

**Beyond Germanization and Russification:  
Nationalism and Education, 1870-1914**

By

Matthew J. Baltz

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Advisor: Professor Victor Karady

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## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Germanization in Prussian Poland .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>The role of the state and its policies.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Polish responses .....</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Conclusion .....</i>	<i>39</i>
<b>Chapter 2: Russification and the Estonians .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<i>The role of the state and its policies.....</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Estonian responses .....</i>	<i>56</i>
<i>Conclusion .....</i>	<i>60</i>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>66</b>

## Introduction

Certain words lead schizophrenic lives within public and academic discourse. We typically find them bearing multiple meanings, heavily dependent on context and used in everyday speech without much precision or reflection. The “nation” is one well-known sufferer of this affliction, and much confusion arises when it is thrown about carelessly or without qualification. This confusion becomes especially apparent when the word “building” is added to it, to the extent that when policymakers or academics refer to “nation building,” it is not immediately clear whether they are referring to a process directed at the institutions of a state or the minds and culture of its people. In addition to a persistent conflation of meaning between nation and state, there is also an apparent disconnect between popular and academic understandings of the origins and antiquity of nations, nationalism, and the nation state. Indeed, one persistent indication of the power and longevity of various national myths is that they have only begun to be overcome in school textbooks and in the collective imaginations of citizens around the world.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis proposes that two other words, “Germanization” and “Russification” (as well as, conceivably, any group name followed by the suffix “-ization” or “-ification”) could be diagnosed with a similar case of schizophrenia. Like the national idea, Germanization, and Russification have been used, and quite often abused, in a public and scholarly context. The reasons for abuse are not hard to guess, especially when found in the speeches of politicians indulging in popular nationalist rhetoric or in the writings of academics dipping their pens in national ink. In central and eastern Europe, where these words have a special resonance, they can even be used as historical justification for legislation designed to discriminate against groups

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<sup>1</sup> See Schissler, Hanna and Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal (eds.) *The Nation, Europe, and the World: Textbooks and Curricula in Transition*. New York: Berghahn Books. 2005.

who had once occupied a dominant position but are now considered “national minorities.”<sup>2</sup>

My goal here is not to “take sides” on what was and still remains a very controversial issue for citizens of states with historical grievances based on current understandings of how their ancestors lived, learned, thought, worked and died within an imperial setting. Nor is it my intention to rehabilitate the policies of these states or deny that they were often conceived and implemented in a chauvinistic and culturally insensitive manner. That being said, the fact that I feel obliged to make these statements may be seen as one indication of the extent to which the usage of these words have been politicized, and all too often, studied by partisans of either “side” with an axe to grind or a defense case to be mounted. With interests involved that often go well beyond the academic, it is therefore not surprising that Germanization and Russification or the efforts made by empires and nation states to assimilate or acculturate non-dominant ethnic groups in one respect or another, are historically well-known and have been the subject of special scrutiny. When wielded by nationalists of various stripes, these words typically serve a dual purpose: to celebrate the nation’s capacity to resist domination and recall the ultimate injustice that could be perpetrated upon a nation: repression to the point of annihilation. Besides casting historical groups as heroes and villains and victims and perpetrators, they also help reaffirm an understanding of society, both past and present, which sees self-motivated, clearly bounded “nations” as the primary actors filling these roles.

So I am quite aware that this thesis wades into rather controversial waters, of relevance to everyday public and political life as well as to academia. Although a highly entertaining thesis may be written about the rhetorical usage of these words in the public and political sphere, this will essentially remain a scholarly endeavor. Nor will I attempt to add to the growing corpus of

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<sup>2</sup> For an extended discussion of imperial legacies, “minoritized majorities” and their impact on efforts to promote liberal multiculturalism, see Will Kymlicka. *Multicultural Odysseys: Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity*. (Forthcoming from Oxford University Press)

descriptive or narrative accounts of Germanization and Russification. Given that these policies were carried out toward several non-dominant ethnic groups within each imperial context over a fairly long period of time, it will not be possible within the scope of this project to comprehensively study each case. The goals will therefore be far more modest, concerned with addressing through a comparative historical approach several problems and questions that the usage of such terms have generated.

Since these terms can potentially be used in a variety of different contexts and take on many meanings, a few qualifications need to be made in terms of the specific interests of this thesis. When one writes of Germanization or Russification one can be referring to a sociological, usually voluntary, process that occurs through the interaction of members belonging to different categories or social groups, as well as to a specific policy designed to achieve certain objectives, usually involving varying degrees of administrative, linguistic, or cultural homogenization. Moreover, to take the Russian case as an example, many historians have remarked that Russification is a term used to describe an array of processes and policies, including the assimilation of local elites, control of the apparatuses of administration, and cultural policies aimed at the adoption of the language or beliefs of the dominant group.<sup>3</sup> While the purpose-driven “brand” of Germanization, and Russification will be the focus of this study, the more voluntary or “organic” sociological processes are important to keep in mind, and will be revisited at varying times throughout this thesis when appropriate.

However, even a focus on the policy-side of the equation does little to cut down the

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<sup>3</sup> Such a division between “administrative” and “cultural” Russification was first proposed in Thaden, Edward C. (ed) *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1981. Alexey Miller has advocated a more nuanced approach in order to reflect the regional particularities all too often obscured by reliance on just one general term. These and other issues are explored in detail in his chapter entitled “Russification or Russifications?” appearing in *The Romanov Empire and Nationalism*. (Forthcoming from Central European University Press.)

rather large beast that lurks behind these two, quite general terms. Indeed, most accounts highlight the fact that various state institutions - the army, bureaucracy, judiciary and education system - were usually deployed to carry out this function with varying degrees of success. The primary focus of this study will be limited to Germanization and Russification in primary and secondary education from the period beginning roughly with the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 and ending before World War I. While it is true that varying degrees of Germanization and Russification had been practiced during previous periods,<sup>4</sup> I chose this span of years because they mark a shift which became visible in the educational policies not just in the cases that will be the main focus of this study, but throughout the states and empires of Europe.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the Franco-Prussia War of 1870-71 and the reaction to it serve as a useful symbol of a new era in the history of education and national identity.

The first was the linkage that was made, especially by observers at the time, between the importance of the education system to national strength and the projection of power, particularly from a military and economic standpoint. To say that the French defeat at Sedan did not go unnoticed by the powers of continental Europe is hardly surprising given the drastic effect this had on the European balance of power. Far more significant was the general consensus that emerged soon after on the decisive role played, not by Bismarck or Napoleon III, but by the humble Prussian schoolteacher and scientist. While interstate rivalry and wars had been a fact of life long before the nineteenth century in Europe, rivalry in the educational sphere was a relatively new phenomenon. The world began to change, as did the stakes involved in a

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<sup>4</sup> Poles especially will attest to the fact that a rather punitive brand of Russification had begun in Russia almost immediately in response to the events of 1863.

<sup>5</sup> Nor am I alone in highlighting the significance of these years in the history of nationalism. Eric Hobsbawm, for one, notes that three important shifts in nationalist thought took place during this period, namely (1) an expansion of the criteria for “nations” who could justifiably claim status as such and the right to self-determination (2) the elevation of language and ethnicity as the most decisive criteria for potential nationhood and (3) a noticeable shift to the political right among national movements. Hobsbawm, E. J. *Nations and nationalism since 1780 : programme, myth, reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1990. p 102.

government's success or failure in modernizing its education system.

From a broader perspective, these years also saw the penetration of state or imperial power into the daily lives of their inhabitants to an unprecedented degree. One of the most visible intermediaries in this encounter between state and subject (and eventually, citizen) was the schoolhouse. While interest in school reform by central authorities, and laws calling for the mandatory provision of certain levels of education dated as far back as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was not until this period that governments had at their disposal the resources to match their educational goals. To be sure, even during this period, the rhetoric used and importance ascribed to educational improvements and standardization were rarely matched with the funding or political will required, but this period did indeed see an enormous increase in the number of schools, teachers, and students enrolled; an expansion of education that was both a European and global phenomenon.<sup>6</sup>

The outcome of the war also heightened existing security concerns over the destabilizing effects of nationalism, an ideology being embraced to varying degrees within states, empires, and national movements eventually seeking a state of their own. German unification, a process that turned inward after the war, had obvious consequences for the non-dominant groups living within the new borders, but it also had geopolitical implications and affected the European balance of power. For instance, as we will discuss in the second chapter of this thesis, it served as a spur for the Russification policies enacted in the Baltic lands, where the loyalties and influence of the Baltic Germans came to be seen as a more and more suspect in certain circles inside and outside of government.

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<sup>6</sup> For more on education expansion as a global phenomenon, see Ramirez, F. O. and J. Boli. "The Political Construction of Mass Schooling: European Origins and Worldwide Institutionalization." *Sociology of Education* Vol. 60 No. 1987. A more recent discussion on this issue, in the context of Ottoman school reforms beginning in the latter half of the nineteenth century, appears in Fortna, Benjamin. *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the late Ottoman Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2000. p 26-41.

Coinciding with, and in many cases strengthened by, the expansion of education in this period was the continued evolution of nationalism as both an ideology and political movement. Nationalists of the nineteenth century were themselves aware of the importance of education as a means of “awakening” or consolidating the national identity of their compatriots and it is not surprising that educational policies, particularly those impacting the language of instruction and religion, were often framed in national terms by members of dominant and non-dominant groups. As this thesis will argue, education often played a crucial role in the nationalization of preexisting religious and linguistic categories at the popular level. Part of this thesis will therefore hope to explain why and how education came to be viewed through a nationalist lens, not just by the active members of national movements where this had long since been the case, but also by government officials, bureaucrats, and the general population.

So my decision to focus on primary and secondary education during this period is essentially twofold. First, these years marked a period of unprecedented modernization and expansion of education systems, spurred on by the interest of states that turned to education in the interest of strength and unity, the requirements of industries in need of workers or professionals with specialized skills, and the demands of parents who began to see education more and more as a path to social mobility.<sup>7</sup> Second, education often became an important field of battle for nationalists on both sides, often producing dramatic events like school strikes, rallies, and various other forms of organized resistance, but also more quotidian experiences among students and parents responding to the education being offered to them each day of the

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<sup>7</sup> State-centric functionalism and economic determinism have been a common feature in explanations of the rise of modern education systems. Only in recent years have we come to appreciate how popular demand often acted as a spur to the expansion of schools and education, even as governments sought to resist it. See Cohen, Gary B. *Education and Middle-Class Society in Imperial Austria: 1848-1918*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press. 1996. Curtis, Sarah. “Supply and Demand: Religious Schooling in Nineteenth-Century France.” *History of Education Quarterly*. Vol 39, No 1. 1999. p 51-72.



school year. Schools therefore became the source of common shared experience ranging from the spectacular to the mundane, experiences that could simultaneously transcend old boundaries and produce new ones. In this respect, Rogers Brubaker's approach to understanding nationhood and nationalism as an "event" with fluctuating levels of salience is most appropriate, especially in terms of how the experiences of the Germanization and Russification of schools could potentially lead, to use his words, the "nullification of complex identities by the terrible categorical simplicity of ascribed nationality."<sup>8</sup> Picking up on this theme, this project will attempt to shed light on the complexity that lay behind these "events," both in terms of the identities of the main groups and actors involved and the interests and goals they brought with them to the schoolhouse.

Given the rather specific interests of this thesis on the interaction between education policy and the "nationalization" of groups and categories at a popular level, I have chosen not to deal as thoroughly with the issue of higher education. This is not to deny that higher education had an especially important role to play in the assimilation or acculturation of elites.<sup>9</sup> However, since a university education remained a remote possibility for large segments of the population well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the stakes involved in, for instance, the language of religious instruction were much greater from the perspective of the average person.<sup>10</sup> It is also important to note that primary and secondary education can not be fully understood in isolation from higher education, and indeed other aspects of the broader political, economic, social and international

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<sup>8</sup> Brubaker, Rogers. *Nationalism reframed: nationhood and the national question in the new Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1996. p 20. This quote was also cited by Eric Lohr in his book on the campaign against enemy aliens in Russia during World War I, an episode which he also describes as a nationalizing "event." Lohr, Eric. *Nationalizing the Russian Empire: the Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1993. p 8.

<sup>9</sup> See Kappeler, Andreas. (Ed.) *The Formation of National Elites*. (Comparative Studies on governments and non-dominant ethnic groups in Europe: 1850-1940; v 6) Dartmouth: New York University Press. 1992.

<sup>10</sup> With the democratization of higher education, the same case could not be made today, as recent conflicts over the right to an Albanian-language university in Tetovo and a Hungarian-language university in Cluj demonstrate.

environment. Language regulations in administrative and public life, discriminatory land ownership policies, and even attempts to achieve a more favorable demographic balance through colonization were often part of the wider landscape, affecting how school policies were framed by opinion leaders like politicians, journalists, activists and clergymen as well as, and perhaps most importantly, the actual consumers of primary and secondary education: the students and their parents.

That being said, this thesis is concerned with two issues that I argue are often obfuscated by an unqualified usage of these terms. The first is the tendency to take for granted certain aspects of the social groups in question, both in terms of the dominant actors busy “Germanizing” and “Russifying” populations, and the non-dominant groups who serve as their target. To turn first to the dominant groups, behind these general terms existed considerable variation in regard to their worldviews and self-identifications, their goals and strategies in the educational sphere, and their conceptions of the minority groups within their borders. Ever since Benedict Anderson popularized the term “official nationalism”<sup>11</sup> which he defined as the “willed merger of nation and dynastic empire,” this notion has come to dominate much of our understandings about what imperial authorities hoped to accomplish towards their subject peoples. For those familiar with Anderson’s elegant prose, it is hard to forget the imagery of Kings, Kaisers and Tsars attempting to fit “the short, tight, skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the empire.”<sup>12</sup> Although a useful conceptual metaphor to keep in mind, in its

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<sup>11</sup> Anderson credits Hugh Seton-Watson with first using the term, but the popularity of *Imagined Communities* and his chapter on official nationalisms has ensured that it has become most associated with him. See Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). p 86.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* Referring to Anderson’s discussion of “official nationalism” Theodore Weeks even goes so far to say that he “often gets his facts wrong for Russia.” Given that Anderson is a specialist of South-East Asia and his reliance on rather dated secondary material, these mistakes are perhaps understandable. See Weeks, Theodore R. “Russification: Word and Practice 1863-1914. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*. Vol. 148, No. 4. December 2004. p 475.

oversimplification it may perhaps do more to obscure rather than illuminate the reality behind the objectives of imperial authorities, which were quite varied and complex. Given that Russian and German national identities were undergoing considerable change, contestation, and indeed, construction, throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century,<sup>13</sup> it should also come as no surprise that the perspectives and interests of the imperial center, nationalist ideologues, policymakers, bureaucrats, and local authorities were often very different. As this thesis will argue, policies could aim to achieve complete linguistic assimilation, forms of acculturation, simple obedience to the imperial center, a counterbalance to other national or foreign influences, or a combination of all of these things.

Educational policies also varied between and within empires not just for the reasons outlined above, but also as a result of different attitudes toward the groups who were the target of these measures. Differentiation between “historic” versus “non-historic” nations; assumptions of religious, linguistic, and ethnic compatibility or lack thereof; racialist discourses; cultural chauvinism and notions of a civilizing mission; each were variously used, depending on the context, to inform and legitimate the policies of Germanization and Russification. Of course, even this perspective assumes that the objectives of these policies were ever clearly defined or coherently implemented. At least where primary and secondary education is concerned, it would be quite misleading to always assume that the policies were consistently applied, had unambiguous objectives, or that robust measures were even taken to ensure their implementation (much less success) especially in terms of the all important indicator: funding. The cries of

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<sup>13</sup> Studies of identity discourse and construction have grown immensely in the last two decades, as the first chapter of this thesis will explore in more detail. For a useful survey of the main issues and debates on German identity and historiography, see Jarausch, Konrad H. and Michael Geyer. *Shattered past : reconstructing German histories*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2003. Alexey Miller provides a useful survey of the literature and main issues dealing with Russian identity in Miller, Alexey. ““The Empire and the Nation in the Imagination of Russian nationalism.” in Alexei Miller and Alfred J. Rieber (eds.) *Imperial Rule*. Budapest: Central European University Press. 2004.

“unfunded mandate!” so familiar in current political discussions on education reform were probably heard no less often in this period as well.

Similar points could be made if we turn from the dominant side of the equation to the intended “targets” of these policies. Here we find considerable variation in the extent to which a “national” identity understood in the modern sense had penetrated the collective and individual consciousness of certain populations, as well as the lengths individuals were prepared to sacrifice their social standing, career opportunities, or indeed their very lives for such a cause. Existing local, confessional and linguistic ties, as well as prevailing social and economic conditions influenced responses not just to the messages of national and social movements, but also to those of educational establishments. So too did the attitudes, policies, perceived openness, and relative attractiveness of the educational services and social prospects offered by the dominant group. This leads to important questions, despite frequent nationalist-motivated characterizations of forced coercion, on the voluntary and involuntary aspects of such policies. The decision of parents or students to enroll in the schools or learn the language of the dominant group in the interest of social mobility or broadening potential career prospects need not always be characterized as forced. As Eugen Weber noted at the start of his chapter on the role of education in the modernization of rural France (an episode, it is worth adding, not very different from those which are the focus of this project) “people went to school not because school was offered or imposed, but because it was useful.”<sup>14</sup> The patterns of response to Germanization and Russification will be therefore be the second issue explored in this thesis.

In sum, by looking closer at the beliefs, identities, interests, and resources of the main groups and actors concerned, as well as how they perceived their options and opportunities at the

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<sup>14</sup> Weber, Eugen. *Peasants into Frenchmen: the Modernization of Rural France 1870-1914*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1976. p 303.

time, the goal is to become more sensitive to the dynamics of how Germanization and Russification in education “worked” within each imperial context. I have already mentioned above how one approach to the study of ethnicity and identity advocated by Rogers Brubaker may be of particular use in grasping these dynamics, but there are several others that could also be fruitfully called upon and may cast our understandings of these topics in a new light.<sup>15</sup> Specifically, an approach that distinguishes between groups and categories, sees group-making as a project, and “groupness” as a complicated interaction between various actors may go a long way to help understand how Germanization and Russification was actually experienced. And for the groups often characterized as the “victims” of these policies, as essentially passive objects of assimilation, it may make more sense to see them instead as active subjects engaged in a more complicated process of both acceptance and resistance.

In order to approach in a systematic way and bring to light the considerable variation one finds by going beyond the simple usage of these terms, this thesis will use a comparative method. The primary objects of comparison will be the formulation and implementation of, and response to, the educational policies characterized as forming a part of the process of Germanization and Russification. Imperial Germany was selected because it provides an example of an empire very much established on the basis of conquest beginning to embrace “nationhood” as a new basis of political legitimacy. As we will discover, this transformation was by no means completed with the declaration of the *Kaiserreich* in 1871, but had only just begun and remained in many important respects incomplete well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Russian Empire, meanwhile, offers an example of an empire also in the process of redefining itself, but for a number of different reasons its identity as an imperial, rather than a national state remained largely intact. Moreover, its reputation as a “prison house of nations” often obscures a reality which is far more complex,

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<sup>15</sup> See Brubaker, Rogers. *Ethnicity without Groups*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 2004.

and as this thesis will argue, its policies become far less sinister when the actual context in which they were carried out is taken into consideration.

The selection of Hohenzollern and Romanov empires was also made in order to contribute the growing literature devoted to the comparative study of empires. As the introduction to *Imperial Rule*, a collection of essays published in 2004 rightfully acknowledges, emergence in interest in this subject can be explained in part by current events and interest in superpowers, intergovernmental organizations, transnational corporations and NGO's, but also by a desire in academia to go beyond the "nation" and the nation state as the primary unit of analysis, and to balance the overtly or covertly nationalistic perspectives and assumptions that have been projected onto the past. German history, particularly in the years following unification in 1871, has especially fallen victim to a premature nationalization of its past and the concurrent de-emphasis of its imperial characteristics.<sup>16</sup> Preoccupation with the thesis of a German *Sonderweg* and the pronounced tendency to look westward instead of eastward in comparative studies all helped to contribute to the marginalization of its imperial history.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, one of the overall goals of this study is to illustrate that many fruitful comparisons may be drawn between the Germanization and Russification policies of the two empires, made all the more relevant given the fact that each existed within a larger system of states and the "entangled" nature of their histories. Also, by placing these, often controversial, experiences within a broader European (and indeed global) context of education expansion and

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<sup>16</sup> Such is the argument put forth by Philip Ther in two recent essays. Ther, Philipp. "Beyond the Nation: The Relational Basis of a Comparative History of Germany and Europe." *Central European History*, vol. 36, no. 1. 2003. p. 45-73. Ther, Philipp. "Imperial instead of national history: positioning modern German history on the map of European empires." in Alexey Miller and Alfred J. Rieber (eds.) *Imperial Rule*. Budapest: Central European University Press. 2004. p 47-66.

<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that this observation is not especially new. As early as 1986 we can find Geoff Eley, one of the foremost critics of the *Sonderweg* thesis, remark prior to a lengthy review of four monographs dealing with various aspects of the history of Poles in Imperial Germany, that "we can sometimes forget that the *Kaiserreich*, like the Romanov and Habsburg empires, was a multinational state." Eley, Geoff. *From Unification to Nazism: Reinterpreting the German Past*. New York: Routledge. 1986. p 200.

modernization, a context which saw national and imperial states repeatedly turning to the education system for the fulfillment of various needs, we may be forced to revisit certain assumptions and misconceptions that have been made on the divide between the history and experience of western and eastern Europe.

Given that Germanization and Russification policies were carried out toward several non-dominant ethnic groups within each imperial context over a fairly long period of time, it will not be possible within the scope of this project to comprehensively study each case. Nevertheless many insights may be gained through an analysis of the responses of Poles in the provinces of Poznan, West Prussia and Upper Silesia to Germanization, and the response of the Estonians in the Baltic provinces of Estland and Livland to Russification. Since these two groups were different in so many ways, the primary goal will not be to compare the two but to gain a better appreciation of the wide range of reactions that were possible to Germanization and Russification respectively.

The Polish case was also selected because it provides an example of an ethnic group of the “lateral type,” to draw on Anthony Smith’s typology,<sup>18</sup> in which a territorial and dynastic concept of nationhood first emerged among aristocratic and clerical elites but remained weak among the broader Polish-speaking population until relatively late in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Much of the first chapter will be concerned with the role that Germanization of primary and secondary education played in the transition from an elite-based conception of nationality to one that began to encompass all strata of society along ethno-linguistic and religious lines. In other words, it will seek to explain how schools and the experience of Germanization helped to nationalize preexisting religious and linguistic categories and make it possible for Poles to imagine themselves as belonging to a broader national community. Ultimately, this thesis hopes

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<sup>18</sup> Smith, Anthony D. *National identity*. Reno: University of Nevada Press. 1991. p 61.

to offer judgments on the extent to which we should see “nationhood” as an existing basis for action and the cause of the ensuing conflict over schools, or whether it is more accurate to see this as one of the *results* of these policies and the conflicts that arose over them. The Estonian case, meanwhile, will allow us to explore the effects of Russification on a group of the “vertical type,” in which a national concept arose, not from an elite, but from a small group of educated and increasingly national conscious individuals who defined the “nation” from the start in popular and ethno-linguistic terms.

Germanization and Russification will be given its own chapter, and both chapters will be organized into two sections. The focus of the first section will be on the state and its policies, although consideration will also be given to the broader context in which state policies were carried out as well as the role played by other non-state actors. In addition to exploring in depth the policies themselves, this section will be concerned with the interests and goals that motivated these policies, their attitudes towards the non-dominant group to which they were directed, and how they changed over time. This section will also analyze the extent to which the government succeeded in translating official policies into everyday practice and achieving the desired objectives. Often mitigating government effectiveness was a persistent lack of funding and oversight through inspection, shortage of well-trained or politically reliable teachers, and the availability of other school alternatives beyond the state’s control. Indeed, students and parents sometimes had a range of choices both near and far, from private or denominational schools, underground school networks, study abroad, home schooling, and of course, no schooling at all.

The second section will explore in detail these patterns of response and the reasons behind them. In addition to political, economic and social factors, certain characteristics internal to the group such as its social structure, historic presence or strength of elites, preexisting ethnic,



linguistic and religious ties, and the degree to which national consciousness had become a determinant for action will be considered. Also of importance is the degree to which the Germanization and Russification policies were accompanied by a positive incentive. All of the above could potentially influence how educational policies were framed and choices toward assimilation and acculturation. The relative openness of the dominant group and the quality of education being offered by them also figured into these choices, as did potential career opportunities for members of non-dominant groups. The histories of national movements are filled with numerous examples of leaders who make a career in being advocates or spokesmen for their “nation,” however those who chose *not* to take part in these movements, and instead elected to willfully assimilate or acculturate into the dominant groups, or simply be “neutral” are often just as significant.

Since the scope of this thesis encompasses the geographic territory of two empires, it therefore presents obvious challenges in terms of the linguistic competency required to carry out a truly thorough review of the available primary and secondary literature, not to mention the sheer volume of resources that could be potentially called upon. For both these reasons, the sources to be used in this work will be almost entirely secondary and published in English. Since this is not intended to be a comprehensive historical narrative and is instead essentially problem-oriented, that is concerned with approaching aspects of this topic that have been researched in isolation but not nearly as often from a comparative perspective, these limitations need not be debilitating. In addition, the strength of the available literature and renewed interest in the subject in recent years makes a project of this kind not only possible, but also a useful contribution to the scholarly literature. This thesis should therefore be seen, in many respects, as a synthesis of much work that has already been done in the field, although these prior studies

were completed with different research agendas and sought to answer different questions.

Although a more extended discussion of this literature will be found in the chapters that follow, it is worth calling attention to four broad currents in the study of modern European history, nationalism, the history of education and the field of sociology that I see as coalescing and informing the lines of inquiry undertaken for this thesis. The recent developments in the field of modern European history has already been alluded to, and that is the challenging of three particularly pernicious fictions found in the master narratives of nations and nation states: the myths of national autonomy, authenticity, and historical inevitability.<sup>19</sup> The second development is the cultural turn that the field of nationalism studies has taken over the past two decades. The scholarship on nations and nationalism has essentially shifted away from increasingly stale debates on the antiquity of nations (“do nations have navels?”) or grand theories seeking to describe and explain the origins or originators of nationalist thought. These old questions have been replaced by new ones, concerned more with the fundamental issues of identity and identity formation, the nature of national and social groups, the intersection between national identity and social categories, and finally, how the “nation” is and has been symbolized, communicated and experienced in everyday life.<sup>20</sup>

In the history of education we can find a similar shift taking place, one that moves beyond government policy and qualitative data concerned with “systemization,” “inclusiveness” or “progressiveness”<sup>21</sup> to how education was actually practiced and experienced.<sup>22</sup> In a recent

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<sup>19</sup> For a good discussion of this issue, see Geyer, Michael. “Historical Fictions of Autonomy and the Europeanization of National History,” *Central European History*. Vol. 22, no 3/4. September/December 1989.

<sup>20</sup> In an article written in 1993, the anthropologist Katherine Verdery formulated several thought provoking questions on these very topics. Verdery, Katherine. “Whither ‘nation’ and ‘nationalism’?” *Daedalus* Vol 122, No 3., Summer 1993.

<sup>21</sup> For a well-known study belonging to this genre of education history, see Mèuller, D. K., F. K. Ringer, et al. *The Rise of the modern educational system : structural change and social reproduction, 1870-1920*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press. 1987.

essay on secondary education in Europe, Robert Anderson has argued that if we confine ourselves to state-centric approaches or see schools simply as engines of social reproduction, we will miss the fact that, as he aptly puts it,

Much diversity remained behind the façade, and one of the most fruitful kinds of research today is that which looks at secondary schooling in its urban context, at what families wanted from schools and how they actually used them; at how what went on in the classroom, the real culture of the secondary school, differed from the official curricula; at how the structure of the system was affected by ethnic, gender and religious divisions; and at how schools functioned to integrate local and regional elites into national cultures and (sometimes) supranational loyalties.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, research on assimilation in the field of sociology has sought to go beyond traditional understanding of what this process actually entails. An article published by Rogers Brubaker provides a useful survey of how this shift has occurred in several areas, although only two are of particular relevance to our topic. The first is a shift from an “organic” understanding of assimilation that assumes the complete absorption of non-dominant groups by dominant groups to a more “general” or “abstract” understanding of assimilation as a “process of becoming similar.”<sup>24</sup> The focus therefore shifts onto the process, rather than on end-states. The second proposed shift in the concept of assimilation is related to this change in understanding of dominant and non-dominant social groups and how they interact. Concerning the dominant group, Brubaker describes a shift from a “taken-for-granted reference population – the ‘core culture’ or ‘national society’ as a whole – to a disaggregated approach that discards the notion of assimilation as a single process, considers multiple reference populations and envisions distinct processes occurring in different domains.” Instead of seeing these groups as homogenous units

<sup>22</sup> Ben Fortna’s study on education in the Ottoman Empire and Gary Cohen’s work on Austria-Hungary has already been mentioned. To this we may also add Dowler, Wayne. *Classroom and Empire*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press. 2001. Lamberti, Marjorie. *State, society, and the elementary school in imperial Germany*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1989.

<sup>23</sup> Anderson, Robert. “The Idea of the Secondary School in Nineteenth-century Europe.” *Paedagogica Historica*, Volume 40, Nos. 1 & 2, April 2004. p. 106.

<sup>24</sup> Brubaker, Rogers. (2001) “The return of assimilation? Changing perspectives on immigration and its sequels in France, Germany, and the United States.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Vol. 24, No. 4. p 534.

whereby shifts occur wholesale from one to the other, this new emphasis on the heterogeneity of social groups logically means that assimilation, or the process of becoming similar, occurs only in certain respects. As Brubaker puts it, it entails “a shift from one mode of heterogeneity – one distribution of properties – to another mode of heterogeneity.”<sup>25</sup>

When speaking of the Germanization and Russification of human beings and the policies that are directed *at* them, such perspectives are important to keep in mind. Unlike when these terms are used to describe something that happens to objects such as the design of buildings or dress, surnames and place names, or even language usage in schools or administration, individuals do not so easily pass from one state to the next. As Eric Hobsbawm so memorably put it, “men and women did not choose collective identification as they chose shoes, knowing that one could only put on one pair at a time. They had, and still have, several attachments and loyalties simultaneously, including nationality, and are simultaneously concerned with various aspects of life, any of which may at any one time be foremost in their minds, as occasion suggests.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *ibid*

<sup>26</sup> Hobsbawm, E. J. *Nations and nationalism since 1780 : programme, myth, reality*. p 123.

## Chapter 1: Germanization in Prussian Poland<sup>1</sup>

Our understanding of German society between the proclamation of the *Deutsche Kaiserreich* in 1871 and its dismemberment after World War I has benefited immensely from the cultural turn in historiography over the past two decades. Studies investigating the non-Prussian states within the empire have done much to shed light on how the new imperial situation meant not just a reorganization of political life and further integration of the economy, but also a psychological reorientation from identification with particular “fatherlands” to membership with a broader German state or ethnonational community.<sup>2</sup> Although German unification was achieved under Prussian auspices, the following decades witnessed similar identity struggles in this part of the empire between traditional imperial understandings of the state and narrower national interests.<sup>3</sup> Religion also remained a significant element of collective identity throughout the imperial period, not to mention various other social categories.<sup>4</sup> As David Blackbourn remarked in the introduction to his wide-ranging history of Germany, this scholarship “has brought us closer to how those we write about understood their own lives and made us more alert to the existence of multiple, overlapping identities on society: not just whether someone was a worker or bourgeois, say, but whether they were Westphalian or Bavarian, Protestant or

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this chapter, the term “Prussian Poland” will be used to refer collectively to Poznan, Upper Silesia, and West Prussia, the three provinces in Prussia with the highest percentage of ethnic Poles. I use the term for brevity’s sake, not in order to make a political statement.

<sup>2</sup> Confino, Alon. *The nation as a local metaphor : Württemberg, imperial Germany, and national memory, 1871-1918*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 1997. Applegate, Celia. *A nation of provincials : the German idea of Heimat*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1990. Green, Abigail. *Fatherlands : state-building and nationhood in nineteenth-century Germany*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 2001.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion on how these various conceptions of state and nation affected Wilhelmine Germany’s conception of citizenship, see Rogers Brubaker. *Citizenship and nationhood in France and Germany*. Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> One specific indicator of the continued relevance of different social categories can be found in the membership patterns of teacher associations, where rival organizations along national, regional, confessional, and gender lines remained characteristic throughout the imperial period, to an extent not found in other professions like law or medicine. See McClelland, Charles E. *The German experience of professionalization : modern learned professions and their organizations from the early nineteenth century to the Hitler era*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2002. p 98.

Catholic, young or old, male or female, and why these things mattered.”<sup>5</sup>

German unification had obvious consequences for the non-German peoples of the *Kaiserreich*, of which Poles between 1867 and 1910 accounted for approximately one tenth of the total German population.<sup>6</sup> Polish deputies protested their incorporation in both the North German Confederation in 1867 and the German Empire in 1871 in large part due to the uncertainty that accompanied the formation of a new state based on the ideal, if not reality, of German nationhood. In the following decades, a similar struggle began to take place between competing scenarios of nationhood and between those whose loyalties remained oriented toward the Prussian German State or outside of its borders. Since the Congress of Vienna earlier in the century, Polish speakers were separated between the borders of the Hohenzollern, Habsburg and Romanov empires, and within Prussia itself, where 2,200,000 Poles lived in 1867, provincial divisions left the highest percentage of Poles (39 percent) in Poznań, followed by 34 percent in the Opole regency of Silesia, 20 percent in West Prussia, and 7 percent in East Prussia.<sup>7</sup> For historical and demographic reasons, variation between the Prussian provinces remained significant. In the case of the Opole regency, commonly referred to as Upper Silesia, a regional identification remained especially strong and developments in the political and educational sphere followed in many respects a different course in comparison to Poznań and West Prussia.<sup>8</sup>

A curious situation therefore unfolded, where the political, economic, social, and cultural life of the empire was experiencing varying degrees of integration but the content of the national

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<sup>5</sup> Blackbourn, David. *The Long Nineteenth Century: A History of German, 1780-1918*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1998. p xxi.

<sup>6</sup> Molik, Witold. “The Poles in the Grand Duchy of Poznan, 1850-1914.” in Andreas Kappeler (Ed.) *The Formation of National Elites*. (Comparative Studies on governments and non-dominant ethnic groups in Europe: 1850-1940; v 6) Dartmouth: New York University Press. 1992. p 14.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Recent interest in Upper Silesia has highlighted its regional particularity, particularly in the realm of identity and politics. See Kamusella, Tomasz. “Upper Silesia 1870-1920: between region, religion, nation and ethnicity.” *East European Quarterly*. Vol. 38 No. 4. Winter, 2004.

idea that was supposed to serve as the fundament to this process still remained very much open to interpretation. Nationhood, as both a social category and source of identification, retained, in words of one historian a “vital plasticity.”<sup>9</sup> Recognition of the continued relevance of preexisting social ties and the role that construction played in giving substance to German nationhood are important to keep in mind in approaching the Germanization of non-dominant groups during this period. They not only undermine the assumption of a clearly bounded, core national culture (despite the assertions of German nationalists of an “authentic” German *Volk*) but also allow for a better appreciation of the fact that “Germanization,” in national if not linguistic terms, was a process affecting Germans as well as non-Germans. And given the “plasticity” of the national category still very much in emergence, religious, linguistic, cultural, and racial criteria may be used selectively or in combination depending on time and place to expand or constrict membership in the imagined national collective.

That being said, by the eve of the First World War, Germans and Poles increasingly began to identify themselves and each other in national terms, and language in particular became one of the most important indicators of this divide. Perhaps the most striking sign of this national and linguistic polarization can be found in the decline in the number of bilingual Polish and German speakers in Poznań, the province in Prussia where Poles were the most concentrated and tensions ran the highest. According to a Prussian census conducted in 1846, of the 1,338,529 inhabitants, 21 percent of the population indicated that they spoke Polish and German (with 50.7 percent professing to speak only Polish and 28.3 percent only German). A similar census completed in 1910 showed that less than 1 percent (.6 percent) of the population now

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<sup>9</sup> Geoff Eley in fact refers to this as “the central paradox of the post-unification period, namely the indisputable suffusion of national values in a society where the exact content of the national tradition and its future direction were a matter of bitter dispute.” Eley, Geoff. “State Formation, Nationalism, and Political Culture: Some Thoughts on the Unification of Germany.” *From Unification to Nazism: Reinterpreting the German Past*. London: Routledge. 1992. p 73, 77.

spoke (or claimed to speak) both Polish and German, while Polish speakers accounted for 60.9 percent and German speakers 38.4 percent out of a total population of 2,099,831.<sup>10</sup> Other indicators of the polarization of society throughout the provinces of Prussian Poland along other lines can be found in declining rates of intermarriage, and a rise in certain areas in religious conversions. Clearly, for many individuals it had become intolerable to attempt to remain outside the national lines that were being drawn in linguistic or religious terms, and choices were being forced and made. Previous commonalities based on confession, economic interests and political orientation now became deemphasized within a nationalist frame, resulting in a kind of “national self-absorption,” as one author describes it.<sup>11</sup>

The Germanization policies in primary and secondary education played an important role in this process of nationalizing certain social categories, creating opportunities for popular mobilization, multiplying shared interests and identifications, and encouraging wider segments of the population to think of their relationship between themselves and others in national terms.<sup>12</sup> While the state policies that set in motion the Germanization of schools largely dictated the terms of the debate, a more complicated interaction existed between state and religious institutions, local government, German and Polish nationalist organizations and societies, economic interests, and of course, the consumers of the education itself, the students and their parents. The remainder of this chapter will explore some of these educational policies, the motivations behind

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<sup>10</sup> Statistics cited in Miaso, Jozef. “Educational Policy and Educational development in the Polish territories under Austrian, Russian and German Rule, 1850-1918.” in Tomiak, J.J. (ed.) *Schooling, Educational Policy and Ethnic Identity*. (Comparative Studies on governments and non-dominant ethnic groups in Europe: 1850-1940; v 1) Dartmouth: New York University Press. 1991. p 179.

<sup>11</sup> Hagen, William W. *Germans, Poles, and Jews: the Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772-1914*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. 1980. p 260.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Wonsler Tims, in his analysis of the origins and policies of the ultranationalist H-K-T Society even writes that “if any one policy paved the way more than the others for the Polish disaffection that cost Germany so dearly at the end of the World War, it was the school language policy pursued during Bülow’s chancellorship.” Tims, Richard W. *Germanizing Prussian Poland : the H-K-T Society and the struggle for the Eastern marches in the German Empire, 1894-1919*. New York: AMS Press. 1966. p 103.



them, and how they were translated into everyday practice. Special emphasis will be placed on how religion and language, or more accurately the defense of the use of Polish in religious instruction, made it possible to see these categories as markers of membership within a broader national group, not just for nationalists on both sides where this had long been the case, but for broad segments of the population.

### ***The role of the state and its policies***

The Germanization of schools in the 1870s was preceded by more than a century featuring the assertion of the Prussian state's authority in the educational sphere, and an often uncertain position for the future of the Polish language within it. Although it has been suggested that historians have generally overestimated the government's impact on school administration and instruction at the primary level prior to 1870,<sup>13</sup> Prussia does stand out among its contemporaries in asserting its early dominance, albeit in concert with religious authorities. The catalyst, as is often the case in the history of education reform, arose out of a crisis. Almost immediately after its humiliating defeat at the hands of Napoleon at the Battle of Jena, education became one of the centerpieces of the Prussian recovery plan. In 1807, a bureau of education was established, and within a decade it became a department in its own right, operating within the Ministry of Religion, Education and Public Health<sup>14</sup>. The following years saw the institution of the *Volksschule*, the introduction of provincial school boards, and legislation formally making the *Gymnasium* both a state institution and a prerequisite for university entrance. For different reasons, an early consensus emerged on the value of education to the state among early pan-

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<sup>13</sup> Lamberti, Marjorie. *State, society, and the elementary school in imperial Germany*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1989. p 37.

<sup>14</sup> Prussia, unlike France, never attempted to separate religion from public education, and in fact "God, King, and fatherland" were, according to Reisner, "regarded as a trinity, the members of which were more or less equal, equivalent, and interchangeable." Reisner, E. H. *Nationalism and education since 1789; a social and political history of modern education*. New York, The Macmillan Company. 1922. p 149.

German nationalists like Fichte, enlightened intellectuals like Alexander von Humboldt, and government officials like Baron von Altenstein, the first minister of education until his death in 1840.<sup>15</sup>

Altenstein was an important figure in upholding the principles of denominational schooling, and for Polish speakers, bilingual education and religious instruction in the mother tongue. In this respect he was in concordance with the original spirit of Friedrich Wilhelm III's proclamation to the Grand Duchy of Poznań in 1815, which assured his Polish subjects that "you will be incorporated in my monarchy without having to relinquish your nationality."<sup>16</sup> When a principal of a gymnasium in Poznań tried to limit the use of the Polish language in religious instruction seven years later, Altenstein issued a statement saying that "religion and language are the highest treasures of a nation...a government that acknowledges, respects, and values these may be sure that it will win its subjects' hearts."<sup>17</sup> However, in the years leading up to the Germanization policies of the 1870s, an uneasy balance between the promotion of the knowledge of German and respect for the teaching of Polish prevailed. It was one often disrupted by the overzealousness of *Oberpräsidenten* (provincial governors) who took advantage of their authority and exceeded ministerial guidelines.<sup>18</sup> Due to the low systemization of schools and the fact that educational regulations usually took the form of decrees rather than formal laws, practices at the provincial and local level varied and were dependent largely on the personalities and views held

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<sup>15</sup> In his famous addresses to the German nation, Fichte wrote that "If Germany is to be saved, the nation must be taken as the unit of social organization, Germany must realize its character and destiny, and through a conscious control of education, it must liberate all its potentialities – moral, intellectual, physical and vocational – for national service, that exists within the children of all its people." Quote cited in Wilds, E. H. *The foundations of modern education*. New York, Farrar & Rinehart. 1942. p 415.

<sup>16</sup> Quote cited in Hagen, William W. *Germans, Poles, and Jews: the Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772-1914*. p 79.

<sup>17</sup> Quote cited in Kulczycki, John J. *School strikes in Prussian Poland, 1901-1907 : the struggle over bilingual education*. Boulder: East European Monographs. 1981. p 4.

<sup>18</sup> Two noteworthy examples include Theodor von Schön, *Oberpräsident* of West Prussia (1816-1842) and Eduard Flottwell, *Oberpräsident* of Poznan (1830-1841). Flottwell, for instance, asserted that the goal of his policies was "the complete fusion of both nationalities...through the decisive prominence of German culture." *ibid* p 6-7.

by officials occupying different levels of authority. Abuse of such discretionary power by governors all the way down to the level of school inspectors was a typical source of controversy well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

A balanced perspective of the Germanization policies that began in the 1870s and continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century requires an awareness of several dimensions, not all of which were specifically in answer to the so-called “Polish Question.” The first can be seen as a continuation of the struggle that began over clerical control of education as early as the 1840s. Schoolteachers had begun then to agitate for better pay, freedom from inspection by religious authorities, and the social prestige that would come with higher professional standards and remuneration. German nationalists had also called for efforts to wrest control of schooling from clerical hands, a position expressed in the 1870s by the National Liberals. In this respect, the encouragement of interconfessional schooling and the passage of the School Inspection Law of 1872, which made all school inspectors servants of the state, was very much in keeping with classic *raison d’etat*. At least in theory, the inspection law applied to Catholics as well as to Protestants and animosity toward the new interconfessional schools being encouraged by the government was shared by Protestant and Catholic authorities alike.<sup>19</sup>

In conjunction with this assertion of state interest in education were attempts to introduce a “German” dimension to the curriculum at all levels, particularly through the teaching of history and literature.<sup>20</sup> The General Regulations issued by the Prussian Ministry of Education in October 1872 on the curriculum of the *Volksschule* called for the introduction of patriotic

<sup>19</sup> Lamberti, Marjorie. *State, society, and the elementary school in imperial Germany*. p 64-44.

<sup>20</sup> By 1897, when candidates for the baccalaureate were asked what the purpose of the study of history was, 80 percent responded “to exalt patriotism.” Quote cited in Albisetti, James. “The Debate of Secondary School Reform in France and Germany.” in Mèuller, D. K., F. K. Ringer, et al. *The Rise of the modern educational system : structural change and social reproduction, 1870-1920*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press. 1987. p 195.

elements in order to inspire loyalty to the state and devotion to the emperor.<sup>21</sup> In the 1880s, the introduction of German history and literature became part of a broader debate over the role and status of modern or realistically oriented *Realgymnasium* and *Oberrealschule* and the classically based, humanist education represented by the *Gymnasium*. In 1890, the national goals envisioned for the education system found quite explicit expression in the address made by Kaiser Wilhelm II to the Conference of Secondary School Reform:

It is our duty to educate young men to become young Germans, not young Greeks or Romans...We must make German the basis and German composition must be the center around which everything else revolves...There is another point which I should like to see more developed with us; that is the “National” in questions of history, geography, and heroic tradition.<sup>22</sup>

The goal of rallying all Germans to the national standard was temporarily challenged by the government’s campaign against Catholicism during the *Kulturkampf* “culture struggle” of the 1870s. In league with the National Liberals, Bismarck sought to counter the decentralizing threat posed by Catholic particularism, ultramontanism, and in the case of Polish Catholic priests, the use of religion to “Polonize” their parishioners. The May Laws of 1873, which placed the training and appointment of clergymen under state supervision, combined with the previous year’s regulations on school inspection made Catholics a special target for removal from these offices. But by targeting Catholicism, the government had elevated the importance of religious identification in general and provided all Catholics, German and non-German alike, with shared grievances and reasons to resist the government’s persecution. In linguistically mixed areas like Upper Silesia where there were large adherents to the Catholic faith, this only served to strengthen German and Polish Catholic cooperation through the Center Party, one that would

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<sup>21</sup> Kulczycki, John J. *School strikes in Prussian Poland*. p 15.

<sup>22</sup> Quote cited in Reisner, E. H. *Nationalism and education since 1789; a social and political history of modern education*. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1922. p 211.

endure for several decades.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps in recognition of the negative effect the *Kulturkampf* had on the state's wider agenda of exploiting German nationalism, Bismarck would later write to his ambassador to the Vatican in 1887 after the repeal of the May Laws that "I have always had the desire to deal with church affairs in the Polish-speaking parts of the country *separately*."<sup>24</sup>

Appropriately enough, Bismarck brings us to the education policies formulated by the government that *did* deal with the Polish-speaking parts separately. To be sure, both the School Inspection Laws of 1872 and the May Laws of 1873 had an especially negative effect on Polish Catholics, and Bismarck made no secret that this would be the case in rallying support for both these measures.<sup>25</sup> For the proposed inspection law, the "Iron Chancellor" resorted to an especially paranoid justification for school supervision in Prussian Poland where he claimed "the influence of the local clergy hinders the German language from spreading, as the Slavic and Romance people together with the Ultramontanes [are] trying to foster backwardness and ignorance, and to combat German culture, which is trying to spread enlightenment all over Europe."<sup>26</sup> After Catholic priests began to be reinstated to inspectorships and teaching positions during the period of rapprochement in the 1880s, fewer Polish Catholics were allowed to return in the predominately Polish areas of West Prussia and Poznań in comparison to the Rhine Province, Silesia and Westphalia. The majority of the new interconfessional schools, never

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<sup>23</sup> For a full account of the increasingly troubled relationship between Poles and the Center Party, see Bowersox, Jeffrey D. "Loyal sons of the Church and Fatherland? Center-Polish relations in Upper Silesia, 1871-1907." *Canadian Journal of History* Vol. 38, No. 2. August, 2003.

<sup>24</sup> Smith, Helmut Walser. *German nationalism and religious conflict: culture, ideology, politics, 1870-1914*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1995. p 185.

<sup>25</sup> For his National Liberal supporters, both the clergy and the Polish landowner represented retrograde elements of society that needed to be marginalized in order to strengthen the position of the peasantry. As Geoff Eley observes, officials with these political leanings were important players because "they staffed the apparatus of the *Kulturkampf* and provided the most consistent parliamentary supporters for the anti-Polish legislation." Eley, Geoff. "German Politics and Polish Nationality: The Dialectic of Nation Forming in the East of Prussia." *From Unification to Nazism: Reinterpreting the German Past*. London: Routledge. 1992. p 206.

<sup>26</sup> Bismarck would even claim during his negotiations with Pope Leo XIII in 1878 that the Polish priests, who were using Catholicism to nationalize the peasantry and were responsible for the polonization of over 30,000 Germans, was the real cause of the *Kulturkampf*. Trzeciakowski, Lech. *The Kulturkampf in Prussian Poland*. (translated from the Polish by Katarzyna Kretkowska) Boulder: East European Monographs. p 102, 119.

popular to begin with, were also located in these areas.<sup>27</sup> In these schools, as well as in school inspector positions, German Protestant teachers tended to be overrepresented, leaving little doubt that they were envisioned as serving a Germanizing function.<sup>28</sup>

Although there was an undeniable religious dimension to the school reforms (especially from the perspective of most Poles) language lay at the heart of the government's policy. The overall goal was to diminish the usage of Polish as both a subject and language of instruction at all levels, although regulations varied from province to province. For example, in Poznań, some early concessions were made to allow instruction in Polish, but by 1887 Polish was officially eliminated as a language of instruction at all levels, as it had been earlier in the other provinces. Due to the longstanding convention that religion should be learned in one's own mother tongue, religious instruction remained the one area where Polish was tolerated, although in the upper levels German was to be used to teach religion in both grammar and secondary schools as soon as knowledge of the language was considered sufficient. As a general rule, the teaching of Polish as a subject was admissible in cases only where it was needed to teach religion. Otherwise, it was prohibited within the standard curriculum, a prohibition that even extended into private lessons within the school after school hours.

The government measures were based in large part on the findings of an inspection tour of the schools in Prussian Poland conducted in 1872. Knowledge of German among Polish-speaking students, even in the high grades, was found to be extremely poor. Perhaps even more alarmingly in the eyes of the authorities, it was reported that many students from German Catholic families were becoming "Polonized," allegedly due to the influence of Polish Catholic priests using religion and their positions in schools for national purposes. Nor were German

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<sup>27</sup> By 1882, there were 200 interconfessional primary schools in West Prussian and 76 in Poznan. Lamberti, Marjorie. *State, society, and the elementary school in imperial Germany*. p 91.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid* p 112.

Catholics considered the only targets of the “Polonizing” threat at this time, as one anti-Polish newspaper headline in 1872 warned that “Polish agitation aims at Polonizing the Mazurians.”<sup>29</sup> Since the Mazurians were predominately Protestant and spoke Polish we can suspect that, language, rather than religion, was understood as their vulnerability to “Polonization.”

Although the policies begun in the 1870s represented a radical change of course from the previous status quo, it is important not to overestimate the government’s ability both before and after this period to implement its directives and turn policies into everyday reality. In this respect, it is worth recalling that Bismarck first had to relieve Heinrich von Mühler of his duties as Minister of Education before he could appoint the more enthusiastic Adalbert Falk (who had no prior experience in school administration) to carry out his agenda in 1872. Fully aware that a marginalization of Catholic and Polish presence in school inspection and instruction would pose insurmountable practical and logistical challenges for primary schools already overwhelmed by a shortage of qualified personnel, population growth, and popular demand, Mühler of course resisted. His replacement did not make these problems go away, particularly in areas with high concentration of Poles and Catholics like the Poznań Province, where shoddy schools and overcrowding made it, in the words of one historian, “the most impoverished and destitute school system in the Prussian state.”<sup>30</sup> Attempts to entice German instructors from outside of the region, or provide generous salary bonuses to Polish teachers willing to tow the government line, were often unable to ease the problem of overcrowding in classrooms.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Trzeciakowski, Lech. *The Kulturkampf in Prussian Poland*. p 121.

<sup>30</sup> Lamberti, Marjorie. *State, society, and the elementary school in imperial Germany*. p 109.

<sup>31</sup> Some statistics provided by Marjorie Lamberti will help to put the hopelessness of many teacher’s situation in the proper perspective. “In 1877 the school classes exceeding the “normal” (80 students) size numbered 869 in Posen and 448 in West Prussia; in 240 of these schools in Posen, there was a ratio of only one teacher per more than 150 pupils. School provisions for German Protestant children were better than those for the Polish Catholics. In 1879 the Posen district government reported that the average size in Catholic schools in five counties ranged from 97 to 136 children per teacher, but for Protestant schools the corresponding figures ranged from 36 to 79 children per teacher.” Lamberti, Marjorie. *State, society, and the elementary school in imperial Germany*. p 115

Moreover, as the government began to provide direct subsidies for the provision of schools and teacher's salaries in the 1880s, even this did little to further the goal of improving the level of instruction in Catholic schools, where the funds were needed most. The folly of this practice was summed up best in a letter written by a concerned citizen to the Minister of Education in 1892: "While the state government has given considerable sums for the establishment and equipment of Protestant schools, nothing has happened to improve and expand the Catholic schools, and they remain with conditions which make it impossible even for the most diligent teacher to instruct in the German language successfully."<sup>32</sup> Ironically, this complaint did not issue from a Catholic school official, but from Ferdinand von Janseman, who in two years time would be one of the co-founders of the nationalist pressure group, the Society for the Eastern Marches. Letters such as these notwithstanding, such structural and logistical problems were rarely used as explanations for the failure of the policy. Fingers were instead pointed at national agitators among the clergy and gentry, as well as the only bastion that still officially remained for the Polish language in primary schools: religious instruction. Not surprisingly, even this area became the target of Germanization in the early 1900s, and as we will find in the next section, it was the crossing of this line that occasioned the most active popular resistance in the form of school strikes.

Given the obvious shortcomings in the way the government went about putting its policies into practice, it is worth asking what the practitioners hoped to accomplish and what their understanding was of the overall situation. Officially, as we have already seen, justifications tended to take on a defensive tone or highlight the integrative benefits for Polish-speakers in learning the official language of the empire. The reality was of course far more complex. And just as attitudes toward the empire's Polish citizens and understandings of the "threat" they posed

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<sup>32</sup> Quote cited in Lamberti, Marjorie. *State, society, and the elementary school in imperial Germany*. p 128.



varied among chancellors and education ministers during these years, this was no less true among those occupying less powerful positions as mayors, provincial governors, teachers, inspectors, and members of local school boards.

Nevertheless, it is still possible to identify a few official and public discourses that motivated the government's policies and animated popular understandings of them, as well as pick up on how they seemed to change over time. The first was the view that too many allowances had been made in the past, and the whole Polish "problem" would have been solved long before had the usage of German in schools been strictly applied. National agitators from the gentry and clergy took the blame for taking advantage of German indulgence, and so the language decrees were seen as defensive measures to save not only German-speakers, but also the Polish-speaking peasantry, from being led astray from their natural loyalty to the state. A sense of "civilizing mission," reminiscent in both objectives and methods to that of state teachers in rural France also help explain the missionary zeal with which many school inspectors and instructors went about their work in Polish-speaking communities. A healthy dose of cultural chauvinism lay behind these endeavors. Although many would not go so far as to demote the status of the Polish language to a local "idiom," as Count Herbert Bismarck did during a speech in the Prussian upper house in 1902, there was no doubt a general sense that the German language was a means to liberate the Poles from the clutches of religious obscurantism and overcome their cultural "backwardness."<sup>33</sup> The depiction of the Poles in popular "eastern marches" literature or *Ostmarkenliteratur* also contributed to the sense of Polish cultural inferiority, which were often explained in racist terms.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Tims, Richard W. *Germanizing Prussian Poland*. p 134.

<sup>34</sup> For a brief discussion on this issue, and how it informed the the idea of "internal colonialism" see Ther, Philipp. "Imperial instead of national history: positioning modern German history on the map of European empires." in

Whereas the “civilizing mission” concept could appeal to a broader German cultural tradition, other discourses dealt more specifically to the national dimensions of the conflict, positing the idea of a broader struggle between Germans and Poles being waged over the land and schools of the so-called “Eastern Marches.” This view found expression most explicitly from partisans from the Society for the Eastern Marches (a nationalist pressure group founded in 1894 whose ranks by the 20th century included a significant percentage of civil servants and teachers) who never refrained from shouting the slogan that “nationality follows language!” Although it is important not to overestimate this group’s influence both in government circles and on the broader society, the framing of success and failure in education and in other spheres in which they had a special interest (landownership, Germanization of place names) had become a part of a broader trend of framing (and in many cases, glorifying) political, economic, social and international relations in terms of a national struggle.

Official policies outside the educational sphere, especially beginning in the 1880s, did much to contribute to the sense that a struggle of national proportions was being waged not only against a Polish national movement among the gentry and clergy, but also against the “Polishness” of the region itself. Largely in response to an unprecedented level of internal and external migration within the *Kaiserreich* and a Polish birthrate that was nearly double that of the Germans, we begin to find by the 1880s acts like the expulsion of 30,000 non-Prussian Poles and Jews (many of whom had settled in Prussia long before) as well the establishment of the Royal Colonization Commission, designed to encourage German settlement in the Eastern territories. The school’s failure to promote knowledge of German, which became one of the most important indicators of assimilation, no doubt contributed to the escalation of the government’s policies

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Alexei Miller and Alfred J. Rieber (eds.) *Imperial Rule*. Budapest: Central European University Press. 2004. p 56-61.

towards the Poles in the upcoming decades. The fact that the Poles proved to be a worthy competitor in the economic sphere and in purchasing land also contributed to the further radicalization of the government's policies. Various property and expropriation laws in subsequent years were designed to inhibit the economic impact of Polish lending and banking institutions, just as the Associations Act of 1908 sought to inhibit the usage of Polish during political meetings. The Germanization of primary and secondary education therefore took place within a broader political, economic, and social landscape that had grown increasingly hostile, not just to the traditional "enemies of the state" from the gentry and clergy, but to the very presence of Poles, the Polish language and culture, and especially during the *Kulturkampf* era, the religion to which most belonged.

### ***Polish responses***

The Prussian government's policies and their methods of implementation had a significant impact not only on the leaders and elites from Polish society, but also the broader population. This is not to deny the significance of internal developments - namely the effects of the "organic work" movement, growing economic strength and assertiveness of the Polish middle class and intelligentsia and corresponding decline in the role of the Polish gentry, and the vitality of the popular Polish press - all of which have been described elsewhere in greater detail and with more authority that this author could hope to claim.<sup>35</sup> Due to the interests and scope of this thesis, my concern rests primarily on the response of the general population, particularly among the Polish peasantry among whom the conception of Polish nationhood remained weak in comparison to religious identification well into the 20th century. Also of interest is the political and ideological struggle within the national movement that began during the decisive years of the

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<sup>35</sup> In addition to Hagen's monograph, another useful survey from the perspective of all three partitioned territories can be found in Wandycz, Piotr S. *The Lands of Partitioned Poland, 1795-1918*. Seattle: University of Washington Press. 1974.

1890s and early 1900s and the role this played in the general school strike of 1906-07, in which it has been estimated over 93,000 Polish students participated.<sup>36</sup>

Lack of documentary evidence makes it difficult to speak conclusively of the national sentiment felt among the Polish peasantry and working classes, however some conclusions may be drawn based on the patterns of response to the government's Germanization policies. The first is that identification with the Catholic faith remained strong and the status of the Polish language in the educational sphere was not seen as very important beyond its usage in a religious context. This is borne out by the fact that the early, and in many respects, quite extensive rounds of Germanization of primary and secondary schools that began in the 1870s did not occasion nearly as much protest as the government's treatment of Catholic priests. Parents were generally amenable, or at least ambivalent, to the prospect of their children learning German even if it came at the expense of Polish. Parental complaints instead centered on the fact that the Germanized curriculum left schools without enough qualified teachers to effectively teach their children, who were learning very little of either language.<sup>37</sup> It is worth recalling that overcrowding and the frequent adoption of "half-day schools" to accommodate demand meant that school effectiveness was limited no matter the language of instruction. One final indication of an apparent lack of concern with the Polish language beyond its usage in religion was shown by the fact that in the Bydgoszcz regency of Poznań as late as 1903, only 174 out of 336 *Volksschulen* elected to request supplementary Polish language lessons.<sup>38</sup> Granted, the reasons why this was the case are obscure, especially given the additional taxes such a request would require, but it is nevertheless a striking figure and seems to corroborate the broader trend outlined above.

<sup>36</sup> Kulczycki, John J. *School strikes in Prussian Poland*. p 202.

<sup>37</sup> Lamberti, Marjorie. *State, society, and the elementary school in imperial Germany*. p 116.

<sup>38</sup> Kulczycki, John J. *School strikes in Prussian Poland*. p 203.

We may also conclude that the peasants remained fairly loyal to the Prussian state, thanks in part to the traditional idea of *Kaisertreue* but also the conservative influence of the gentry and upper clergy among whom the appeal of separatism along a romantic or ethno-linguistic basis remained confined to a minority by the 1890s.<sup>39</sup> This can be seen most clearly in the preference to lodge protests in the form of petitions, organize meetings, or participate in other legal means of airing grievances to the state rather than adopting more revolutionary tactics of resistance. A general willingness within Polish society to work within the system was also reflected in the popularity of the “organic work” organizations like the Society for Folk Education, the Association of Folk Libraries and the Society for Popular Reading Rooms and many others like them appealing to different constituencies. The numerical results of these efforts are indeed impressive: by 1883 475 libraries had been established with 78,784 total volumes, and between 1880 and 1914 there were over 1,500 Polish reading rooms to cite two just two examples.<sup>40</sup> To be sure, these political and educational activities no doubt contributed to awareness of and identification with a broader Polish “nation” but it was of a socially and politically conservative type in which political autonomy, secession from the empire or unification with other partitions enjoyed little prominence.

However, in the final decades before the turn of the century the traditional role and influence of the gentry and upper clergy faced new challengers from the intelligentsia and middle classes, as well as from populist and socialist movements. The credibility of their leadership also took a major blow after the strategy of “loyalism” practiced by the so-called “court Poles”

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<sup>39</sup> Indeed, as Tomasz Kamusella argues, it was not until the 1890s that “the Polish estates’ early nineteenth-century project of re-establishing Poland as the nation-state within the pre-partition borders of Poland-Lithuania was replaced by the idea that the Polish nation-state should overlap with the territorial extent of the Polish-speakers, that is, the postulated Polish nation.” See Kamusella, Tomasz. “Upper Silesia 1870-1920: between region, religion, nation and ethnicity.”

<sup>40</sup> Miaso, Jozef. “Educational Policy and Educational development in the Polish territories under Austrian, Russian and German Rule, 1850-1918.” p 178. and Trzeciakowski, Lech. *The Kulturkampf in Prussian Poland*. p166.

representing the interests of the gentry and clergy, failed to gain adequate concessions from the Caprivi government in return. As Hagen describes in detail, this failure also shifted the political center of gravity from the government to the local level, where a broader political and ideological struggle within Polish society for mass support ensued.<sup>41</sup> It was in this context, with various political factions organizing and seeking popular support, that the Prussian government provided the issue – the Germanization of religious instruction – around which Poles from across Prussia and beyond could be mobilized and display an unprecedented show of solidarity.

The strikes that began in 1906 were not spontaneous nor immediately embraced by all segments of Polish society. They had in fact been predated by isolated instances of school strikes, most notably in the county of Wrzesnia which attracted national and international attention, but all had failed to gestate into a more widespread general strike. What changed was not only the organizational vitality of the various competing factions, but also the entrée of the National Democrats (a politically savvy nationalist group whose organization originated during the previous decade in Warsaw under the leadership of Roman Dmowski) and homegrown nationalist organizations like the *Straz* (Guard). For these groups, especially the National Democratic faction who glorified the idea of an uncompromising national struggle, their strategy was to seize upon the discontent that had been brewing for years and be ready when the new language regulations were enforced in 1906. As the National Democratic Newspaper *Kurjer Pzonanski* (Poznań Courier) made clear in 1906, this was understood as but the first step:

The most significant features of the school strike are its strong sense of civic awareness, determined will, energy, and stubbornness. These attributes of our populace today are battling for Polish as the language of instruction because in this case the language is dearly associated with the question of religion. These same attributes of our populace tomorrow will battle for Polishness as Polishness, without secondary considerations, and

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<sup>41</sup> Hagen, William W. *Germans, Poles, and Jews: the Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772-1914*. p 230.

with the same strength with which today they defend religious instruction in Polish.<sup>42</sup>

The press played a vital role in spreading awareness and encouraging parents and students to strike, even in some instances going so far as to print samples of “strike notes” that parents could copy and present to teachers when the school year began. Even so, support for the strike was uneven throughout Prussian Poland and dependent on local circumstances, especially in Upper Silesia where years of solidarity with the Center Party and hostility toward the nationalist organizations mitigated the strike’s effectiveness.<sup>43</sup> They enjoyed the most participation in Poznań and West Prussia, where over the course of 1906 and 1907 it is estimated approximately 1,600 schools and 93,000 students participated.<sup>44</sup>

The strike’s appeal was based on a combination of national and religious interests. “Where it was strong,” as Kulczycki describes in extensive detail, “one can usually detect the hand of the local priest, school board member, national activist, large landowner, or the members of the local socioeconomic elite.”<sup>45</sup> Also, thanks to the heavy-handedness of the authorities who refused to back down, the effects of the strike were felt by more than just the striking students. In addition to fines being levied on newspapers and striking students, non-striking siblings enrolled in the Gymnasiums were expelled, as were parents who held local offices. Even in one district, the strike compelled public houses to close at eight in the evening while the strike was going on.<sup>46</sup> It would therefore be safe to assume that all segments of society, from public officials to drunkards, newspaper editors to gymnasium students experienced the strike in some

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<sup>42</sup> Kulczycki, John J. *School strikes in Prussian Poland*. p 97.

<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, it is significant to note that the strike, as Bowersox describes in detail, did prove to be “The decisive moment in the collapse of Center-Polish co-operation.” The effect can be seen most clearly in the Polish county of Pless-Rybnik, where Center support plummeted from a high of 99 percent in 1892 to 10 percent in the 1907 Reichstag elections, leading for the first time to the election of a Polish party candidate. Bowersox, Jeffrey D. “Loyal sons of the Church and Fatherland? Center-Polish relations in Upper Silesia, 1871-1907.”

<sup>44</sup> Kulczycki, John J. *School strikes in Prussian Poland*. p 112.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid* p 151.

<sup>46</sup> Tims, Richard W. *Germanizing Prussian Poland*. p 98.

way, uniting classes and generations. By the conclusion of the strike in July 1907, it is estimated that the authorities removed 280 Poles from local offices, expelled 80 students from gymnasiums, sentenced 35 clergymen to a total of 20 months in jail and 45 months worth of imprisonment to newspaper editors, and handed out considerable fines.<sup>47</sup>

Although the strikes eventually failed to bring about a change in the government's Germanization policies, they did succeed in solidifying the already growing nexus between religious, linguistic and national identification. In summing up the significance of the strike, Kulczycki put it best when he wrote:

The Polish national movement had *penetrated* the lives of the masses of Prussian Poland to the point of rousing them to put up direct resistance to the Prussian government, something they had never done before. Through the strikes they *participated* in the affairs of Polish society more intensely than they had in the past. The risks they endured and the price they paid indicated that they *identified* their interests with those of Polish society. Parents and children joined the strike for a variety of reasons, but they soon embraced the religious and national values that were ostensibly at stake. Following the strike, there was an upsurge of popular support for Polish and cultural activities.<sup>48</sup>

## ***Conclusion***

Several conclusions may be drawn based on the policies the Prussian government pursued and the Polish response to them. The first is that the government policy was ineffective in using schools as an agent of Germanization, in large measure due, as we discovered above, to the inadequate means through which they were carried out. The resistance of Polish elites, their organizational capability, and geographic concentration in many areas no doubt contributed to their failure, but given the lack of funding, oversight, qualified teachers, and increasingly hostile atmosphere in which they were enacted, these policies were in many respects doomed from the start. In addition to the failure to provide adequate schooling and strike a more equitable balance in the funding of Protestant and Catholic schools in the region, there was the more general failure

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<sup>47</sup> *ibid* p 99.

<sup>48</sup> Kulczycki, John J. *School strikes in Prussian Poland*. p 218.



to provide adequate incentive to learn the language. Job opportunities in state and local offices were largely barred to Poles, and enrollment in secondary education was made increasingly difficult over time. Between 1902 and 1908 the number of Poles in secondary schools actually decreased, and in training colleges, where the Poles made up 60 percent of enrolled students in 1898, they accounted for barely 10 percent in 1908.<sup>49</sup> Polish schoolteachers who could prove their effectiveness in teaching German were provided with bonuses, but the government's increasingly radical requirements and the alienation that following them would entail no doubt limited their appeal, especially in areas with large Polish majorities. Nevertheless, it is worth recalling that the teacher in Wrzesnia, whose excessive resort to corporal punishment toward Polish students unwilling to speak German famously sparked a mob's discontent, was in fact Polish, a fact which earned him the ire of one angry mother who threatened to "scratch out" his eyes for selling "children's souls for a hundred marks."<sup>50</sup> The mother's reference to the "selling of souls" no doubt reflects again the religious dimensions that the conflict over language in schools had taken.

In terms of the policies themselves, we can also note a definite drift from a policy claiming to be defensive and more in keeping with the concept of acculturation or integration to one which was increasingly hostile to the presence of the Polish language in all its forms both inside and outside the schoolhouse. The apparent lack of success in teaching the German language, which essentially became the chief indicator of progress, also no doubt contributed to the aggressive drift of the policies in other spheres, as well as the final attack at the turn of the century on the last area where Polish was still tolerated in schools, namely religious instruction. In this respect, the Germanization of schools can be seen as contributing to, and reflecting,

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<sup>49</sup> Miaso, Jozef. "Educational Policy and Educational development in the Polish territories under Austrian, Russian and German Rule, 1850-1918." p 178.

<sup>50</sup> Kulczycki, John J. *School strikes in Prussian Poland*. p 51.

broader societal trends in which nationality along linguistic, ethnic, and racial terms was ascendant. The most visible manifestation of this trend was of course the rise of nationalist groups and organizations like the Society of the Eastern Marches, however it is important not to overestimate their impact on the government's policies or that they spoke for broad segments of the German-speaking population, both locally or across the empire. Religious identification remained a significant hurdle to a more ethnonational conception of German identity.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, economic interests quite often trumped national ones, as shown by the willingness of landowners to continue to hire Poles from abroad for seasonal labor as well as sell their lands to Poles when they made them the best offer.<sup>52</sup>

All of the above are really just glimpses of a wider situation in which the shift to a nationalist worldview was by no means absolute and still subject to contestation over the relevance of various social categories and boundaries. A similar uncertainty extended to the official level, most notably in cases where imperial, estate and economic interests often trumped strictly "national" ones. Hence we find Caprivi willing to court the Poles in order to gain passage of Army and Navy Bills of considerable importance to the empire; hence we also find the government reluctant to exercise, if not pass, the radical expropriations bill before the war, as conservatives viewed it as a threat to right of property and a drift toward "state socialism." Foreign policy considerations also no doubt tempered the government's enthusiasm in alienating its Polish citizens, as they were seen as an important factor in the event of a war with Russia,

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<sup>51</sup> This is illustrated most clearly in the conflict between the Society for the Eastern Marches and the Protestant League. Both shared an anti-Polish orientation but the former group believed that "the absurd idea that posits the equivalence of Protestant and German as well as Polish and Catholic can be destroyed." This excerpt is taken from an issue of the Society for the Eastern Marche's official newspaper, *Die Ostmark* date April, 1898. Cited in Smith, Helmut Walser. *German nationalism and religious conflict: culture, ideology, politics, 1870-1914*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1995. p 183.

<sup>52</sup> For a balanced account of the so-called "struggle for the soil," see Tims, Richard W. *Germanizing Prussian Poland..*

beginning especially in the 1890s.<sup>53</sup>

Nevertheless, the government was also quite willing to exploit German nationalism when necessary and displayed an increasing willingness to identify state interests with national ones. As the largest, and theoretically most threatening non-German group, the empire's Polish citizens were from the beginning convenient "Others" with which to justify the state's expansion of control in the educational sphere and in other spheres of society. Although nominally directed at the "disloyal" elements of Polish society from the clergy and the gentry, such a distinction was rarely made in rhetoric or in practice.

In many respects, the Polish patterns of response mirrored the increasingly radical policies pursued by the government authorities. It is worth recalling the fact that the initial rounds of Germanization of schools in the 1870s, which primarily affected primary and secondary education at the upper levels, occasioned little protest save a few petitions and rallies organized by Polish leaders from the gentry and middle classes most directly impacted by them. However, the government's offensive against their religious leaders did leave an important legacy as the spectacle of hundreds of priests being arrested, and the closing down of the seminaries and archdioceses in many areas for lack of a priest no doubt created a lasting image in the minds of many Poles of a government hostile to them and their religion. Furthermore, outside the religious sphere, the empire's agrarian policies in the following two decades only served, as Tims describes in detail, to "multiply the common interests of the Polish landowner, the Polish peasant and the Polish business man."<sup>54</sup>

The government's encroachment on the language of religious instruction only reinforced these unifying trends. By attacking the two "treasures" as Altenstein predicted, the result was

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<sup>53</sup> For an interesting discussion of Kaiser Wilhelm II's views of the Poles, Russia, and the empire, see Rohl, J.C.G. "A Document of 1892 on Germany, Prussia and Poland. *The Historical Journal*. Vol. 7, No. 1. 1964. p 143-149.

<sup>54</sup> Tims, Richard W. *Germanizing Prussian Poland*. p 15.

not only disloyalty, but due to these broader social and economic changes, the nationalization of collective understanding of them.

## Chapter 2: Russification and the Estonians

Russification in the late imperial period remains controversial in many circles, but a rather broad scholarly consensus appears to have emerged in at least two respects. First, analysis of official and bureaucratic discourse have confirmed that the word “nation” remained a vague social category and that various markers, including language religion, class, or alphabet were used individually or in combination as indications of it. From regional studies focusing on the western provinces,<sup>1</sup> the Baltic provinces and Finland,<sup>2</sup> and the Volga Region,<sup>3</sup> we find variations on the same theme: a broad range of often conflicting understandings of nationhood and various social categories being emphasized or deemphasized as significant. This is hardly surprising considering the relative novelty of the concept, not to mention the sheer diversity of the empire. Moreover, beyond official and public understandings of the “nation,” similar points could also be made on understandings of the empire itself. As Robert Geraci has aptly put it, “at a time of divergent opinion in Russia, different conceptions of the empire – confessional, administrative, national, dynastic, cultural, political, linguistic, and racial (separately and in various combinations) – competed fiercely for precedence.”<sup>4</sup>

Many scholars are also in agreement that the central government never adopted systematic, coherent or consistently applied policies toward the ethnic groups of the empire on

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore Weeks has written numerous monographs and articles on this subject. See especially: *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1914*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press. 1996. and “Russification: Word and Practice, 186-1914.” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*. Vol. 148, No. 4. December, 2004. Two articles appearing in the journal *Kritika* also deal specifically with this region. See Dolbilov, Mikhail. “Russification and the Bureaucratic Mind in the Russian Empire’s Northwestern Region in the 1860s.” *Kritika: Explorations of Russian and Eurasian History*. Vol. 5, No. 2. Spring 2004. p 245-71. Also in this issue, Staliunas, Darius. “Did the Government Seek to Russify Lithuanians and Poles in the Northwest Region after the Uprising of 1863-64?”

<sup>2</sup> The standard text on Russification in this region remain the articles collected in Thaden, Edward C. (ed) *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1981.

<sup>3</sup> Dowler, Wayne. *Classroom and Empire*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. 2001. Geraci, R. P. *Window to the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Geraci, R. P. *Window to the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* p 27.

an individual or collective basis. In his study of Russification in the Western Provinces and the Kingdom of Poland, Theodore Weeks resists the usage of the term “nationality policy” on the grounds that it “seems far too definite a term for the confused, disparate, and uncoordinated actions of the Russian administration vis-à-vis its non-Russian subjects.”<sup>5</sup> Given the seriousness in which the imperial authorities viewed the threat posed by Poles to the integrity of the empire, the failure to formulate a consistent policy is all the more surprising. To help account for this, it may be worth recalling, as Pearson does in an article on Russification in a different context, that the government at this time never saw the need to establish a “nationalities bureau” or appoint an official in charge of coordinating policies toward the empire’s nationalities as the Bolsheviks eventually did.<sup>6</sup>

All of the above is not to deny that national considerations did not enter into the calculus of the imperial authorities, or that it failed to act or pursue policies according to their own understandings of it. *Narodnost*, or according to one English translation, “nationality,” did, after all, form the third point of the famous trinity of “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality” proposed by education minister Sergey Uvarov as forming the guiding principles of the empire. However, as this chapter will illustrate, the various groups represented by this trinity, that is the Orthodox Church, the dynastic state, and the “Russian nation” quite often worked at cross-purposes with each other and found their interests in misalignment. In the case of the latter two especially, as Ronald Suny has argued, “the imperial tended to thwart, if not subvert, the national, just as the national worked to erode the stability and legitimacy of the state.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Weeks, Theodore R. : *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1914*. p 5.

<sup>6</sup> Pearson, Raymond “Privileges, Rights, and Russification.” in Olga Crisp and Linda Edmondson (eds.) *Civil rights in imperial Russia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1989.

<sup>7</sup> Suny, Ronald G. “The Empire Strikes Out: Imperial Russia, ‘National’ Identity, and Theories of Empire” in Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (eds.) *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2001. p 56.

So we are left to conclude, as Alexey Miller has recently argued, that we should think more in terms of “Russifications” in the plural rather than “Russification” in the singular.<sup>8</sup> Along the same lines, Andreas Kappeler has recently wrote that the study of Russification requires us to take into account “different perspectives and the different regional, imperial and international contexts of Russian policy.”<sup>9</sup> It may take the form of “administrative” or “cultural” Russification as Thaden has proposed, but even in these cases the actual objectives of the policies and practices need to be qualified depending on the situation. On the issue of cultural Russification, which is of particular interest to this study, Geraci has written that it would be best to think in terms of a continuum along two extremes that aim, on the one hand, for total linguistic and cultural assimilation, and on the other, for more modest integration with the imperial state. Along these lines, he contends, most policies fell somewhere in the middle and “was far from being a simple question of whether or not.”<sup>10</sup>

With these perspectives in mind, this chapter will explore the Russification of primary and secondary education in the Baltic Provinces of Estland and Livland, with special emphasis on its impact on the Estonian-speaking peoples of this region. In this case, the policy goals remained ambiguous in the sense that Geraci proposes, subject to change over time, and was in fact of benefit to the non-dominant group in many ways. Moreover, it is a situation that involves a number of different groups and actors, most notably the Baltic Germans, the Russian government, and the Lutheran and Orthodox Church. But before beginning an analysis of the state’s policies, a rough demographic sketch of the two main groups that served as the target of Russification may be in order.

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<sup>8</sup> Miller, Alexey. “Russification or Russifications?” in *The Romanov Empire and Nationalism*. (Forthcoming from Central European University Press.)

<sup>9</sup> Kappeler, Andreas. “The Ambiguities of Russification.” *Kritika: Explorations of Russian and Eurasian History*. Vol. 5, No. 2. Spring 2004. p 296.

<sup>10</sup> Geraci, R. P. *Window to the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia*. p 9.

The Baltic Germans made up the ruling elite of the provinces of Estland, Livland and Kurland, part of the Russian empire since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. These territories enjoyed a wide degree of political and cultural autonomy and over the years Baltic Germans began to fill in great numbers the empire's military and civil service. Baltic society was divided according to a rigid ethnic and social hierarchy consisting of German landowners and a peasantry speaking local dialects of Estonian and Latvian. The Estonian-speaking population was located in Estland and the northern parts of Livland. Serfdom was abolished in the region shortly after the Napoleonic Wars, but the feudal arrangement between German landowner and Estonian peasant remained largely intact until Estonian landownership started to become more prevalent in the 1860s. Although most Estonians were Lutheran like the Baltic Germans, the Russian Orthodox Church began to conduct missionary work in the region during the 1830s. When worsening economic conditions were combined with vague promises of free land, a movement in northern Livland began in the 1840s which resulted in the conversion of approximately 100,000 Lutheran peasants to Orthodoxy (it estimated that 65,000 were Estonian).<sup>11</sup> Since the promised land did not follow, interest in the religion soon waned among converts who were motivated by material rather than spiritual reward and the status of these "reconverts" became an important issue during the period of Russification in the 1880s. In 1881, the population of the Baltic Germans stood at approximately 180,423<sup>12</sup> while the Estonian-speaking population was 812,000, with over 90 percent living in the countryside.<sup>13</sup>

### ***The role of the state and its policies***

A proper understanding of the imperial state's Russification of primary and secondary

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<sup>11</sup> Haltzel, Michael H. "The Baltic Germans." in Thaden, Edward C. (ed) *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1981. p 123.

<sup>12</sup> Haltzel, Michael H. "The Baltic Germans." p 150.

<sup>13</sup> Raun, Toivo U. "The Estonians." in Thaden, Edward C. (ed) *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1981 p 296-297.



schools in the Baltic Provinces in the mid-1880s requires an awareness of the broader historical context in which they occurred. Attempts to integrate the Baltic provinces politically, administratively, and economically within the empire had already begun during the reign of Alexander II. The reforms of the 1860s affecting the rest of the empire did not automatically apply to the Baltics, and the following two decades saw various steps to gradually make these lands an integral part of the “Russian family” as the tsar told the Baltic German representatives in Riga in 1867.<sup>14</sup> Also spurred on by concerns over peasant unrest in the Baltics and the integrity of the empire’s borderlands in general after the uprising of 1863, the reforms mainly targeted land ownership, peasant self-government, reform of the judiciary and municipalities, and the further use of Russian in affairs of state and administration. The reforms were not intended to disrupt the status quo too drastically (by, for example, introducing zemstvos reforms, which were never established in the Baltic area during the tsarist regime) and were geared toward adapting to local conditions as much as possible.

This held true in the realm of education reform. Since the Russian language was understood as one means of uniting the provincial governments and its peoples to the empire, efforts were made to require increased instruction of Russian as a subject in the secondary schools, teaching seminaries, and universities. Village schools were also required to include some Russian instruction in the curriculum, in part due to concerns raised during the 1860s (probably not personally shared by the tsar) that village schools were being used to “Germanize” the Estonians and Latvians.<sup>15</sup> The overall strategy was to introduce the Russian language in

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<sup>14</sup> Thaden, Edward C. “The Russian Government.” in Thaden, Edward C. (ed) *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1981. p 33.

<sup>15</sup> One catalyst was a sermon delivered in 1864 by the Superintendent-General of the Lutheran Church in Livland calling for the Germanization of the Latvians and Estonians so that “these fragments of peoples vanishing from history” may be brought “to an equal footing of nationality with their masters, like the religious equality they now enjoy.” This was seized upon by Russian nationalists in the press like Mikhail Katkov, and eventually led to the superintendent’s resignation. Quote cited in Haltzel, Michael H. “The Baltic Germans.” p 125 .

existing schools gradually and to offer more and better opportunities to learn the language by establishing new elementary and secondary schools as well as teacher training institutions. The Orthodox schools, where instruction was in the local languages but Russian was also emphasized, were also provided with funding to improve their quality and attractiveness. By 1884, they accounted for 315 out of a total 1,612 rural elementary schools in Estland and northern Livland.<sup>16</sup> A positive incentive to learn Russian was also added by reducing the military service requirement by two years for graduates who demonstrated a satisfactory competency in the Russian language. Since universal conscription was decreed in 1874, this provided no small incentive, and may help account for the fact that by the 1880s, 13.4 percent of the Estonian pupils enrolled in Orthodox schools in Estland and Livland were Lutheran.<sup>17</sup>

Radical proposals to Russify more thoroughly the existing schools and place them under the administration and supervision of the Ministry of Education (as the Orthodox schools had been since 1873) were resisted.<sup>18</sup> Although officially a part of the empire's Dorpat Educational Region, primary, secondary, and higher education schools remained until the 1880s under the control of the Baltic German landowners and the Lutheran church. The wellborn typically attended private schools, while the public school system was composed of municipal elementary schools (mainly for German students) village and township schools (catering to the Estonian and Latvian population) and gymnasia (also overwhelmingly German). The village schools were maintained by peasant organizations and the manor lords, and were staffed by instructors trained in Lutheran teachers' seminaries.<sup>19</sup> This system, so long displaying a German orientation and very much designed as a means of social control, would prove difficult for the Russian language

<sup>16</sup> Raun, Toivo U. "The Estonians." p 315.

<sup>17</sup> Thaden, Edward C. "The Russian Government." p 50.

<sup>18</sup> Baltic schools remained under the loose jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior until 1886.

<sup>19</sup> Haltzel, Michael H. "The Baltic Germans." p 120.

to crack, mainly in the upper levels. A combination of resistance (especially in Dorpat University) a shortage of teachers qualified to teach Russian effectively, and lack of funding to establish new schools probably accounted for much of the slow progress in learning Russian during these years. Nevertheless, the introduction of four Russian secondary schools in Reval and Narva during this period no doubt opened new opportunities for Estonian students, whose only option in the past was to attend German secondary schools in small numbers and basically assimilate into the German culture.<sup>20</sup>

Although Alexander II and his advisors maintained a positive or realistic perspective on the Baltic Germans, nationalist polemics in the public sphere during the 1860s began to call for the mobilization of the state and the Orthodox Church to defend the local peasantry from “Germanization” and abolish some of the Baltic Germans’ special rights and privileges. The Prussian conquests did little to cool the growing criticism of the Baltic German’s treatment of the peasantry, the highlight being a very public written exchange between the Russian nationalist and Slavophil Iurii Samarin and the Baltic German historian and chauvinist, Carl Schirren. For Alexander’s part, he viewed the Prussian victories in a positive light, perhaps partly due to his mother’s Prussian origins, but more significantly because a Prussian victory meant a French defeat and the eventual undoing of the disastrous terms of the Treaty of Paris of 1856. Such perspectives from St. Petersburg would change drastically with Alexander II’s assassination in 1881 and the ascendance of his son, Alexander III.

Given the nature of the political system, it is important not to underestimate the role that individual personality played, especially in the person of the tsar. In a two volume study tracing the symbolic and ceremonial representation of the Romanov dynasty, Richard Wortman proposed that the presentation or “scenarios” of political power rested on the interplay between

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<sup>20</sup> Raun, Toivo U. “The Estonians.” p 316.

two overarching myths: the “European” and the “national.” The European myth, to borrow Wortman’s words, “expressed the motifs of empire and conquest” and was associated with the word *Rossiia*, while the “national” expressed a connection to the ethnic Russian heartland and its people and was associated with the word *Rus*.<sup>21</sup> The ascendance of Alexander III to the throne inaugurated a scenario of power more unabashed in its grounding of imperial authority on the latter dimension, that is in national symbols and imagery.

To remarkable extent, the son was very much a mirror image of his father in his obsession with authentic or “true Russians” and “Russianness,” his devotion to the interests of the Orthodox church, his uncompromising stances on state centralization, and his Germanophobia. Where the father sent a telegram of congratulations after the Prussian victory in 1870, the son wrote letters to friends warning that “one has to think seriously of our native land and that soon the filthy Prussians will reach her” and that “sooner or later we are bound to feel the power of Germany on our own shoulders.”<sup>22</sup> His willingness, along with the willingness of the men he surrounded himself with like Interior Minister D.A. Tolstoi, Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod K.P. Pobedonostsev, and Education Minister I.D. Delianov, to identify the state’s interest more closely with that of the “nation” and religion help explain the Russification campaigns of the 1880s, and the reason why they remained somewhat short-lived.<sup>23</sup> He was also no doubt influenced, as were many in imperial service, by the anti-German polemics in the nationalist press.

Following an inspection tour of the Baltic provinces in 1882, a series of reforms of the courts, police, provincial administration and the school system were introduced. The

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<sup>21</sup> Wortman, Richard. *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1995. p 6-7.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid* p 185.

<sup>23</sup> This episode has even characterized them as an “abortive experiment.” See Thaden, Edward C. “The Russian Government.”

Russification of primary and secondary schools was implemented gradually but steadily between 1885 and 1893. In 1885, Russian became a compulsory subject for all primary and secondary schools where it was still not included in the curriculum, and in the following year, all Baltic schools were centralized under the jurisdiction and supervision of the Ministry of Education. In 1887, Russian replaced Estonian and Latvian as the language of instruction for all subjects except religious instruction and church singing. Instruction in the mother tongue was permitted in the lower two grades until 1893.<sup>24</sup> The Russification of instruction also extended to all the German urban elementary schools, secondary schools, and private schools. However, rather than continue to maintain their gymnasia with a Russified curricula, the Livland and Estland diets elected to close them, although their private schools remained open in a Russified form. The final blow came in 1893 when the language of instruction and name of Dorpat University were Russified and it lost its former autonomy. Both the town and the university located within it were given the name Iur'ev, inspired by an 11<sup>th</sup> century Russian fortress of the same name once found in the vicinity.

Support from Alexander III and sympathetic provincial governors also invigorated the activities of the Orthodox Church in the region. These ranged from symbolic gestures like the construction of the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral on a site atop the Domberg in Reval (present-day Tallinn) over the local government's objections, to more active efforts to proselytize among the local peasantry and persecute Lutheran priests for administering to Orthodox Estonian "reconverts."<sup>25</sup> Behind these efforts, as one provincial governor expressed to the procurator of

<sup>24</sup> Haltzel, Michael H. "The Baltic Germans." p. 169.

<sup>25</sup> For an extended discussion of the symbolic dimensions that the construction of Orthodox churches throughout the empire took on under the reign of Alexander III, see Wortman, Richard. *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy* p 254. The history of Estonian conversions into the Orthodox fold, as has been already mentioned, dates back to the 1840s when it was believed that adoption of the state's official religion may translate into economic or land gains. Hope was also renewed during the 1880s for similar reasons, but failed to produce a movement on the scale of the previous one. In many cases, such "conversions" remained largely superficial and

the Holy Synod in 1886, was the hope that Orthodoxy would not only drive a wedge between the Estonians and Lutheranism, but also hasten their unification with the “great Russian family.”<sup>26</sup> While it is highly questionable that religion could have acted as a gateway to further assimilation as the authorities hoped, it became largely a moot point due to the low success rate in attracting Estonian converts. Between 1881 and 1897 the Orthodox Estonian population in Estland increased by 3.9 percent, while in Livland, there was growth of less than 1 percent over a fifty year period prior to 1897.<sup>27</sup>

Although the Russification of the education system was quite thorough (although not as thorough as the German case since the principle of religious instruction in the mother tongue was always respected by the authorities) there were several factors limiting its effectiveness in practice. First, there were very few school inspectors in the region to ensure compliance. In 1891, there were only ten inspectors for all three provinces, with some responsible for as many as 400 schools. Not surprisingly, years would often go by between school inspections.<sup>28</sup> This would not be a major problem had it not been the fact that there remained a shortage of teachers qualified to instruct in Russian, especially in rural areas where Estonians accounted for approximately 70 percent of the village teachers. Taking into account that school teachers were among the most active strata in the Estonian national movement, it would be safe to assume that many failed to fully follow the education ministry’s mandate.<sup>29</sup>

Further complicating the picture was the government’s continued reliance on the local Baltic German landowners and peasant populations to fund the schools. In cases where schools

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many returned back to the Lutheran fold; an illegal act according to the state and the Orthodox church, for whom apostasy is strictly forbidden.

<sup>26</sup> Raun, Toivo U. “The Estonians.” p 325.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*

<sup>28</sup> *ibid* p 317.

<sup>29</sup> Hroch, Miroslav. *Social preconditions of national revival in Europe : a comparative analysis of the social composition of patriotic groups among the smaller European nations.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1985. p 85.

were not closed entirely, landowners would decrease funding and maintenance, which in tandem with the decline in the quality of instruction no doubt contributed to the decline in overall enrollment. This helps explain why in Estland between 1886 and 1892, enrollment actually dropped from 25,646 to 20,565.<sup>30</sup>

The final factor limiting the effectiveness of the Russified school system was the availability of alternatives. The Baltic Germans had several possibilities; a few could go to secondary schools in Germany or one of the six located in Moscow and St. Petersburg. A great many pursued their secondary studies in unofficial instructional circles run from private homes. The Estonians had fewer options, but since education was not compulsory within the empire, many were educated in their homes or not at all. Home schooling in fact enjoyed a long tradition in Estonian culture, and may explain why, despite the decline in enrollment, the literacy rate, already high in 1881 with 95.8% of all 14 year-olds, actually increased to 96.6% of all 10 year-olds in 1897.<sup>31</sup>

The government's support of the Orthodox Church, and its abilities to act as an agent of Russification should also not be overestimated. Influential circles within the Senate, State Council and Committee of Ministers were less than enthusiastic about the prospect of undermining property rights in order to build new churches on expropriated land or in renewing the persecution of Lutheran pastors, which ended when Nicholas II ascended the throne. Even the firmly devout Alexander III did not support the more aggressive tactics of the Orthodox brotherhoods to proselytize the Estonians and Latvians. For instance, in 1886 we find him responding to one energetic proposal to gain Latvian converts by saying that "all this is like some kind of Orthodox propaganda; I do not allow that this is a good thing. The movement to

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<sup>30</sup> Raun, Toivo U. "The Estonians." p 317.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*

Orthodoxy must be spontaneous, on the personal initiative of the Latvians, without any pressure of the government.”<sup>32</sup>

This leads us to the important question of what the objectives were behind these policies and how energetically the government pursued them. Clearly, the measures taken had a centralizing element designed to integrate Baltic schools more firmly within the Ministry of Education. Moreover, the continued weakness in the knowledge and usage of Russian, especially among the educated classes, was also seen as barrier to efficient bureaucratic and administrative communication within the empire. To these official concerns must also be added the symbolic dimension of the government’s insistence (and the Baltic German resistance) to learning Russian. There is no doubt that a sense of cultural superiority informed the worldview of the German nobility and educated classes, and in this respect it is interesting to note the role that the idea of “maturity” had long played in official and public discourse. As early as the 1830s, when similar complaints were raised by Education Minister Uvarov over the Baltic German refusal to learn Russian or implement reforms, he remarked that “they do not perceive that Russia has grown up.”<sup>33</sup> Maturity also played an important role in the insults exchanged in the 1860s, as shown by Schirren’s rejoinder to Samarin in 1869 that “no, your people is not mature and not worthy of ruling over us...chain up your instinct and teach it to control itself...”<sup>34</sup> A sense of aggrieved pride, felt at the level of the tsar and resonating down through the imperial bureaucracy, can therefore account for some of the extremities that Russification entailed in practice, which went well beyond the need to better instill knowledge of Russian among the Baltic German officials and ruling classes.

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<sup>32</sup> Thaden, Edward C. “The Russian Government.” p 69.

<sup>33</sup> Whittaker, Cynthia H. *The origins of modern Russian education: an intellectual biography of Count Sergei Uvarov, 1786-1855*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press. 1984. p 202.

<sup>34</sup> Haltzel, Michael H. “The Baltic Germans.” p 132.



Whereas a mixture of inferiority complex and a sense of pride in “Russianness” may have informed attitudes toward the Baltic Germans, the opposite could be said to be true of the Estonian-speaking populations. Official perspectives toward this group appear to be based on a mixture of ignorance and alarm that Lutheranism and the German language would eventually “Germanize” the local population. They tended to see the Estonians more as passive objects of assimilation, with those who spoke the Estonian language eventually becoming marginalized within the Russian or German fold, depending on whose gravitational pull was stronger. Although “denationalization” of the Estonians may have been seen as the eventual consequence of the policies, they should therefore be seen more in terms of a defensive measure against German influence and a desire to promote the state language. Moreover, we may interpret the government’s willingness to allow religious instruction in the mother tongue as an indication that Russian acculturation rather than assimilation was the overriding goal. A lack of concern over the threat the Estonians posed no doubt also lay behind the reason why very few inspectors and very little funding was devoted to fully implementing the Russification policies of the 1880s, which continued in the education sphere through the reign of Nicholas II. It would only be after the Revolution in 1905 that the Estonians would protest the Russified elementary schools, and beginning in 1906 the establishment of private schools offering Estonian as the language of instruction was made legal, and in the coming years, concessions made in allowing instruction in Estonian in the first two years of schooling.

### ***Estonian responses***

Although nine out of ten Estonians lived in rural areas on the eve of the Russification in the 1880s, the previous decades had seen some gains in landownership and the growth of a small lower-middle class in Baltic towns and cities. Like the patterns followed by many of the so-

called “small nations” or “non-historic nations,” in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, identification with an Estonian nationality remained in the beginning confined to a small educated minority. Given the rigid ethnic and social divides and the fact that various written forms of the Estonian language only began to be formalized by Baltic German scholars in the 1830s and 1840s, it is not surprising that most Estonian-speaking peoples until the 1850s typically referred to themselves as *maarahvas* or “people of the country” and others as *saks* which typically meant “German” but could refer to any individual (including Estonian) who spoke German or had acquired some education.<sup>35</sup> The overall education level of the Estonians improved by a surge in the construction of Lutheran schools in rural areas between 1835 and 1860, in which time the number jumped in Estland from 47 to 230, while in Livland the increase (from 393 to 496) was less drastic.<sup>36</sup>

This surge in schooling would be pivotal in the Estonian national “awakening” of the 1860s and 1870s. It is during this period that we find the beginnings of a period of “patriotic agitation” where we find resistance in certain educated circles to identification with the Baltic German dominant culture, as well as the formation of Estonian agricultural and cultural organizations like the Estonian Literary Society and the Estonian Alexander School movement. This was very much a national movement of the “integrated” type described by Hroch,<sup>37</sup> based on ethno-linguistic and social criteria in which an educated elite played a small role and most of the active participation was among the growing number of rural landowners and above all a large group of village schoolteachers, who according to Hroch’s research formed the “largest group of

<sup>35</sup> Raun, Toivo U. “The Estonians.” p 293.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*, 294.

<sup>37</sup> Smith, Hroch, Miroslav. *Social preconditions of national revival in Europe : a comparative analysis of the social composition of patriotic groups among the smaller European nations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1985. p 27.

Estonian patriots.”<sup>38</sup>

Timing, in many respects, therefore proved to be everything in shaping the Estonian response to the Russification policies of the 1880s. Had it not been preceded by two decades of Estonian educational and cultural activities, spearheaded mainly by a growing number of peasant landowners and village schoolteachers, the Russian language may have ultimately supplanted the Estonian “dialect” as many Russian bureaucrats no doubt expected. In retrospect such expectations may seem illusory, but at the time many administrators saw the policies being pursued in France and Germany as evidence that states could adopt such measures to achieve this purpose.<sup>39</sup> And as we will discover below, there is ample evidence that many Estonians began learning the language quite well and took advantage of the new opportunities that the Russification of schools offered.

There is a tendency to over-represent in the historical record the activists and leaders of national movements and ignore the fact that, as Tivo Raun rightfully acknowledges “some continued to assimilate willingly to German or Russian culture while others adopted a cosmopolitan outlook or remained lukewarm to the idea of Estonian nationalism.”<sup>40</sup> For many Estonian-speaking students fortunate enough to gain an adequate knowledge of Russian, the displacement of Baltic German hegemony in secondary and higher education opened up unprecedented career opportunities within the Baltic civil service and the Russian empire. A recent study completed on the career patterns of civil servants in Revel has found that the number of ethnic Estonians increased from 4 (2 percent of the total number of civil servants) in

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<sup>38</sup> *ibid* p 82.

<sup>39</sup> Thaden cites one report on the Baltic German schools prepared in 1902 in which it was argued that Russia was following this very pattern. In this administrator’s case however, he conceived of the government’s goals more in terms of state interests, claiming that it was necessary for the population to participate in “the common national life and culture.” Thaden, Edward C. “The Russian Government.” p 72.

<sup>40</sup> Raun, Toivo U. “The Estonians.” p 291.

1871 to 442 (approximately 50 percent of the total) in 1897.<sup>41</sup> Nor did those with a higher education remain in Estland or Livland, as shown by the fact that by 1915 nearly 40 percent of Estonians of this category lived in other parts of the empire. Such tendencies among the educated elites are clear indicator of the successes of the Russified school system, and one of the reasons why we find very little organized resistance to Russification.

We may also conclude that the government's willingness to allow religious instruction in the mother tongue also served to temper any potential resistance to the Russification of schools among the Estonian-speaking peasantry. Moreover, the government's gradual approach prior to the 1880s of introducing the Russian language in only parts of the curricula and providing a positive incentive by reducing the military service requirement for Russian speakers, no doubt served to dampen the shock of the Russification of schools.

Russification therefore had the biggest emotional and psychological effect on the small, but growing Estonian intelligentsia for whom the Russification of schools during the 1880s and 1890s marked a period of disillusionment and disorientation. The introduction of administrative Russification, the displacement of many of the traditional rights and privileges of the Baltic Germans, and the introduction of the Russian language in the school curriculum had been universally welcomed, and even requested by petitioners since the 1860s and 1870s. However the ensuing Russification of schools, especially of primary education, as well as the opening of the Estonian Alexander School in 1888 with Russian as the language of instruction led many to adopt a pessimistic view of the future and doubt the benevolence of the tsar toward the Estonian

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<sup>41</sup> Woodworth, Bradley D. "Those who wore the cap of the bureaucrat: multiethnicity and Estonian tsarist state officials in Estland Province, 1870-1914." Paper presented at the international congress of East European Studies, Berlin, July 2005. This reference was found in an article already mentioned at the start of this chapter by Alexey Miller "Russification or Russifications?" in *The Romanov Empire and Nationalism*. (Forthcoming from Central European University Press.)

people.<sup>42</sup> Since the idea of Estonian “nationhood” had by no means developed into a well-defined, universally embraced social category and there was far from a consensus among them about its relationship to the German and Russian dominant groups, their ability to provide any coherent leadership during the first two decades of the Russified school system was therefore quite limited. It would ultimately take the emergence of a new generation of university-educated activists and the destabilizing effects of the Revolution of 1905 to provide Estonian leaders the opportunity to collectively make demands for more instruction in Estonian at all levels of education, one of the few issues on which there was general agreement.

### ***Conclusion***

From the preceding discussion, we may therefore conclude that the Russification of schools in Estland and Livland had both positive and negative effects on the development of an Estonian national identity, and that it is doubtful that the policy ever aimed to “denationalize” or completely assimilate the Estonian-speaking peoples into Russians. The most positive effects of the Russification of education and political life was its displacement of German as the dominant language in administration and at the level of secondary and higher education. As a consequence, Raun observes, “the Estonians were exposed to two competing cultural influences, neither of which was strong enough to supersede the other.”<sup>43</sup> To be sure, the Russification of schools was indeed a success in attracting many Estonians to learn the Russian language and pursue opportunities in the state bureaucracy both within the Baltics and the empire. But it was also a source of disillusionment for the small, but growing, Estonian intelligentsia. In the longer term, the government’s failure to take full advantage of the goodwill engendered among the Estonians was due to a combination of its unwillingness to fully displace the hegemony of the

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<sup>42</sup> Raun, Toivo U. “The Estonians.” p 316.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid* p 320.

Baltic Germans or to satisfy Estonian demands for greater control of political affairs through the introduction of the *zmstevos* reforms. A line was clearly drawn just short of the full dismantling of the traditional political and social structure in the provinces, and well short of allowing the Estonian language and culture to gain a status equal to the Russian or German traditions.

## Conclusion

As the introduction of this thesis discussed in detail, the terms “Germanization” and “Russification” can potentially mean very different things when they are studied in their original context. The preceding two chapters found that various interests and goals motivated these policies and that the policies themselves were carried out in different ways and very much subject to change over time. It was also found that responses to Germanization and Russification were also quite varied both within and between the two groups who served as the targets of these measures. For all of the above reasons, broader conclusions concerning Germanization and Russification during this period must remain tentative at best, since in both empires such policies were carried out in many different contexts toward numerous other non-dominant groups. A replication of the approaches adopted in the previous two chapters would no doubt reveal a similar degree of diversity in the role of the state and its Germanization and Russification policies, as well as the patterns of response to them. Therefore we may anticipate that Germanization in Schleswig-Holstein and Alsace as well as Russification in Finland, the Western Provinces, Congress Poland, and various other parts of the empire, would multiply our understandings of the terms to a considerable degree. Further study along the lines of inquiry adopted in this thesis, not just in the context of the Hohenzollern and Romanov empires, but in other states, may ultimately make it possible to construct a typology of different policies, not just in the educational sphere but in other sectors that have served an integrating function such as the army, bureaucracy, and judiciary system.

That being said, it is still possible, even on the basis of the two case studies explored in this thesis, to identify certain commonalities. Since the preceding chapters have been concerned with fleshing out the aspects that made their particular cases unique, this conclusion will be

devoted to a brief discussion of similarities rather than differences. It will attempt to link some of these aspects to the broader trends that were discussed in the introduction of this thesis, especially the role that education and other state activities played in framing preexisting social categories, especially language, in national terms.

Most similarities can be found in comparing the respective roles of the state and the interests and goals that motivated its policies. For the reasons described at length in the introduction of this thesis, both states increasingly turned to the education system to accomplish various objectives, which in practice meant varying degrees of centralization and expansion of control within their respective education ministries. In both cases, school inspection, the training of teachers, the content of the curricula and the parameters governing the language of instruction were the main areas in which the state began to assert its authority. In doing so, both governments also met with certain constraints. As empires born out of recent and historic conquests, each had to reconcile the interests of established players, namely religious and governing elites, that had long been part of the educational landscape and continued to enjoy certain rights and privileges. In Imperial Germany, the main obstacle was religious control of school inspection and the training of teachers, while in the Baltic States it was the control of the local governing elite that had long enjoyed autonomy in the educational sphere. Both also shared logistical constraints in translating their policies into practice. A lack of funding, or unwillingness to provide it, often ensured that learning conditions, especially in rural areas, remained substandard, leading to a decline not only in effectiveness but also enrollment in parts of Prussian Poland as well as in Estland and northern Livland. New language requirements meant in both cases a shortage of teachers with adequate training, and the low number of school inspectors, especially in the Baltics, ensured that supervision was low in many areas.



In addition to centralization, both states were also motivated by a concern for the “hearts and minds” of their subjects and citizens. We find in both cases the assumption, not entirely unfounded, of a peasantry and working class that was naturally loyal to the state but in constant danger of being led astray. This was in part a reaction to the emergence of national and social movements challenging traditional modes of authority and enjoying varying degrees of popular support thanks to the increasing influence of the popular press and general growth in literacy. In the case of Imperial Germany, the democratization of political life added another dimension to these conflicts that would not be experienced in the Russian Empire until after 1905. Under these new circumstances, education was therefore seen as a potential lever with which to block the encroachment of “Polonization” in Prussia and “Germanization” in the Baltic States. A defensive element can therefore be found as part of the justification behind the Germanization and Russification policies.

Finally, we witnessed in both empires an embrace, to varying degrees and with a great deal of ambiguity, of a national conception of itself and its interests. This was particularly so in the case of the German Empire in the decades that followed the 1870s and we can roughly trace the increasingly radical forms that Germanization took, both inside and outside the educational sphere, as one indication of the nationalization of political and public life. Such a pattern was not followed in the Russian Empire, but during the reign of Alexander III we did indeed begin to see a tendency to both identify with, and act according to, national as well as imperial interests in the activities of certain officials. As was discussed at the beginning of the second chapter, understandings of the relationship between nation and state remained quite ambiguous and never amounted to a coherent or universally held principle. In any case, the Russification of Baltic schools did not appear to be motivated by an attempt to turn Estonians into Russians.

Given the overwhelming dissimilarity of the Poles and Estonians in terms of size, social structure, relations with dominant groups, and various other factors, it would be inappropriate to attempt to compare the two patterns of response. Moreover, as we discovered, Germanization and Russification policies diverged in significant ways and occurred in different contexts. However, it is significant to note that in both cases broad support for political autonomy along ethno-linguistic lines, or in Gellnerian terms, the nationalist idea that the political and cultural unit should be congruent, developed relatively late during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To be sure, for Poles nationhood in ethno-linguistic terms had begun to set in, and in the first chapter we found how the experience of Germanization in schools, and ultimately their active resistance to it, played a vital role in merging preexisting religious and linguistic identifications with a Polish national consciousness.

This could be seen as part of a wider trend that was taking place in the latter half of the nineteenth century of conflating linguistic categories with national ones. For instance, language came to be seen as the only objective indicator of nationality in the censuses states began to conduct with increasing regularity. As Hobsbawm rightly observes, “by asking the language question censuses for the first time *forced* everyone to choose not only a nationality, but a linguistic nationality.”<sup>1</sup> Schools served a similar function, as the state’s relegation of languages to different statuses only served to intensify awareness of their unequal treatment. And as language came to be seen as more than a means of communication and became one of the most important markers of nationality, its usage in schools took on an added significance. The use of a language at all levels of the education system came to be not only a symbol of national status, but also a prerequisite for national survival.

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<sup>1</sup> Hobsbawm, E. J. *Nations and nationalism since 1780 : programme, myth, reality*. p 100.

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