671) (assessed on December 6).

<sup>70</sup> Kaplan, 174

<sup>71</sup> Kaplan, 171

<sup>72</sup> Liulevicius, 41

these measures, it was actually becoming increasingly subordinated to Russian policy in the process.

This policy continued following the death of Frederick the Great as Prussia's political figures became even more concerned about its geographic position. Prussia possessed little to no natural frontiers such as mountains or rivers that could secure it from attack. The Prussian frontier in the East during this period extended more than a 1000 km and Prussia's statesmen were still concerned with the fact that Prussia had a long undefended border with Russia.<sup>73</sup> As a result, Prussia increased its cooperation with Russia as Prussia's generals and leaders were concerned that another war with Russia would lead to a defeat similar to that of Poltava, the battle that destroyed Sweden's empire and its place as the chief power on the Baltic.<sup>74</sup> A new system began to arise in which Prussia became dependent upon Russia to further its foreign policy goals in Europe, relying on Russia not only for its aggrandizement but also to strengthen its eastern frontier.<sup>75</sup> This is seen in Prussia's actions when starting the second partition of Poland, where Prussian ministers plainly stated to the Russian ambassador that Poland had to be reduced to an insignificant size and be allowed to choose whatever type of government it wanted without disturbing the rest of Europe. This action had to take the form of the "incorporation of border provinces which were meant to improve the defences of the Prussian

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<sup>73</sup> Brendan Simms, *The impact of Napoleon: Prussian high politics, foreign policy and the crisis of the executive, 1797-1806* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 71.

<sup>74</sup> Robert Howard Lord, *The Second Partition of Poland: A Study in Diplomatic History* (New York, Ams Press, 1969, originally published in 1915), 162.

<sup>75</sup> Michael G. Müller, "Absolutism and Reform in Eighteenth Century Central and Eastern Europe" in *The Germans and the East*, ed. Charles Ingrao and Franz A. J. Szabo (West Lafayette: Prudue University Press, 2008), 69.

state.”<sup>76</sup> This shows that there was an increasing desire for Prussia to expand her borders as a means of gaining increased protection over her eastern provinces and that the developing co-dependence between Russia and Prussia could be used to gain this result. It demonstrates that Prussia was now seeking to use its alliance with Russia towards outright annexations in Poland as a means of securing its border.

To do this, Prussia relied on Russia’s expansionist agenda as a means of gaining a more secure eastern frontier as well as the strengthening of Prussia’s recently acquired bridge between East Prussia and her other territories.<sup>77</sup> This increasing dependency on Russian expansionism is also seen in Prussia’s use of this to ensure that each power was given its desired regions before any serious opposition from Austria could be raised. Ironically, Prussia was therefore using the very thing it feared, Russian expansion, as the means to which it could further its own expansionism as well as protect itself. For Prussia, though, this partition was particularly important as for the first time Prussia was a coherent kingdom with clearly defined borders, serving as a psychological victory for Prussia as it now displayed solid borders that were far easier to defend.<sup>78</sup> The outcome of this was to show the failure of Frederick’s system of co-dependence as Prussia was now more and more dependent upon Russia for its expansion. Interesting, it also shows that his system did work on some levels as with the introduction of Frederick’s counter-weight, Austria, Prussia was able to gain large areas of land in Poland as it was intended. This expansion was short lived however, due to Prussia being forced to confront Napoleon and the forces of the French Revolution. Prussian diplomacy became paralyzed as the

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<sup>76</sup> David Pickus, “Might, Right and Poland: Eastern Europe during the Age of Enlightenment,” *Consortium on Revolutionary Europe 1750-1850* (1995): 49.

<sup>77</sup> Lord, 319

<sup>78</sup> Lord, 387

Prussian government attempted to bring France into its system of co-dependence through its trying to balance Russia`s growing hostility to France with Napoleon`s attempts to use Prussian foreign policy towards French expansion along the Rhine River.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> James J. Sheehan, *German History, 1770-1866* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 233.

## Chapter 2: Dynastic Conservatism and its Influence on the Fear

Prussia became increasingly isolated as its leaders failed to recognize the crumbling of the balance of power that resulted from the French Revolution and the coming to power of Napoleon. The end result of this was Prussia's complete defeat by Napoleon at the Battle of Jena in 1806. Prussia's position as a great power was destroyed as it was stripped of most of the eastern territories that it had recently gained. Its relationship and fear of Russia entered a new phase as Prussia was now dependent upon Russian support for its survival as a great power. This complete dependence was created by Russia's signing of the Treaty of Tilsit, which ended the first conflict between France and Russia in the Napoleonic wars. It denied Napoleon the ability to dissolve Prussia as a state and allowed Russia to use its diplomatic power, after the defeat of Napoleon, to ensure that Prussia regained a fragile recognition as a great power.<sup>80</sup> This dependence on Russia was strengthened following the final defeat of Napoleon with the Congress of Vienna, the meeting of the major and middle states of Europe that drafted the treaty that reshaped Europe following his defeat. As a result, the Prussia of 1815 was designed by the Congress of Vienna and dependent on Russian diplomatic assistance to further its foreign policy objectives.<sup>81</sup> This is seen in Prussia's failure to completely annex the kingdom of Saxony which straddled its southern borders. The Prussian delegation had hoped to use Saxony as the means by which Prussia could formally end its need of Russian support through the

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<sup>80</sup> Robert M. Berdahl, *The Politics Of The Prussian Nobility: The Development Of A Conservative Ideology, 1770-1848* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 107.

<sup>81</sup> Edward Crankshaw, *Bismarck* (London: Macmillan London Limited, 1981), 4.

strengthening of its position in Germany. Demonstrating Prussia's reliance on Russia, it was forced to abandon this policy following Russia's refusal to support Prussia in anything that went against Russian interests in Eastern Europe.<sup>82</sup>

Prussia was forced to compromise, giving up its gains in the second and third partitions of Poland to Russia in exchange for new western territories along the Rhine River. As a result, Prussia was made more German in its national character by the Congress for the purposes of serving as a barrier against France and its perceived support of revolution in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>83</sup> Its new role would be strengthened as well by the creation of the Holy Alliance in 1815 between Russia, Austria and Prussia. This alliance was designed to secure the protection of the domestic and foreign policies of the states involved. It was meant to protect the three states from aggression or revolution and to create an image of conservative order and stability fighting against the chaos and bloodlust of the French Revolution. The alliance drew upon the new Romanticism that was developing after the revolution and its focus on religious feeling to strengthen the new conservative political system that was taking shape in Germany after 1815. The effect of this was that it drew Prussia even closer to Russia as the two states were now committed to supporting one another against any perceived attack on Conservatism in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>84</sup>

This new Conservatism and its building of the Holy Alliance very closely mirrored the political climate in Germany at this time, which was focused on gaining support for a united

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<sup>82</sup> Thomas Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck*, trans. Daniel Nolan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 74.

<sup>83</sup> Ralph Flenley, *Modern German History* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1964, originally published in 1953), 134.

<sup>84</sup> Michael Florinsky, *Russia: A Short History* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964), 257.

Germany with the intention of dissolving all foreign intervention in its affairs, particularly that of post-revolutionary France. This is seen in the Wartburg Festival in October 1817, held to celebrate the anniversary of the allied victory at the Battle of Leipzig and the ending of Napoleon's control of Germany. Spurred on by Romanticism and its focus on a strong connection to one's faith, language, literature and customs, the participants struggled to define the national symbols that marked and united German culture against those of its neighbors, particularly France.<sup>85</sup> The Wartburg Festival was meant to be an inspiration to the German people, reminding them of their cultural identity as well as the need for future action.<sup>86</sup>

Far more important though, was the Hambach Festival that occurred in 1832 in the Rhineland Palatinate, as unlike the Wartburg Festival which had been small and unorganized, the one at Hambach was well organized, with a large non-governmental politically active crowd in attendance. It began with between twenty to thirty thousand people gathering in the town of Neustadt before marching to the castle ruins near the village of Hambach where speeches were given demanding that the Germans work towards a united and democratic state, free from political censorship and oppression. They also demanded that foreign oppression in Europe was to be fought against at all costs.<sup>87</sup> This is particularly important as it shows the universal, Pan-European nature of German nationalism during this period. This universalism is seen in the strong Slavic presence at Hambach, particularly in groups who had previously been included in the German fear of Russia. There was a German outpouring of support for the Poles and their failed rebellion against Russia with slogans proclaiming "without Poland's freedom, no

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<sup>85</sup> Nipperdey, 267

<sup>86</sup> Sheehan 610

<sup>87</sup> Sheehan, 610

German freedom, without Poland's freedom no lasting peace, no salvation for all the European people". This was showcased alongside red and white Polish and red, gold and black German flags. It shows that during this time period, the German fear of Russia among Germany's politically active individuals had turned towards a more universal rejection of the conservative system that was created by the Congress of Vienna. The fear of these individuals was therefore more focused on the apparent repression of nationalities by the major powers, particularly France and Russia during this period.<sup>88</sup>

This universalism was by no means the only approach to Germany's relationship to the major powers during this period. By far the most important of these views was that of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, a Saxon philosopher and major political scholar during the period of the Napoleonic occupation, which were expressed in his famous lectures, *Addresses to the German Nation*.<sup>89</sup> These were a series of lectures that were given during Napoleon's occupation of Germany and were meant to push the listeners towards a fierce resistance to it. Fichte argued strongly against the universal quality of German nationalism during this period. Instead, he argued that German society and culture had to be guarded at all costs due to their being unique. He attacked the perceived infiltration and adoption of foreign elements into German culture by arguing that the Germans were distinct from other races of Europe. He stated that the Germans represented an original people, whose culture had to be protected through the educating of the population to alert them to the need to defend it against any perceived attack

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<sup>88</sup> Liulevicius, 74

<sup>89</sup> Flenley, 122-123

aimed at diluting their culture.<sup>90</sup> This education was to take the form of a championing of the German nationality by showing how the German people were original and unique through a showcasing of their possession of an original and still living language.<sup>91</sup> He argued that this education was to create a pride in the German fatherland that was to lead all Germans to rise in a single patriotic feeling to defend against any incursion by a foreign power on German lands or its culture.<sup>92</sup> Over time, Fichte's views would increasingly influence the German nationalist movement. Through the 1830's and 40's, it became increasingly anti-universal, abandoning the earlier universalism in favor of a racial and anti-Slavic nationalism that would be aimed at Russia. This led later German intellectuals to view Fichte as an early apostle of the nationalist creed and its need to purify and expand German culture into the east.<sup>93</sup>

Due to this, a dualism began to develop as the new nationalism promoted by Fichte began to clash with and influence the German fear of Russia. Another cause of this dualism was a new orientation to Prussian absolutism known as dynastic conservatism. It had begun to develop in Prussia as the government expanded Prussia's dependence on Russian diplomacy that had been established by the Congress of Vienna. This new system was created by Frederick William III, who argued that Prussia needed to maintain Russia as its natural and eternal ally, based on their states being engaged in the "principles of peace, concord and love which are the fruit of religion and Christian morality."<sup>94</sup> Prussia's government now clearly saw a firm connection of the two nations as essential to Prussia's survival. This is the direct opposite of

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<sup>90</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "Addresses to the German Nation" (1807/08), [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage\\_id=3981](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage_id=3981) (accessed, 14 April, 2013), 6.

<sup>91</sup> Flenley, 123

<sup>92</sup> Fichte, 6

<sup>93</sup> Flenley, 123

<sup>94</sup> Florinsky, 257

Frederick's system, that of using Russian interests to support the expansion of the Prussian state and the sense that Russian expansion and aggression had to be closely monitored to ensure that Prussian interests were secure.<sup>95</sup> This shows that Prussia's dependency on Russian foreign policy, following the Napoleonic period had deepened. The Prussian government now saw Russia as an essential element of its survival and protection against the spread of revolution versus Frederick's system of co-dependence and counter weight, which was more of a cynical manipulation of great power politics.

As part of this new focus in Prussia's foreign and domestic policies on Russian assistance, an increased interest was taken in the ties between the Prussian and Russian dynasties, with a particular emphasis on marital ties between the Romanovs and Hohenzollerns. This is seen in an event in 1829 at the Neues Palace that was given in honour of the Russian empress, Alexandra Feodorovna, who was a daughter of Prussia's king, Frederick William III. The event was a recreation of a medieval festival in which the Prussian Crown Prince Frederick William IV and many other high ranking Prussian princes participated in a medieval tournament preceded over by the empress. The princes engaged in a single quadrille, a movement of four horsemen during a military parade moving in a square pattern, along with various maneuvers involving their swords and lances that were scored by the judges.<sup>96</sup> This festival was an expression of Romanticism and its ideals surrounding monarchism and was meant to showcase the Prussian dedication to loyalty, courage and sacrifice. It is important to the examination of the German fear of Russia as it shows the new focus of Prussia created by

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<sup>95</sup> Sepastian Haffner, *The Rise And Fall of Prussia*, trans. Ewald Osers (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), 98.

<sup>96</sup> David E. Barclay, *Frederick William IV and the Prussian Monarchy, 1840-1861* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 2.

dynastic conservatism as it was meant to emphasize the close personal and military ties of the Hohenzollerns to the Romanovs as well as Prussia's commitment to these ties.<sup>97</sup>

This emphasis of the dynastic ties and closeness to Russia had started to change as a result of the 1848 revolution and its awakening of German nationalism. The German fear of Russia began to divide between the dynastic conservatism of the king and that of many German intellectuals who became increasingly anti-Slavic. They abandoned the earlier universalism of the Hambach festival in favour of a nationalism based on Fichte's views regarding unification and expansion into Eastern Europe. This nationalism had begun as a result of key German Romantic intellectuals such as Herder who demanded unification due to the conviction that the united *Volk* were meant to spread German culture throughout Eastern Europe.<sup>98</sup> Russia was therefore portrayed as the great barbarian tyrant of the East against which Germany was engaged in a heroic struggle. This is particularly seen in the poem by Graf von Platen, entitled a *Call to the Germans*, published on 11 December 1830, in which he urged the Germans to turn their strength against Russia to expel it from European soil. It is also seen in the poem by Moritz Hartmann, *The Three Riders*, which paints a fearful image of bloody Cossack riders looking towards Germany as the next victim of their barbarism.<sup>99</sup> To combat this perceived threat from Russia, groups such as the Teutomatiacs or ultra-Germans, began to advocate the special nature of German culture as the ultimate barrier against Russian influence in Central Europe. An emphasis was placed on the superior nature of all things German and involved such figures as Richard Wagner who stated in his collected writings, *German Art and German Politics* that

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<sup>97</sup> Barclay, 3

<sup>98</sup> Liulevicius, 70

<sup>99</sup> Liulevicius, 74

any German achievement was to be considered the pinnacle of human achievement and advancement, which was the key to holding back the barbarism of Russia.<sup>100</sup>

This dualism within the German fear of Russia did begin to break down as a result of the reign of Frederick William IV. The monarchical-conservative nationalism of Frederick William flew in the face of both the dynastic conservatism of Frederick William III and its focus on marital ties. It also opposed the intellectual anti-Russian nationalism and its focus on aggression and power in the East by emphasising the need for a harmonizing political order in which social conflict and strife would have no place.<sup>101</sup> This is clear in the use of romantic based historic performances which included elaborate ceremonies such as personal oath taking and attracted nationalist intellectuals and many German liberals. They believed that Frederick William wished for the creation of a powerful democratic Germany that could stand against the revolutionary violence of France and the reactionary order of Russian Absolutism.<sup>102</sup> Frederick William himself played into this belief with his arguing for the recreation of the Holy Roman Empire under the Habsburgs with the Hohenzollerns as the hereditary generals and guardians of the eastern frontier of Germany.<sup>103</sup> Although contradictory in its interpretation of democracy, Frederick William used this wording in an attempt to draw the liberals in Germany to his romantic imagery of the Teutonic Knights, who he saw as the medieval guardians of the Holy Roman Empire's eastern frontier.

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<sup>100</sup> Hughes, 79

<sup>101</sup> Barclay, 189

<sup>102</sup> Liulevicious, 81.

<sup>103</sup> Barclay, 190

He even became involved in a number of military campaigns in Germany aimed at unifying parts of Germany under Prussian rule as well as to further the image of himself as the guardian of German unity. This included a war of liberation in the duchies of Schleswig-Holstein, which had begun as a result of a liberal nationalist revolution in Denmark, who controlled them. After demonstrations in Copenhagen, the new liberal government in Denmark had declared its intention to incorporate the duchies into Denmark's other territories. This had caused mass protests in Kiel, the capital of Holstein and calls by the nationalist liberals in Germany for a war against Denmark. In response to this, Frederick William ordered troops into Schleswig after the German leaders in the territory had requested help against the Danish efforts to incorporate the province into Denmark proper.<sup>104</sup> This action clearly demonstrated how different Frederick William IV's monarchical conservatism was from Frederick William III's dynastic conservatism. Under this system, Prussia marched to the assistance of the democratic uprising which showed that it was determined to support a diplomatic nationalist program aimed at expanding the Prussian state.

In terms of the German fear of Russia, this action is important due to the Russian attempts to stop the Prussian advance in Schleswig-Holstein and elsewhere in Germany. In the face of this Frederick William ordered a retreat. This was the result of a conference held between Austria, Prussia and Russia in the town of Olmütz in eastern Bohemia (Czech Republic today). The conference was tasked with attempting to ensure peace between Austria and Prussia after the latter's aggressive actions in Denmark. Unrest in the state of Hesse-Kassel in central Germany also contributed to the heightening of tensions as it appeared as if Prussia was

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<sup>104</sup> Hughes, 87

threatening Austrian influence in Germany. In response, Austria threatened war against Prussia by forming an offensive and defensive alliance with Bavaria and Württemberg against Prussia and mobilized 200,000 troops. Prussia found itself in a position in which it had no clear advantage against Austria and so it turned to Russia for support, evoking Prussia's reliance on Russian support with the intention of using it against Austria.<sup>105</sup>

The problem for Prussia though was that Russia had become increasingly alarmed by Prussia's aggressive actions, which it saw as support of the radical German nationalism mentioned earlier. Due to this, Russia did not support the Prussian position and instead threatened war against Prussia if it did not give in to Russian demands to maintain the status-quo. The result of this was a complete Russian diplomatic victory over Prussia as it forced Prussia to basically surrender to Austria at Olmutz. Prussia was forced to back down completely as it had to accept the return of the German confederation as it had existed in 1815 as well as Austria's dominant position within the confederation.<sup>106</sup> On top of this, Prussia was even forced to pay large indemnities for the damage that had been caused by its campaigns, making it look as if Prussia had been defeated in a major war instead of just a diplomatic agreement.<sup>107</sup> Therefore Frederick William IV, and by extension Prussia, appeared weak, feeble and insecure in the face of Russian indignation and military might.<sup>108</sup>

As a consequence of this, Frederick William IV was forced by Russia to accept and implement the dynastic conservative nationalism of his father Frederick William III. Russia did

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<sup>105</sup> Warren B. Morris, Jr, *The Road To Olmütz: The Career Of Joseph Maria von Radowitz* (New York: Revisionist Press, 1976), 140.

<sup>106</sup> Morris, 147

<sup>107</sup> Mosse, 42

<sup>108</sup> Mosse, 43

this by appearing to threaten Prussia with invasion. It increasingly appeared to many German liberals and intellectuals, including Heinrich von Treitschke, that Frederick William IV had betrayed Prussia due to his perceived personal fear of Nicholas I.<sup>109</sup> As a result, the German fear of Russia in this period can be characterized as a period of dualism and inconsistency due to the actions of Frederick William III and his focus on the dynastic ties between Russia and Prussia, the increasing German intellectual hatred of Russia and Frederick William IV's attempts to form a new nationalist conservatism based around the Prussian monarchy. Ultimately though, the German fear of Russia during this period can be characterized by a fear of Russian dominance over Prussia. This is seen in the German liberal reaction to the Treaty of Olmütz, Frederick Williams IV's inability to resist Russian demands and his forced acceptance of Frederick William III's focus on dynastic ties. This resulted in an inconsistent policy towards Russia that would ultimately lead to a new phase in the German fear of Russia. This new phase would be caused by Otto von Bismarck and his attempt to return to Frederick the Great's policy of co-dependence as he sought to unite Germany under Prussian rule by ensuring that Russia would not intervene.

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<sup>109</sup> Heinrich von Treitschke, *History of Germany In The Nineteenth Century, vol 6, Frederick William IV*, trans Eden and Ceder Paul (New York: Ams Press Inc, 1968), 322.

## Chapter 3: Otto von Bismarck and the Period of German Overconfidence

Otto von Bismarck was born in 1815 as the son of Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand von Bismarck, an eccentric country landowner and Wilhelmina Louise Mencken, the daughter of the Prussian Royal Cabinet Chancellor Anastasius Ludwig Mencken.<sup>110</sup> His political career started in 1847 with his entry into the Prussian Landtag (House of Commons) where he gave his maiden speech, clearly outlining his political abilities. He attacked liberalism and the liberal's belief that they had been the driving force behind the Prussian uprising against Napoleon in 1813. He questioned the essential belief of the liberals that every element of Prussian society had risen up in revolt against Napoleon's domination of Prussia.<sup>111</sup> In doing this, Bismarck showcased his political abilities that would make him so successful in his use of the German fear of Russia against the Russian government. He did this partly through the quick softening of his beliefs following his appointment as the Prussian ambassador to the German confederation in Frankfurt. Bismarck rejected the ultra-conservatism of his earlier speech and embraced a much more pragmatic view in which he wrote continuous letters to the Prussian prime minister demanding that Prussia not follow Austria's lead in siding with Britain and France in the Crimean War. Instead, he argued that Prussia had no reason to oppose Russia's place at the

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<sup>110</sup> Jonathan Steinberg, *Bismarck: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 13.

<sup>111</sup> Steinberg, 76

head of conservatism in Europe and it should use this opportunity to secure Russia's gratitude against a future clash in Germany between Austria and Prussia.<sup>112</sup>

This is very important to understanding Bismarck's later use of the German fear of Russia to change Prussia's dependence and reliance on Russia to his advantage. It shows that above all else, Bismarck was *Urpreusse*, or essentially Prussian.<sup>113</sup> This meant that with all the different political theories and ambitions of the kings and politicians involved, Bismarck was only focused on using whatever combination of them was needed to further Prussia's prestige and glory to ever increasing heights.<sup>114</sup> It is essential to understand this as it also shows the other key characteristic of Bismarck's life that played into his relationship with Russia, his position as a Junker noble. The Junkers were the aristocracy of Prussia whose power came from Frederick the Great's policy of maintaining the *Rittergüter* or estates of the Teutonic knights, in the hands of the Junkers and using them exclusively as officers in the army. This meant that the Junkers were adamant Royalists with the understanding that the king was to do everything possible to maintain their privileges and positions within the Prussian administration and army. This is critical to understanding Bismarck and his relationship to the German fear of Russia as he clearly shows he saw himself as a Junker and as such was dedicated to the expansion of the power of the Prussian Crown.<sup>115</sup> Bismarck therefore, saw the German fear of Russia as a tool that could be used to manipulate Russia to expand the Prussian crown's prestige and power. To do this though, Bismarck would rely on his other significant quality, being an opportunist. This

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<sup>112</sup> Erich Eyck, *Bismarck And The German Empire* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1968),

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<sup>113</sup> Steinberg, 13

<sup>114</sup> Crankshaw, 3

<sup>115</sup> Erich Eyck, 12

would be seen in his guiding of Prussian foreign policy from his appointment as Prussian Prime Minister in 1862, through his appointment as German Chancellor in 1870, until his dismissal in 1890. He would use the German fear of Russia, German nationalism, and the breakdown of the post Napoleonic alliance system to ensure that Prussia's standing as a great power was strengthened through the creation of a new German empire controlled by Prussia.

This is very significant to the German fear of Russia as it marks a move away from the former policy of subordination and adhering to dynastic conservatism, towards a new confidence on the part of Prussia in its dealings with Russia. This had started to develop as a result of Bismarck's relationship with the Tsar and the rest of the Romanov family, which allowed him access to the inner workings of the Russian government's organization and operation. He had gained this access during his time as Prussian ambassador to St Petersburg in the 1850's and early 1860's and allowed him to gain an understanding of Russia's views regarding European diplomacy as well as Russia's foreign policy goals within Europe and how it wished to achieve them.<sup>116</sup> This is seen in Bismarck's comment on the Tsarist political system in which he stated that the Russian Tsar could be easily manipulated through a careful releasing of information to him personally.<sup>117</sup> Bismarck, unlike earlier Prussian officials, had a better understanding of Russia's relationship with Prussia and how this relationship could be used to strengthen Prussia. The Russian and Prussian relationship was now entering a new phase in which Prussia would seek to expand its exploitation of Russian foreign policy. This was done by exploiting Bismarck's knowledge of Russian politics as he implemented a system similar to

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<sup>116</sup> Edgar Feuchtwanger, *Bismarck* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2002), 62

<sup>117</sup> Otto von Bismarck, *Bismarck, The Man And The Statesman: Being The Reflections and Reminiscences of Otto Prince von Bismarck*, Vol 2, trans. A.J. Butler (London: Smith, Elder, & CO., 1898), 234.

Frederick's system of co-dependence but which worked far more successfully and expanded Prussia's influence in Germany under the cover of protecting Russian interests in Europe.

This shift in Prussian policy had begun as a result of Russia's shift away from its rapprochement with France towards the strengthening of Prussia's position in North Central Europe. Russian leaders regarded this as important as they sought to strengthen the position of conservative states against the infiltration of republican ideas that were associated with France and the government of Napoleon III.<sup>118</sup> Russia saw Prussia as the means to which it could create an effective barrier between the regime of Napoleon III and Poland, which was in a state of revolt against Russia. It planned on retreating from international diplomacy to deal with much needed internal reforms while using Prussia to guard Conservatism's position in Europe.<sup>119</sup> Bismarck saw this as an opportunity for Prussia to expand its position in central Europe as he viewed Russia's actions as a retreat in which Russian diplomacy was "placed in cold storage." He viewed Russia's retreat as a chance to break Prussia's subordination to Russian diplomacy by using his knowledge of Russian politics as a means of fulfilling Frederick the Great's policy of containment, reversing the earlier Prussian diplomatic subordination.<sup>120</sup> Bismarck did this by changing the focus of Prussia's territorial ambitions away from expansion in the east that had been undertaken by Frederick the Great and his immediate successors, towards a system of expansion within the German confederation.

Bismarck started this exploitation and reshaping of Prussia's relationship with Russia shortly after taking office in 1862, with his support of Russia in its policy of repression in Poland.

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<sup>118</sup> Mosse, 95

<sup>119</sup> Mosse, 98

<sup>120</sup> Mosse, 98

He started by declaring that the Poles were the true enemy of Prussia and that any suppression of them was in the interest of the state. As a result, Bismarck was soon advocating that Russia should “strike the Poles in such a way that they despair of their lives” and that any success of the Polish national movement was a defeat of Prussia. Bismarck also began rejecting the letters by members of the Prussian Foreign Ministry in which they condemned the brutal actions of the Cossacks against Polish villages suspected of helping the rebellion, stating that the “fight against [the Poles was not being conducted] according to the rules of civil justice but the rules of war.”<sup>121</sup> This allowed Bismarck to appear as Russia’s only friend in Europe, earning the Tsar’s gratitude and friendship towards Prussia.<sup>122</sup> Bismarck saw this as the means by which the relationship between Prussia and Russia could decisively be turned in Prussia’s favour. He claimed that it was ‘simple common sense’ to strengthen the reactionaries’ position as he stated that Prussia could not afford to let the Russian Empire fall into the possession of its enemies, which would weaken Prussia’s eastern border, exposing it to the barbarity of the Poles and ultimately the policies of Napoleon III’s France.<sup>123</sup> This is significant to the German fear of Russia as it marks a major change in Prussian thinking away from subordination to Russia towards the exploitation of Russian diplomacy and towards a system of co-dependence that, unlike Frederick the Great’s system, actually achieved its goals of containment.

To support this plan, Bismarck sent General Gustavo von Alvensleben to Russia to assess the situation there and to determine what support the Russian army might need to end the rebellion. He was in effect ordered to rattle the Prussian sabre against the Poles and ensure

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<sup>121</sup> Eyck, 68

<sup>122</sup> Robert H. Lord, “Bismarck and Russia in 1863,” *American Historical Review*, vol. 29, no. 1 (Oct 1923): 24.

<sup>123</sup> Otto Von Bismarck, *Bismarck: The Man And The Statesman, Being The Reflections And Reminiscences of Otto Prince Von Bismarck*, Vol 2., trans. A.J. Butler (London: Smith, Elder, &CO, 1898), 342.

that the Russians continued to do the same.<sup>124</sup> More importantly, though, Alvensleben was ordered to pave the way for an agreement between Prussia and Russia regarding Poland and the joint suppression of the rebellion. This would benefit Prussia by placing Russia under further obligations that could be used in the future to ensure that it would not interfere in Bismarck's expansionist ambitions in Germany.<sup>125</sup> The result of this was the signing of the Alvensleben Convention in which both powers agreed on a plan of suppression in which the Russian or Prussian commanders would ask the other for assistance in suppressing the rebellion.<sup>126</sup>

Unfortunately for Bismarck, the convention backfired as Britain and particularly France were angered by the agreement which they saw as an active campaign of suppression against the Poles. Due to this, Bismarck was forced to ask the Russians to claim that the agreement had not been ratified.<sup>127</sup> The convention did have one advantage though for Bismarck, as it allowed him to shift the focus of the Prussian-Russian co-dependence, as Prussia's fear of Russia was now centered on the disorder of the insurrection in Poland instead of the Russians themselves. The treaty therefore, allowed Bismarck to shift Prussia's diplomatic focus away from the east and its reliance on its co-dependence with Russia towards a system of expansion in Germany in which Austria was now to be the main target.<sup>128</sup> Bismarck was using his knowledge of the Russian government, particularly its resentment towards Austrian expansion in the Balkans, to

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<sup>124</sup> Lord, 26  
<sup>125</sup> Crankshaw, 150  
<sup>126</sup> Lord, 28  
<sup>127</sup> Eyck, 69  
<sup>128</sup> Crankshaw, 151

his advantage to disguise his manipulation of Russia's foreign policy regarding Prussian expansion in Germany.<sup>129</sup>

As a result, Bismarck turned towards the strengthening of Prussia's position in Germany through the reshaping of the Prussian fear and codependence of Russia by shifting the balance of power away from the Russians, using their fear of isolation in Europe to force Russia into maintaining a policy of non-intervention in Germany.<sup>130</sup> This is clearly seen in the second crisis over Schleswig-Holstein as it transformed the Prussian-Russian relationship as Russia was now willing to do anything to ensure that Prussia and Russia remained in a state of friendship, a complete reversal of the situation during the Polish partitions. This is observed when Bismarck forced Russia to abandon its earlier policy of protecting the Danish monarchy, that it had maintained since the revolutions of 1848 by playing upon Russian fears that if they did not support him, he would abandon Russia to isolation in Europe and come to an accord with Napoleon III and his revolutionary nationalism.<sup>131</sup> Bismarck would also use a similar strategy during the 1866 war with Austria in which Bismarck would continue to use a mixture of threats as well as his knowledge of Russia's hostility to Austria to ensure that Russia stood neutral, with only minor diplomatic actions, as Prussia assumed the position of the dominant state in Germany and the greatest military power in Europe.<sup>132</sup> This phase of Prussia's relationship with Russia then can be characterized by a case of overconfidence on the part of Bismarck in his dealings with Russia, which is seen in his belief that he could successfully use his knowledge of, and relationship with, the Russian court and royal family to manipulate Russian foreign policy in

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<sup>129</sup> Feuchwanger, 62

<sup>130</sup> Mosse, 148

<sup>131</sup> Mosse, 149

<sup>132</sup> Mosse, 239

Germany's favor. He clearly believed that this knowledge, no matter the situation, would allow him to manipulate Russian policy to support Prussian expansion in Germany.

Following the unification of Germany, though, this overconfidence began to change as a result of Bismarck's attempt to change the nature of the Prussian co-dependence with Russia through adding Russia to his elaborate system of alliances that were meant to ensure that Germany remained at the top of an unequal system of five great powers.<sup>133</sup> This is observed in the remarks of Bismarck to the Russian ambassador to Great Britain, Count Shuvaloff, about the "nightmare of coalitions" in which he states that Germany was at risk due to its potentially having to fight and defeat two of the great powers in Europe and their perceived need for revenge. Bismarck therefore argued that Germany had to have alliances with three of the other major powers in Europe in order to protect itself. Furthermore, Bismarck asserts that Russia had to be considered a key player within this system and that Germany had to maintain its relationship of co-dependence with Russia due to the material force that it could wield against its enemies.<sup>134</sup> This shows that Bismarck was attempting to use the German co-dependence with Russia as a means of securing a formidable ally through the use of his knowledge regarding the monarchical and conservative views of the Tsar. It also shows that Bismarck was, after 1871, attempting to use his reversal of the Prussian-Russian co-dependence as the basis for a wider alliance that was designed to secure Germany's frontiers from an attack. It also served as

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<sup>133</sup> Otto Pflanze, *Bismarck And The Development of Germany, Vol 1: The Period of Consolidation, 1871-1880* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 415.

<sup>134</sup> Otto von Bismarck, *Nightmares of coalitions: Bismarck on the Other Great Powers* (1879) [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=1855](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1855) (Accessed, 20 January 2013).

the basis for an expansion of this relationship to include either England or Austria, ensuring that Germany remained at the top of an elaborate system of great power politics.<sup>135</sup>

This type of alliance system is seen in the creation of the Three Emperors League and the propaganda that was produced to ensure that the populations of the countries involved regarded each other as allies and not rivals. The league was a temporary alliance between Austria, Russia and Germany in which the three powers agreed to maintain friendly relations between the signatories and assist one another in the preserving of peace in Europe as well as defend against the spread of revolutionary activity in Europe.<sup>136</sup> This is seen in the placard that was created to celebrate the founding of the league. The placard shows the angel of peace looking down on the diplomats and leaders of the various states while olive branches surround them along with statements including “may peace be with you” and “strength through union”.<sup>137</sup> The placard shows Bismarck’s purpose, as he tried to create a secure alliance that could maintain Germany’s position as one of three major powers in Europe without forcing Germany to pay a high price for that support. It demonstrates his view that Russia had to be controlled so that Germany could limit the growing rivalry between Austria and Russia, ensuring that Russia was contained and isolated from the rest of Europe, particularly France, by committing it to treaties against one of the other two major powers. This shows the increasingly dualistic nature of Bismarck’s policies towards Russia in which he attempted to remain Russia’s as an ally while at the same time ensuring that Russia remained contained in central Europe. This reflects Prussia’s earlier fear of Russian military expansion and the feeling

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<sup>135</sup> Pflanze, 415

<sup>136</sup> Gordon A. Craig, *Germany, 1866-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 104.

<sup>137</sup> *Three Emperors’ Meeting in Berlin (September 5-12)*. Placard. [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_image.cfm?image\\_id=1418](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=1418) (accessed on January 23)

that Russian interests had to be contained while at the same time remaining advantageous to the Prussian state.

This increasing caution towards Russia had started to re-enter German military thinking soon after the founding of the Three Emperors League in 1873. This is reflected in a memo to the British ambassador shortly after the league's signing, which states that a key aim of Germany was to construct a fleet that could defend Germany's long Baltic coast line from the larger Russian Baltic fleet.<sup>138</sup> This served another purpose as well as it allowed Bismarck to claim that the larger fleet was not meant to challenge Britain's dominance of the sea, allowing him an escape route if Germany's alliance with Russia weakened further, granting him another potential ally. The growing fear of this is also seen in the German government's uneasiness about the increasingly negative attitude of the Russian press towards Germany in which Germany was described as being "cool" to Russian expansionism in Europe.<sup>139</sup> This shows that there was still an underlying fear of Russian military capabilities within the Prussian/German government and the feeling that it had to be prepared for the possibility of another war similar to the one Prussia had fought in the Seven Years War.

The effectiveness of this effort to limit Russian ambitions is reflected in the eastern crisis that arose in 1875 as a result of a series of rebellions in the Balkans and the Tsar's view that he was the protector of the Slavic populations that were rebelling against the Ottoman Empire. It had started as a result of the claims that the Turks and Serbs had committed atrocities against

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<sup>138</sup> *Bismarck Tells the British Ambassador that Germany has Achieved its Legitimate Objectives* (February 11, 1873). [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=1853](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1853) (accessed on January 26, 2013)

<sup>139</sup> Pflanze, 422

one another. After some military setbacks, Russia overwhelmed the Turkish forces in the Balkans and Caucuses resulting in the signing the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878. Russia gained large areas of the Balkan's including Bulgaria. This alarmed Bismarck, who feared that the treaty would result in Germany being forced to choose between its two allies, Austria and Russia. He was particularly concerned about the increasingly hostile attitude of the two powers toward one another.<sup>140</sup> Bismarck therefore proposed the Conference of Berlin between the major powers to prevent a war, and ensure that Russia remained in an isolated position within Europe. He proposed to act as an "honest broker" between Russia, Austria, Britain and France. He stated in his Kissinger Diktat (Kissinger Dictation) that Germany's chief aim was the containment of Russian ambitions. Bismarck asserted that Germany had to ensure that Russia was in a position where it needed to maintain its alliance with Austria and Germany so that it could be properly contained. It reveals that Bismarck was increasingly insecure about his relationship with Russia and was returning to the earlier Prussian policies of hostility to Russian military expansion.<sup>141</sup>

The Congress of Berlin proved to mark a major turning point in the German fear and co-dependence with Russia. While Germany focused on containing Russia, Russia's actions in the Congress reflected its growing resentment towards Germany. This resentment had started as a result of the Russian viewpoint that Bismarck had betrayed Russia, as although they had regained the Bessarabian lands that had been taken as a result of Russia's defeat in the Crimean war and full independence for Serbia, it had been forced to give up control of Bulgaria.

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<sup>140</sup> Eyck, 244  
<sup>141</sup> Steinberg, 355

They also had to watch as Austria gained control of Bosnia and Britain gained control of the Eastern Mediterranean through the acquisition of Cyprus. As a result, the Tsar began to believe that a European coalition had been formed by Germany to destroy Russia's successes and gains won during the war.<sup>142</sup> It looked to him as if Bismarck had become anti-Russian, siding with Austria to purposely limit Russian gains.<sup>143</sup>

On top of this, Germany's increasing economic protectionism, that had started in the 1870's, began to have an anti-Russian element as tariffs were imposed on Russian agricultural goods, including wheat, corn, timber and cattle, items that were meant to help pay for Russia's modernization.<sup>144</sup> The Moscow and St. Petersburg presses accused the Germans of creating a tariff war using as evidence Bismarck's demands for higher freight charges.<sup>145</sup> In response to this, many German conservative newspapers countered by writing about the need for German expansion in the east and how Germany needed to acquire Russia's Baltic provinces as well as Poland to better protect Germany's Baltic provinces from Russian aggression.<sup>146</sup> The Prussian/Russian co-dependence, therefore, began to break down as a situation similar to the Seven Years War began to develop with both sides became increasingly hostile and fearful of the others intentions. The increasing hostility of the two powers towards one another is also seen in the Russians moving thousands of troops into Poland shortly after the conclusion of the Congress. It shows that within Germany there was an increasing fear of Russian imperialism and

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<sup>142</sup> Craig, 113

<sup>143</sup> Joseph Vincent Fuller, *Bismarck's Diplomacy At Its Zenith* (New York: Howard Fertig Inc, 1967), 7.

<sup>144</sup> Craig, 113-114

<sup>145</sup> W.N. Medlicott, *Bismarck and Modern Germany* (London: The English Universities Press LTD, 1965), 138.

<sup>146</sup> Mosse, 391

its links to Pan Slavism which was now being viewed as a danger and a threat to the existence of the German Empire.<sup>147</sup>

Another area where the re-emergence of the German fear of Russia began to show itself is in the Dual Alliance that was signed in 1879 between Austria and Germany. The treaty stated that the aim of the alliance was for mutual defence against an aggressor, defined explicitly as Russia. It states that, if either power was attacked by Russia, both Germany and Austria were committed to the other to engage Russia with the full strength of their forces in support of the other.<sup>148</sup> It continued this by stating that if Russia joined another attacking power the alliance would also come into effect. The treaty reflects the growing uncertainty and fear of Bismarck towards Russia and its actions. It demonstrates that Russia was now being considered only an acquaintance by Bismarck and the German government instead of the close friend it had previously been regarded as. This suggests that Bismarck now believed that Germany could only support Russia as long as German interests were the same.<sup>149</sup> It shows that Russia's recent perceived aggressive behaviour was being considered a threat by the German government and that there was the feeling that Russia's borders within Europe had to be maintained to ensure that Germany's eastern frontiers remained secure. The treaty indicates the increasing doubt of Bismarck about his ability to contain Russian actions and the belief that Germany needed safe guards against an increasingly assertive Russia.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Fuller, 5

<sup>148</sup> *Dual Alliance with Austria* (October 7, 1879), [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=1856](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1856) (accessed on January 28)

<sup>149</sup> Pflanze, 493

<sup>150</sup> Pflanze, 494

This need for the containment of Russia is also seen in the signing of the last of Bismarck's treaties with Russia, the 1887 Reinsurance Treaty. This treaty was meant to replace the earlier Three Emperor's League and was a treaty between Russia and Germany in which both powers agreed to remain neutral if the other became involved in a war with a third power and promised to do everything they could to localize the resulting conflict as long as the other warring state was not France or Austria-Hungary.<sup>151</sup> It also included secret German guarantees of Russian interests in the Balkans, in particular Bulgaria and the area surrounding the Dardanelles and Bosphorus straits.<sup>152</sup> This treaty is important in that it shows Bismarck's increasingly difficult system of friendship and containment. Bismarck was still attempting to use the system of co-dependence, using the treaty to ensure Russia remained friendly to Germany as well as remaining relatively contained within Eastern Europe, thus preventing Russia from becoming the ally of France.<sup>153</sup> The treaty is also important though as it clearly shows how this system was breaking down as he was forced to support Russian expansionism in the Balkan's to gain the signing of the treaty. This treaty was also in conflict with other equally important treaties, resulting in an image in which the two sides can be seen as shaking hands while pointing guns under the table at each other. It reflects the increasing insecurity of Bismarck in his attempts to hold Russia to Germany's side of the alliance systems in Europe.

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<sup>151</sup> *Secret Reinsurance Treaty with Russia (June 18, 1887)*, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=1862](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=1862) (accessed on January 30, 2013).

<sup>152</sup> *Secret Reinsurance Treaty with Russia*

<sup>153</sup> Craig, 131

## Chapter 4: Wilhelm II and the Creation of Racial Fear

During the 1880's and 1890's, Imperialism began to transform as military, commercial, journalistic, academic and cultural groups increasingly dictated imperial policy.<sup>154</sup> Social Darwinism became the driving principle in Great Power politics as business interests, pressure groups, lobbyists and academics used it as justification for mass annexations of territory.<sup>155</sup> This was based on the widespread belief that the European great powers were locked in a struggle of survival and that only nations that acted as predators would survive.<sup>156</sup> As such, the building and maintaining of empires became the dominate force shaping European politics as the European great powers acquired vast areas of Africa and Asia.<sup>157</sup> It was based on the belief that European civilization was blessed and that it was Europe's destiny to spread it throughout the globe.<sup>158</sup> Increasingly, the subject of the ascendancy of the nation and its relationship to subject-hood and nationality became the symbol of European politics as identity became the focal point of European colonial designs.<sup>159</sup> This is seen in a bestselling book in Germany which assured the reader that "the destiny of nations is like that of men [in which] they rise ...bloom... decay and cease to be." It is also observed in the work of Herbert Asquith who compared the growth of empire to the growth of the body and Gabriel Hanotaux who compared imperial growth as bodily vigour.<sup>160</sup> This comparison likened a nation's strength to both its internal

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<sup>154</sup> Geoffrey Wawro, *Warfare and Society in Europe, 1792-1914* (London: Routledge, 2000), 132.

<sup>155</sup> Wawro, 132

<sup>156</sup> Wawro, 125

<sup>157</sup> Liulevicious, 98

<sup>158</sup> Nicholas Atkin, *Themes in Modern European History, 1890-1945* (Abington: Routledge, 2009), 1

<sup>159</sup> Clark, 577

<sup>160</sup> Wawro, 125

cohesion and its ability to command the policies of other nations, resulting in demographic and economic expansion providing justification for the nation to expand or stagnate.<sup>161</sup>

The consequence of this was a polarization of European culture that was part of the *fin de siècle* or end of the century.<sup>162</sup> This polarization is seen in the visual arts and the growing rift between the official mythological and historical themed conservative favoured art and the experimentation and anti-traditionalism of secessionist movements that were arising during the 1880's and 1890's.<sup>163</sup> For Germany, this not only meant participating in this scramble for empire but also a new understanding of it's relationship with the East and Russia, as German conservatism embraced the harsh racial aspects of imperialism as a means of maintaining its control over German society.<sup>164</sup> German nationalism began to emphasize the German national states need for land in the east as German nationalist historians used imperialism and racism for the purposes of justifying Germany's new hostile attitude towards the east.<sup>165</sup>

Following Bismarck's dismissal in 1890, a generational shift in German attitudes towards imperialism took place in which a 'culture of Empire' arose across Germany.<sup>166</sup> This was the result of key figures within the army as well as intellectuals beginning to demand the building of an empire from which German culture and institutions could be spread from.<sup>167</sup> This is seen in the views of Leopold von Schroeder, a leading German imperialist. Schroeder argued against the Russian governments "Russification" policies in the Baltic provinces, calling it a terror of

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<sup>161</sup> Wawro, 176

<sup>162</sup> Clark, 663

<sup>163</sup> Clark, 563-64

<sup>164</sup> Liulevicious, 99

<sup>165</sup> Clark, 582

<sup>166</sup> Wawro, 176

<sup>167</sup> Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 336-340.

unbelief, a tyranny of negation in which the Teutonic race was in a struggle for life and death against “mongolisation” and the rule of barbarism.<sup>168</sup> This is supported by the work of another German scholar of the period, Martin Hartmann, who argued for the setting up of German secular institutions in China and the Ottoman Empire to counter the spread of Russia into these regions by spreading German culture and civilization.<sup>169</sup> The Kaiser was consequently surrounded by individuals who were arguing that Germany should be built up as a saviour of European culture that had to guard against Russian tyranny and barbarism. The German fear of Russia, therefore, became a fear of “Russification” as it was seen as the attempted subjugation of the civilized west by the “barbaric east”.<sup>170</sup> These insecurities became even more evident as key ministers within the German government began to voice increasingly hostile and fearful views of Russia.

This is seen in the case of Friedrich August von Holstein, a key figure within the German foreign office, who became increasingly anti-Russian as he continuously misinterpreted Bismarck’s actions. This misinterpretation of Bismarck’s actions is observed in his views regarding Bismarck’s use of the *Mediterranean Agreement*, which was an agreement between Britain, Italy and Austria-Hungary acknowledging the status quo in the Mediterranean Sea and to limit Russia’s actions towards the opening of the Bosphorus to Russian warships. In his correspondence, Holstein states that Russia and its ministers could not be trusted to abide by the limits of the treaty, which he argues is demonstrated by Russia’s diplomats frantically

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<sup>168</sup> Marchard, 319  
<sup>169</sup> Marchard, 343  
<sup>170</sup> Liulevicious, 88

searching for allies that would support its bid to control the Dardanelles.<sup>171</sup> Holstein furthers this by stating that Russia would always attempt to bring Germany into its foreign policy actions in order to humiliate and weaken it.<sup>172</sup> He argues that Bismarck and his successors had lost their nerve and that instead of seeing this agreement as a deterrent to force Russia to remain neutral and contained, he viewed it as an instrument by which a final reckoning with Russia would be brought about.<sup>173</sup>

This view was supported by members of the German General staff, particularly General Alfred von Waldersee, the chief of the German General Staff. Waldersee viewed Russian/German relations as being apocalyptic so that one had to be eliminated for the other to survive. As a result, Waldersee used his influence within the defence staff to advocate and plan for an immediate attack on Russia by Germany and Austria-Hungary, even attempting to convince the aging Kaiser Wilhelm I that war was needed for Germany's survival as a great power.<sup>174</sup> Although Bismarck was able to put a stop to this through the warning of the limitations of the Dual Alliance, it shows the increasingly fearful and fatalistic attitude of those directly under him. With the succession of Kaiser Wilhelm II and Bismarck's retirement shortly thereafter, German-Russian fears would enter a new phase in which the former co-dependence and containment of Russia was abandoned in favour of a directly hostile and fearful

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<sup>171</sup> Hugo von Radolin, "Hugo von Radolin to Holstein, St Petersburg, 18 January 1897" in Norman Rich and M.H. Fischer et.al, *The Holstein Papers: The memoirs, diaries and correspondence of Friedrich von Holstein, vol IV: Correspondence, 1897-1909* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 5-7.

<sup>172</sup> Friedrich von Holstein, "Holstein to Hugo von Radolin, Berlin, 10 January 1897" in Norman Rich and M.H. Fischer et.al, *The Holstein Papers: The memoirs, diaries and correspondence of Friedrich von Holstein, vol IV: Correspondence, 1897-1909* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 1-3.

<sup>173</sup> Craig, 133

<sup>174</sup> Craig, 134

relationship with Russia, which would lead to the First World War and ultimately the destruction of both empires.

These influences are clearly seen in Wilhelm's memoirs in which he states that there was a definite anti-German element within the Russian officer corps which he regarded as haughty and hostile to Germany. He believed that there was a coolness that was felt in the court, armies and country of Russia towards Germany that could not be overlooked in German foreign policy going forward. This reflects the German view that Russia had abandoned its friendship with Germany and that it was planning against it. Wilhelm continues this view by explaining that Russia, in its increasing hostility to Germany, had to be regarded as an essential threat and that it would attempt to avenge the Treaty of San Stefano and what Wilhelm regarded as Bismarck's mistake.<sup>175</sup> These statements clearly show the influence of the views expressed by Holstein and Waldersee and their apocalyptic understanding of Germany's relationship with Russia as these were the individuals constantly in his presence. It also shows, though, that Wilhelm probably shared these ideas from the start which is seen in his statement that Russia's increasing hostility towards Germany would be the end of the Russian dynasty.<sup>176</sup> It shows that Wilhelm was adopting a negative attitude towards Germany's relationship with Russia and that he was moving the German fear of Russia towards a fatalistic view in which Germany had no choice but to prepare for war.

The German fear of Russia entered a new phase in which Russia was regarded as a source of chaos and peril that had to be overcome. This is particularly seen in Wilhelm's

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<sup>175</sup> Kaiser Wilhelm II, *The Kaiser's Memoirs* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1922), 16  
<sup>176</sup> Wilhelm II, 18

comment surrounding the remark made by a Russian prince who was asked about Russia's desire for war and whether he believed that Russia could win. He answered that Russia would most likely be beaten but that it would gain a revolution and become a republic. Wilhelm viewed this as the general view of the Russian intelligentsia. He declared that revolution was expected any day and that this could be expected as the "Slavs were not faithful...[nor] monarchical,...[but] Republican at heart,... disguise[ing] their sentiments, ... lying, everyone of them, all the time." This statement is important for two main reasons.<sup>177</sup> The first is that it reveals the increasing belief that Russia represented chaos in its desire for war and secondly the revolutionary underground in Russia threatened to spread into Europe. Due to this, Wilhelm saw Germany as the guardian against revolutionary violence arising in the East. The German fear of Russia was also entering a new phase in which race became a key theme. This is seen in Wilhelm's comments regarding the Slavs and in his view that Germany was now facing the creation of a Slavic ring around it by Russia and that a racial struggle between the Germans and the Slavs would soon occur.<sup>178</sup> He even went further in proclaiming that all Germans had to unite against the danger of the Pan-Slavs(Russia) and the Gauls(France).<sup>179</sup> This shows how the former fear of Russia, both militarily and diplomatically, that had existed under Frederick the Great and Bismarck was now being transformed into an apocalyptic racial struggle in which only one race could survive.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Wilhelm, 63

<sup>178</sup> John C.G. Röhl, *The Kaiser and his Court: Wilhelm II and the Government of Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, Originally published in German, 1984), 176.

<sup>179</sup> Röhl, 202-203

<sup>180</sup> Röhl, 203

This increasing focus on racial fear that Wilhelm was injecting into the German fear of Russia is observed in a speech Wilhelm made during a visit to East Prussia in which he proclaimed to a large crowd in Königsberg that he would “protect [Prussia’s] borders, ...[that] East Prussia’s sword will show no less keen an edge in fighting the enemy than it did in 1870. Those who dared to overturn peace...[would suffer] a lesson they will not forget for a hundred years.” Wilhelm furthered this by stating that he would not “let the province be touched, but if anyone should attempt it, my sovereignty will stand against it like a ‘rocher de bronze’, implying that he would rather destroy the province than surrender it to any invading enemy..”<sup>181</sup> Wilhelm followed this up by proclaiming “To arms for religion, morality and order against the parties of revolution.”<sup>182</sup> This speech clearly reveals Wilhelm’s focus on war with Russia as the speech can be seen as a warning to Russia of what it would face if it were to attack. It indicates that Wilhelm was becoming increasingly concerned with the idea of an *Endkampf* or a final struggle with Russia and that he was now turning the old German fear of Russia into a symbolic struggle between the two main races in east-central Europe.

As a result of this, Wilhelm’s focus turned to what he termed the ‘Yellow Peril,’ or threat from Asia, and his view that Russia would play a key role in the determining of the outcome of an Asiatic invasion. This is seen in the painting, ‘the Yellow Peril,’ a work by Herman Knackfuss that was commissioned by Wilhelm in 1898 and sent to the various states of Europe. In this painting, the major states of Europe are portrayed as ancient gods led by the Archangel Michael standing on a ledge overlooking the plains of Russia watching as a great cloud with a hovering

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<sup>181</sup> Röhl, 347

<sup>182</sup> Tyler Whittle, *The Last Kaiser: A biography of Wilhelm II, German Emperor and King of Prussia* (London, William Heinemann Ltd, 1977), 164.

flaming Buddha above it advances across the plain.<sup>183</sup> Key to this painting though, is the position of Russia within it as it is positioned looking towards the others while at the very edge of the ledge overlooking the plain. This was meant to support Wilhelm's claim that Russia would forsake its superimposed European culture and society in favor of its Asiatic roots and would seek to destroy Germany as it was the gateway to Europe.<sup>184</sup> Wilhelm labelled Russia a weak and treacherous nation which could not be trusted and argued that it had to be watched carefully to ensure the security of Germany.<sup>185</sup> The painting can be regarded as an expression of the increasingly racial aspects of the German fear of Russia that Wilhelm was infusing into it as he instructed Knackfuss to infuse images of the Buddha along with Russia's position to create an image of Russian military weakness. This weakness he argued, would lead Russia to side with Japan in a massive attack on Europe in which waves of soldiers would overwhelm European civilization.<sup>186</sup> It demonstrates that Wilhelm viewed a coming war between Germany and Russia as a racial war in which the final struggle between the Teutons and Slavs would be decided.<sup>187</sup>

Wilhelm was not the only individual within Germany who saw Russia as a threat to Germany. Around the same time that Wilhelm was developing his view of the 'Yellow Peril' and Russia's place within it, Germany's historians had begun following the lead of the nationalist historian Heinrich von Treitschke in voicing their concerns which had started as a result of the views voiced by Waldersee and others within the German military. They began to construct a

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<sup>183</sup> Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World: Twentieth Century Conflict and the Descent of the West* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 152.

<sup>184</sup> Wilhelm, 79

<sup>185</sup> Lawrence Wilson, *The Imperial Kaiser: A Portrait of Wilhelm II* (New York: Dorset Press, 1963), 55.

<sup>186</sup> Wilhelm, 201

<sup>187</sup> Thomas A Kohut, *Wilhelm II And The Germans: A Study in Leadership* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 209.

nationalist narrative of a historic drive to the east by the Germans in which the current fear of Russia and the need to contain it were superimposed upon the events of the past. The narrative of the drive to the East began to add onto Wilhelm's concept of racial struggle in which the Germans were portrayed as the bearers of culture eastwards. These historians emphasised the theory that the further one went into Russia, the less culture there was to be found and that as a result Germany was involved in an unending ethnic struggle with Russia, between the bearers of culture and enlightenment and the bearers of barbarism.<sup>188</sup> Russia was portrayed as the location of nightmarish visions of giant peasant armies that at any moment would thunder across eastern Germany towards Berlin, driven by massed Cossack hordes.<sup>189</sup>

The significance of this is that many of these individuals were Baltic Germans who had emigrated as a result of the Russian government's policies of Russification in its western provinces that were increasingly seen as an attempted blockage of German expansion eastward. These individuals included Professor Theodor Schiemann of Berlin University, who formed a highly influential voice in the creation of the Pan-German League in 1891. The League's goals were expansive as it advocated for the unification of all Germans with the mission of carving out a dominant position in central Europe for Germany with the intention of turning it into a world power.<sup>190</sup> Key to the projection of their goals was their focus on the Slavs as the main obstacle to Germany's expansion. Therefore, the German fear of Russia became, for the Pan-German League, a matter of eternal struggle between the "blonds and Slavs" in which Germany was pictured as the dam against a great flood of Slavs that were expected to

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<sup>188</sup> Liulevicius, 121-122

<sup>189</sup> Liulevicius, 126

<sup>190</sup> Liulevicius, 116

sweep across Europe, destroying everything in their path. Key members of the Pan German League, including its leader Ernst Hasse, were soon advocating for the expansion of Germans eastward through the annexation of Russian Poland as well as Russia's Baltic provinces for the preparation of the coming war.<sup>191</sup>

Another prominent group that was focused on Germany's perceived conflict with Russia and the Slavs was the German League of the Eastern Marches. It had been founded in 1894 and was devoted towards the lobbying for the Germanization of the Eastern territories of Germany, mainly, Posen, Silesia, and West Prussia. In particular, it was focused on the supporting of laws for the dispossession of Polish land owners that occurred in 1908. It also focussed on the need for "all German schools, officials paid by the state, and every Polish newspaper" to use German before any other language. This was the result of one leader describing the German overlordship in the region as being the result of being conquered by the German people's sword and plow, fertilized by German sweat and blood and its culture coming from the Germans.<sup>192</sup> As a result, the league's purpose became the production of propaganda in which it took on the role of criticizing and applying pressure to the government, but also acting as a key supporter of the German government. The league can be seen as an attempt by various groups of industrialists, members of the middle class and landowners to create wide spread support for Wilhelm and his policies aimed at creating the image of an eternal racial struggle between the Germans and Slavs.<sup>193</sup> It shows that at least amongst conservative groups in Germany there was support and a willingness to believe Wilhelm's fears regarding the east and that this racial fear

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<sup>191</sup> Liulevicius, 117

<sup>192</sup> Liulevicius, 118

<sup>193</sup> Liulevicius, 118

of Russia was not just the beliefs of select individuals but part of a larger movement. This would have direct consequences for the First World War, which would become the last fateful struggle between the two empires as both sought total victory against the other.

With the coming of the First World War, the German fear of Russia would enter its final phase that would lead directly to the rise of Nazi ideology and its focus on *Lebensraum* or living space to be conquered in Eastern Europe. This was the result of the realization of the German government's old fear about Germany's eastern border, which was a repetition of the Seven Years War with its massive and concentrated Russian offensive into East Prussia. This started in 1914 with the German army's activation of the Schlieffen Plan. This was a plan in which most of the German army was concentrated against France and Belgium with the intention of defeating France and forcing an armistice before sending the bulk of the German army east to deal with the slowly mobilizing Russians.<sup>194</sup> The Germans decided that Russia, due to its size and disbursement of its forces, would be unable to fight a coordinated offensive for at least two months.<sup>195</sup> The German General Staff decided on a huge gamble in which they only stationed nine divisions in East Prussia, while the rest of the army was concentrated against what was hoped would be a lightning strike against France.<sup>196</sup>

Due to this, the eastern front soon appeared as a place set apart in which Germany seemed to be participating in a war of defense against the long lasting Russian menace in the

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<sup>194</sup> Alfred von Schlieffen, *The Schlieffen Plan* (1905). [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=796](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=796) (Accessed February 16 2013)

<sup>195</sup> A.J. Ryder, *Twentieth Century Germany: From Bismarck to Brandt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 119.

<sup>196</sup> Terence Zuber, *Inventing the Schlieffen Plan: German War Planning 1871-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 242.

east. Germany was portrayed by Wilhelm and the German government as a besieged fortress resisting a great barbarian horde.<sup>197</sup> This is seen in the newspaper drawing entitled *The Triumph of Culture* in which a victorious German soldier is depicted standing with a smoking gun over the bodies of dead Slavs who were attempting to invade the cultural heartland of Germany, the birth place of the Junker nobility, East Prussia.<sup>198</sup> This drawing demonstrates the attempt to showcase the eastern front as an epic battle between the Germans as the bearers of culture and the Russians as the bearers of barbarism and tyranny. It represents the beginning of an attempt to rewrite the earlier Teutonic knight's campaigns as part of this struggle. The knights were now depicted as the colonizers and spreaders of culture in the East. Their campaigns were described as part of this struggle against Russian barbarism which is seen in another newspaper clipping depicting German soldiers marching east, seeding the soil as they went.<sup>199</sup>

This evolution is also seen in the population's response to the invasion of East Prussia by two Russian armies in August 1914. The population panicked and fled the province in a great disorganized mob. This fear was soon expressed in the cry of the 'Cossacks are coming' which is depicted in the newspaper drawing *The Cossack's are Coming* in which the Kaiser is portrayed as listening to a growing rumble coming from the east and wondering what danger was racing towards the capital as the bodies of the dead and dying are seen disappearing under the hoofs of the Cossack's horses.<sup>200</sup> This reveals that there was some internalization within the population of the German elite's racial views concerning Russia and the coming of the climax of

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<sup>197</sup> Liulevicius, 131

<sup>198</sup> *The Triumph of Culture*, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/26693/26693-h/26693-h.htm>, (accessed 05 April, 2013).

<sup>199</sup> Liulevicius, 131

<sup>200</sup> *THE COMING OF THE COSSACKS*, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/26693/26693-h/26693-h.htm>, (accessed on February 17, 2013)

the epic struggle between the two nations at the start of the war. This is seen in how the German fear of Russia became involved in the mythologizing of the Battle of Tannenberg, which became the outstanding victory of the German David against the Russian Goliath.<sup>201</sup>

The Battle of Tannenberg had started on 26 August, 1914 with the invasion of the Russian First Army, reinforced by the Russian Second Army, that invaded from Russian Poland with the intention of encircling the German Eighth Army, who were attempting to stop the Russian advance. The problem for the Russians though, was that due to a lack of modern communication equipment and the distance between them, they were unable to coordinate an attack against the outnumbered Germans, allowing the Germans under Paul von Hindenburg to attack one army at a time. This would result in the Battle of Tannenburg in which the Russian army would lose 50,000 men with 90,000 prisoners taken by the Germans, giving the Germans one of the few mass encirclements of the First World War.<sup>202</sup> The German racial fear of Russia is again seen in the Kaiser's proposal for the captured Russian soldiers to be driven onto a barren strip of land in the Baltic and forced to remain there until they died of hunger and thirst. It was left to one of Wilhelm's generals to point out that such a move would be considered genocide and that Germany would therefore leave the civilized nations of the world.<sup>203</sup> This reflects the racial and fatalistic view of the war and the mindset that this was a final struggle between the two races in which one was doomed to perish.

This battle is also very important for analysing the German fear of Russia as the invasion had marked the first invasion of East Prussia since the Seven Years War and the threatening of

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<sup>201</sup> Liulevicius, 132

<sup>202</sup> John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 149.

<sup>203</sup> Röhl, 207

the small Junker estates from which the inner circle of the army descended from. As a result, the conservative heartland of Germany was now pictured to be under threat in which the officer's children, wives, and servants were portrayed as being at the mercy of Russian barbarism.<sup>204</sup> The Russian invasion was described by the German conservative press as the infringement of an entirely different world in which German propaganda claimed that the Russians looted, raped, burned and shot citizens as spies. Germany was proclaimed to be fighting a defensive war in the east in which the "soil [was] soaked with the blood of women and children slaughtered by the Russian hordes."<sup>205</sup> General Paul von Hindenburg, the commanding general of the German army at Tannenberg, was depicted as having descended from the Teutonic knights and that he was protecting the cultural heartland of Germany from the heathen and merciless enemy.<sup>206</sup> He was described as the rescuer of the Fatherland who had avenged the Teutonic Knight's defeat by the Slavs in 1410.<sup>207</sup> Due to this, the battle would lead to a renewed focus on frontier and racial protectionism that re-entered the German fear of Russia as Germany's military leaders argued for annexations in the east and the setting up of puppet states to strengthen Germany's eastern frontier against a future Russian attack.

This idea gained momentum following the Austro-German offensive that began on 1 May, 1915. The Russian army was caught by surprise which resulted in the breaking of the entire Russian front. The Germans pushed into and annexed all of Russian Poland, occupying Galicia and Lithuania until just short of Riga.<sup>208</sup> This was the beginning of the final phase of the

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<sup>204</sup> Keegan, 144  
<sup>205</sup> Liulevicius, 133  
<sup>206</sup> Keegan, 146  
<sup>207</sup> Liulevicius, 132  
<sup>208</sup> Florinsky, 397

German fear of Russia which would have a profound effect on the Germans as the scenes observed and described by the soldiers became part of the Nazi program of *Lebensraum*. This resulted from the Russian Army's policy of scorched earth which created an impression of a land of chaos and disorder. The Germans were confronted with what appeared to be an underdeveloped and ruined infrastructure combined with primeval forests, swamps and open country. This is observed in the account of a German soldier who stated that "...grey is the whole picture which unfolds itself before us today; grey is the new impression that Russia has given us...dirty grey." This displays how the German fear of Russia was evolving as the racial and ethnic elements introduced by the Kaiser and Pan German league became embedded within it. Russia became viewed in terms of primitiveness and emptiness that needed to be guarded against through the acquiring of the conquered Russian territories to protect East Prussia from another invasion in any future war with Russia.<sup>209</sup>

The result of this was that with the Bolshevik revolution in November 1917 and Lenin's demand for peace, Germany pushed for the expansion of her eastern borders into Russian Poland as well as the eastern Baltic. This is described in the "German Solution" which called for the annexation of a wide protective belt around East Prussia. It also called for Lithuania and the Duchy of Courland to be incorporated into Germany through a personal union with Germany through the Kaiser, who would become the new monarch of these regions. It was meant to act as a buffer zone against any future attack by Bolshevik Russia.<sup>210</sup> This was later modified by General Ludendorff, Hindenburg's aide, to include Estonia and Livonia as well as the securing of

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<sup>209</sup> Liulevicius, 135-137

<sup>210</sup> John W. Wheeler-Bennett, *Brest-Litovsk: The Forgotten Peace, March 1918* (London: Macmillan & CO LTD, 1963), 106.

an independent and neutral Ukraine following Trotsky's declaration that war between Russia and the central powers was at an end. He argued that it was meant to protect all Teutonic peoples and their food supply from the Bolshevik and revolutionary terror that was rising in Russia.<sup>211</sup> These views were realized with the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Russia lost massive amounts of its European territories as the Russian empire's former Polish, Ukrainian, Baltic and White Russian provinces were taken by Germany towards the fulfillment of these goals.<sup>212</sup> The German actions can be regarded as an attempt by the victorious to alleviate their fear of Russia by creating a massive barrier against a future Russian attack.

This fear of Russian revolutionary violence and terror is apparent in the concern of the Germans over the propaganda that the Bolsheviks were distributing along the German lines. They were particularly concerned about the propaganda that suggested that the German troops should mutiny and murder the Kaiser, the generals and all other officers as this was considered an attack on the essential institutions of Germany and German society.<sup>213</sup> This growing fear of Bolshevism is also seen in the German army's statement regarding the continuation of operations on the eastern front. The statement was made by the Commander in Chief of all German armies in the east, Prince Leopold of Bavaria, in which he proclaimed that the German armies were advancing in the interests of civilization and the containment of the power of the Bolshevik revolution. Leopold continued by stating that the German army was coming as a saviour and not as conquerors, who were sworn to put down any form of tyranny

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<sup>211</sup> Wheeler-Bennett, 230

<sup>212</sup> Florinsky, 465

<sup>213</sup> Wheeler-Bennett, 226

that had been used as a hand against the various peoples of the Russian empire.<sup>214</sup> This shows that the Bolshevik's propaganda efforts were having an effect on the thinking of the German High Command, who were now in charge of Germany's war time government. It demonstrates that they were becoming increasingly concerned with the containment of Bolshevism and the perceived threat that it posed to Germany. It also reflects how the German fear of Russia was evolving into a hardened form of German militarism that was concerned about ensuring that Germany would not be exposed in any way to the increasing violence of the Bolshevik revolution.

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<sup>214</sup> Wheeler-Bennett, 244

## Conclusion

With the end of the First World War, the German fear of Russia had totally shifted. There was a clear advancement of the racial system of Wilhelm's as Germany's leadership, particularly the Nazis under Adolf Hitler, began to view German foreign policy and expansion in the east as part of an eternal struggle between the Germans and Russia. Russia was now considered the location of a feared communist horde that threatened to destroy German culture and civilization under a wave of revolution and violence. Nazis propaganda about Eastern Europe can be seen as a return to Frederick the Great's fear that Russia represented the greatest possible danger to the existence of the Prussian state. The development of the German fear of Russia can be seen as arising from Frederick the Great's view of Russia and the military campaigns of the Seven Years War. The carnage can be argued as the reason behind Frederick's emphasis on creating a system of co-dependence to maintain Russia's friendship. He believed that in limiting Russia's expansion and ambitions, Prussia would be able to maintain its position as a great power through a manipulation of its relations with Russia to gain territory. Therefore, Frederick engaged with Russia in the dismemberment of Poland in the hopes of achieving this. Unfortunately for him, this would not be realized during his reign, as Frederick did not understand Russian politics enough to manipulate them. He also overestimated Prussia's strength and ability to resist and manipulate the ambitions of a much larger power. Nevertheless, this goal was passed to his successors in Frederick William III and to some extent Frederick William IV's use of dynastic ties as a means of securing Russia's friendship and support in Europe against the influences of the French revolution and nationalism.

Ironically, it was not until Bismarck's continuation and improvement of the system of co-dependence that its goals would be fully realized. As a result, Bismarck's system of co-dependence can be seen as the realization of Frederick's system in its entirety through its manipulation of Russia's diplomatic weakness to make it the more junior partner of a new relationship. Bismarck would use this to unite Germany and ensure that Germany remained at the top of the European balance of power. This system dissolved during the reign of Wilhelm II, who brought a racial element to the German fear of Russia as well as the growing fear of Germany's other leaders that Russia was preparing for a war of destruction against Germany and its supposedly superior culture. The fear was transformed by the policies of *Weltpolitik* or world politics and turned the First World War into a war against the Slavs in which German culture was portrayed as being in an all-out struggle against Slavic barbarism and violence. Finally, the onset of the Russian Revolution and the resulting Treaty of Brest Litovsk would result in the final phase of the German fear of Russia. This was the result of the Bolsheviks' use of propaganda against the German soldiers advancing on the eastern front that called for an overthrow of the political classes in Germany through the murder of the Kaiser and all other officers. This was described as an attack on German culture itself. The outcome of this was that with the coming of the Nazis and the ideology of *Lebensraum* or living space, the German fear of Russia would be pushed to the breaking point and totally destroyed in the war against the Soviet Union which was portrayed as a war of expansion for German culture, which could only survive through the complete destruction of Russia.

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