

The Genesis of a Multiethnic Bureaucracy. The Baltic Region in the Era of Alexander III.

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In the historiographies of the Baltic provinces of Estland, Livland, and Kurland – which comprise the territories of Estonia and Latvia – the years of the reign of Emperor Alexander III and the following decade up to 1905 is commonly known as the era of Russification. This conception was developed not by Estonian and Latvian historians, but by Baltic Germans. The interpretation of this era as one of conflict between central state authority and the peoples of the Baltic region became deeply ingrained in the historiography of the region. The most important Baltic German historian of the twentieth century, Reinhard Wittram, wrote in his *Baltische Geschichte*, opening the section “Die Russifizierung”, that with the beginning of the reign of Alexander III in 1881

[f]or the first time the privileges of the Baltic region were no longer confirmed with the changing of regimes. The emperor repeatedly indicated that he sought to merge the Baltic Provinces [here, correct Russian translation: остзейские губернии] with the rest of the empire and that he would not recognize the legal basis of these privileges.¹

¹ Reinhard Wittram, *Baltische Geschichte. Die Ostseelände Livland, Estland, Kurland 1180—1918* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1954), 216. В оригинале: “Zum erstmal wurden die baltischen Privilegien beim Thronwechsel nicht mehr bestätigt. Der Kaiser gab wiederholt zu verstehen, daß er eine Verschmelzung der Ostseeprovinzen mit dem übrigen Reich anstrebe und die Rechtsgrundlage der Privilegien nicht mehr anerkenne”.

Historians whose work is focused less centrally on the lives of the Baltic German elite and more on Estonians and Latvians, who formed the vast majority of the population of the Baltic provinces, have viewed the period quite differently. From the point of view of the Estonians and Latvians, incursions by St. Petersburg on Baltic German particularism, could open doors that had previously been kept firmly shut to them, unshackling them from the fetters of centuries-old Baltic German tutelage. In a seminal study published in the United States thirty years ago, a group of historians working on the late tsarist period in the Baltic region distinguished between “administrative Russification” and “cultural Russification” in the Baltic region.² Administrative Russification included introduction of the new all-Russian urban statute [Rus. Городовое положение] into the Baltic provinces in 1877. Important was the visit to the Baltic provinces from May 1882 to August 1883 by Senator N. A. Manasein (1835-1895) [Rus. Манасейн], who then recommended Russificatory reforms, signed by Alexander III in 1885, including the replacement of German (and, where used, Latvian and Estonian) in administration, and in the legal and educational systems. In 1888 and 1889 more reforms were introduced, including the transfer of policing power in the countryside from the Baltic German landowners to the Russian Ministry of Interior, and the introduction of the Russian judicial system.

Concerns over Russification were largely rooted in the reaction of Baltic German elites.³ But if our view is broadened beyond the Baltic Germans to include the experience of Latvians, Estonians, and also Russians in the Baltic provinces, then the entire so-called era of Russification takes on new colors.

² Edward C. Thaden, et al., *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981).

³ For a dispassionate overview, see “The Baltic Germans,” by Michael H. Haltzel, in Thaden, et al., *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914*, especially 124-183. In Russian, see N. S. Andreeva, *Pribaltiiskie nemtsy i rossiiskaia pravitel'stvennaia politika v nachale XX veka* (St. Petersburg: Mir, 2008), 54-75

It is indisputable that the reforms of late 1870s through the 1880s fostered a loosening of the social hierarchy in the Baltic region. This included a diversification of the ethnic composition of those serving the tsarist state as civil servants. The infusion of Russians into positions in state service, particularly at its highest levels, has long been known. Significant were the appointments of M. N. Kapustin (1828-1899) as curator of the Dorpat educational district [попечителя Дерптского [Тартуского] учебного округа] in 1883 and in 1885 of Prince S. V. Shakhovkoi (1852-1894) as Governor of Estland province and M. A. Zinov'ev (1838-1895) as Governor of Livland province. These appointments by Alexander II aimed at limiting Baltic particularism in local administration and to strengthen the Russian political and cultural presence in the Baltic provinces.⁴

Far less studied has the inclusion of Estonians and Latvians in positions as civil servants in the Baltic provinces in the late nineteenth century.⁵ In Reval, an ever larger portion of the bureaucracy consisted of Estonians. This article examines the changes in the ethnic composition

⁴ See Michael Haltzel, *Der Abbau der deutschen ständischen Selbstverwaltung in den Ostseeprovinzen Russlands: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der russischen Unifizierungspolitik* (Marburg: J. G. Herder-Institut, 1977). There were important differences in the views of Shakhovskoi and Zinov'ev toward Baltic society. Zinov'ev admired the power of the Baltic German corporations of the nobility. He felt the administrative role of the Baltic German nobility was important and useful, and overall he was flexible in the implementation of reform. Shakhovskoi, on the other hand, saw all of Baltic German society as inimical to the Russian state. Estonians believed he was sympathetic to their complaints of domination by Baltic Germans. However, both governors, as well as Kapustin, were ill-disposed to the Baltic German literati. See also Ea Jansen, "Aleksander III venestusreformid ja eesti avalikkus," in *Acta Historica Tallinnensia* 9: 2005: 47-48.

⁵ See Bradley D. Woodworth "Multiethnicity and Estonian Tsarist State Officials in Estland Province, 1881-1914," in Donald K. Rowney and Eugene Huskey, eds., *Russian Bureaucracy and the State: Officialdom from Alexander III to Putin* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009), 72-88. The argument of the present article and the information on Reval and Estonians draw strongly upon this 2009 article.

of the tsarist bureaucracy in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, focusing on Reval (Est. Tallinn) and Riga.

In Reval, in 1871 there were 236 administrative state officials [Ger. *Staatsbeamte*] in the city. Of these, 173 (73.3 percent) were Germans, 52 (22.0 percent) were Russians, and 4 (1.7 percent) were Estonians. There were also seven officials (3.0 percent) whose nationality was undetermined.⁶ In the census of 1881 (conducted in both Estland and Livland provinces), Reval is listed as home to 300 state officials (people in *Staadienst*), with an overall population of 45,880. Out of these 300, 185 (61.7 percent) were Germans, 88 (29.3 percent) were Russians, 20 (6.7 percent) were Estonians, and 7 (2.3 percent) were of other nationality.⁷ Thus, the decade 1871 to 1881 saw moderate growth in the size of the bureaucracy, a small increase in the percentage of state servitors who were Estonians, and a more substantial rise in the portion who were Russian. Estonians were concentrated in finance, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the police.⁸

Riga was of course a much larger city, with a population in 1881 of 169,329 – more than three and a half times the size of that of Reval with its population of 45,880. In Riga the number of Russians in state service in 1881 already outnumbered Germans – 501 (40.5 percent) to 421 (34.0 percent). Latvians in state service in Riga numbered 169 (13.7 percent) and others or individuals of unknown nationality 147 (11.9 percent).⁹

⁶ *Die Resultate der Volkszählung der Stadt Reval am 16. November 1871*, Paul Jordan, ed. (Reval: Kluge and Ströhm, 1874), 132.

⁷ It should be noted that nationality in this census was affixed according to native language.

⁸ *Ergebnisse der baltischen Volkszählung vom 29. December, 1881*, Part II: *Ergebnisse der estländischen Volkszählung*, Paul Jordan, ed., Band I: *Die Zählung in Reval*, Lieferung I (Reval: Lindfors' Erben, 1883), 132.

⁹ *Ergebnisse der baltischen Volkszählung vom 29. December, 1881*, Part I: *Ergebnisse der livländischen Volkszählung*, Fr. v. Jung-Stilling and W. Anders, eds., Band I: *Die Zählung in*

By the end of the century, it was clear that major changes had occurred in the ethnic composition of the bureaucracy in both cities. The census of 1897 showed that in the years after 1881 there had occurred significant growth in the size of the state bureaucracy. Three things should be noted in comparing the numbers of bureaucrats in the censuses of 1881 with the all-Russian census of 1897. First, not unexpectedly, the proportion of Germans in the bureaucracy steeply declined. Second, the number of Russians rose – again, not unexpected – but among all servitors, the percentage of Russians actually fell in both cities. Third, the numbers of Latvians and, in particular, Estonians, rose, in the latter case, significantly so.

In both cities, the drop in the percentage of German bureaucrats was precipitous. In Reval, Germans declined from 61.7 percent (185) to 14.3 percent (123), and now were no longer vastly overrepresented. (Germans comprised 27.8 percent of the population of Reval in 1897). In Riga, the decline was also significant, from 34.0 percent (421) to 18.7 percent (367). (Germans comprised 25.5 percent of the population of Riga in 1897.) Given the express aim of the Russian government under Alexander III to limit the influence of Baltic Germans in the Baltic provinces, this decline is expected.

Also expected is the rise in the number of Russian bureaucrats. In Reval their numbers rose from 88 in 1881 to 236 in 1897, and in Riga from 501 to 670. But because of the overall rise in the number of bureaucrats, the percentage of those who were Russian actually declined, in Riga from 40.5 percent in 1881 to 34.2 percent in 1897, and also slightly in Reval, from 29.3 to

27.4 percent. (Russians made up 16.9 percent of the population of Riga in 1897 and 10.2 percent of the population of Reval.)¹⁰

More study is needed of Russians who worked as bureaucrats in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. Those at the highest levels – especially the governors – have received the greatest attention, but as a group they are still not well understood. The study of educated Russians in Reval and Riga in the late tsarist period has focused on their activity in voluntary societies (общества). In Estonian historiography, the large numbers of mid-level Russian civil servants who came to Estland and Livland provinces from Russia proper are viewed as a benign, though often ill-informed group.¹¹ Certainly many of the new officials who worked under governors Shakhovskoi in Estland and Zinov'ev in Livland, felt great antipathy toward the Baltic German elites. One of these, Mikhail Nikolaevich Kharuzin (1860-1888), a young jurist in state service in the offices of the Ministry of the Interior in Reval in the late 1880s, was one of the most talented tsarist bureaucrats ever to work in the city. Unlike most of his Russian colleagues, Kharuzin knew Baltic conditions well. Although born in Moscow, to a wealthy merchant family, Kharuzin was sent by his parents to Reval in 1871 to study in the Provincial Gymnasium, where the language of instruction was German.¹² Kharuzin studied at the gymnasium for eight years, completing his studies in 1879. He then completed a law degree at Moscow University, after which came further legal study in Heidelberg and Berlin, followed by graduate work in the law in Moscow. In July 1887 Kharuzin returned to Reval as a senior official for special assignments

¹⁰ Unfortunately, data in the Riga portion of the 1881 census does not provide details concerning what parts of state service individuals were employed.

¹¹J. Saat, et al. eds, *Eesti NSV ajalugu*, vol. 2 (Tallinn: Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus, 1963), 218.

¹²The Kharuzin family had several acquaintances and a relative who had sent sons to Tallinn and Riga to study. See V. N. Kharuzina, *Proshloe: Vospominaniia detskikh i otrochestkikh let* (Moscow, Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 1999), pp. 44-45. A recent overview of the Kharuzin family is in Tat'iana Chervova, "Kharuziny," in *Tallinn* (Tallinn) 28 (2002): 175-180 and 29-30 (2002): 187-194.

for the Estland governor; he also became an editor of the official state gazette *Estliandskie Gubernskie Vedomosti*. Despite his early German-language education, Kharuzin was a fierce opponent of Baltic German special rights, and this was reflected in his work with the state gazette. After producing a catalog of Baltic legal statutes from the early eighteenth century to the 1880s, he wrote a 70-page study critiquing Baltic German legal claims.¹³ His brilliant career, barely begun, was cut short when he died in Reval of typhoid in September 1888.

The rising number of Estonians and Latvians in state service during the late nineteenth century is a fact that has gone under appreciated by historians. The increase of Estonians in state service in Reval was breathtaking – from only 20 in 1881 (6.7 percent of all bureaucrats) to 442 (51.3 percent) in 1897. The rise of the number of Latvians in the state bureaucracy in Riga was more modest: 169 (13.7 percent) to 245 in 1897 (12.5 percent). Estonians and Latvians tended to occupy low- to mid-level positions such as policemen, clerks in state offices, railway workers, mail officials. Throughout the countryside, those who became educated occupied the position of heads of peasant affairs at the *uezd* level, oversaw peasant courts, and also were inspectors of rural schools.¹⁴

In the last three decades of the 19th century, education in the Baltic provinces became more available to wider numbers of people. In the preceding decades of the century, education both at the secondary and primary levels was available virtually exclusively to the sons of Baltic

¹³The work is “*Baltiiskaia konstitutsiia*”: *Istoricheskii ocherk* (Moscow: A. A. Levenson, 1888). The study supports the reforms carried out in the Baltic in the second half of the 1880s. For all his erudition, Kharuzin, who was influenced by Russian nationalist thought and sentiment, overestimated the likelihood of Russian-Estonian cultural rapprochement; he wrote of the “noted tendency among the Estonian and Latvian portions of the population toward the Orthodox church” (5).

¹⁴ For Estonians areas, see Toomas Karjahärm and Väino Sirk, *Eesti haritlaskonna kujunemine ja ideed 1850-1917* (Tallinn: Eesti Entsüklopeediakirjastus, 1997), 61 and Ea Jansen, *Eestlane muutuv asjas Eestlane muutuv asjas: seisusühiskonnast kodanikeühiskonda* (Tartu, Estonia: Eesti Ajalooarhiiv, 2007), 373.

German noblemen. Demographic pressure and Russification of the educational system beginning in the second half of the 1880s were the most important factors in the expansion of educational opportunities and this opened up new occupational opportunities for Estonians and Latvians. Certainly the rise in the number of Estonians in tsarist state service was accompanied – and likely fostered – by an increase in the number of Estonians who had higher education. In Estland and northern Livland provinces (the area of Estonian settlement) the number of male students in secondary schools who were from the peasant estate – and who thus were likely nearly all Estonians – increased rapidly, from 42 (6.6 percent of all students) to 406 (18.7 percent) in 1899.¹⁵ This increase in the number of Estonians in secondary schools took place at the same time that Russian was being introduced into schools, from the mid-1880s to the mid-1890s: beginning in 1887 Russian was the language of instruction beginning in the third year of school and from 1892 was a required subject also in the first year. At the university level, Estonians also made rapid progress in the last decades of the nineteenth century: in 1875 there some 25 to 30 Estonians studying at Dorpat (Tartu) University. By 1880 they numbered to about 50 and then to over 100 by 1890.¹⁶ Russian began to be introduced as the language of instruction at the university in 1887, and thus it seems reasonable to conclude that the increased use of Russian in both secondary and higher education was an important factor in the notable increase in the number of Estonians in state service in this period.

¹⁵ Allan Liim, “Poeglaste keskhariduskoolide õpilaste seisuslik ja rahvuslik koosseis Eestis (1860. aastaist 1917. aastani),” in Endel Laul, ed., *Hariduse ja kooli ajaloost Eestis* (Tallinn: Eesti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia/Ajaloo Instituut, 1979), 60. See also Toomas Hiio and Helmut Piirimäe, eds. *Universitas Tartuensis* (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2007), 221.

¹⁶ Helmut Piirimäe, ed., *Eesti Ülikooli algus. Tartu Ülikooli uuestisünd rahvusülikoolina 1919*. Vol. I (Tartu: Tartu Ülikool, 1994), 15.

Though the influx of Latvians into the tsarist bureaucracy in Riga was much smaller than that of Estonians in Reval, the presence of Latvians in the bureaucracy was noted by contemporaries. V. E. Cheshikhin (Чешихин) (1867-1923), literary historian and son of the founder of the newspaper *Rizhskii Vestnik* E. V. Cheshikhin, wrote in 1901 about the changes in the public lives of Latvians:

Until recently, the words “peasant” and “Latvian” were synonyms. Today, more than a thousand Latvians have a higher education. In Russia [here meaning, the Russian Empire], they are taking first place among the educated nations. It is a reality that Latvians are physicians, attorneys, teachers, professors, and bureaucrats.¹⁷

The last years of the reign of Alexander III saw the introduction of a series of counter-reforms. In the Baltic region, this included a new Municipal Statute, which raised the property requirement for participation in city councils (городские думы). As a result, fewer non-Germans could be elected and city politics in both Riga and Reval entered a moribund period.¹⁸ It is more difficult to assess the impact of the counter-reforms on the make-up of the bureaucracy in the Baltic provinces. No comprehensive census was completed in the years of the early twentieth century. There is evidence that in Estland province, Estonians held an increasing number of positions. Under Prime Minister P. A. Stolypin the Russian state apparently attempted to increase the share of Russians in positions of state service in the Baltic provinces. In 1908 Russians occupied four of the five highest positions in the Estland provincial administration in Reval, with

¹⁷ Ch. Vetrinskii [V. E. Cheshikhin,], *Sredy latyshei: ocherki* (Moscow: Rikhter, 1901), cited in Ulrike von Hirschhausen, *Die Grenzen der Gemeinsamkeit: Deutsche, Letten, Russen, und Juden in Riga 1860-1914* (Göttingen: Vandenkoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 91.

¹⁸ See Bradley D. Woodworth, “Administrative Reform and Social Policy in the Baltic Cities of the Russian Empire: Riga and Reval, 1870-1914,” in *Jahrbuch für europäische Verwaltungsgeschichte* 16 (2004), especially 136-140.

the fifth position held by a German. But among twelve chancellery department heads, five were Estonians; of the rest, six were Russians and one was a Pole. The presence of German in state service was significant only in medical and technical areas.¹⁹

The emergence of a multiethnic bureaucracy in the Baltic provinces in the latter decades of the nineteenth century meant that state servitors were more representative of the overall population. This perspective helps us to see this period not in terms of national conflict between Baltic Germans, Estonians, Latvians, and Russians and a Russian state, but instead as one when a civic identity began to form in this complex region. There is no evidence that during the reign of Alexander III Estonians and Latvians were becoming culturally Russified. More importantly, the reforms and structures introduced by the tsarist state provided new, previously unavailable opportunities for many within the Baltic provinces to acquire experience and skills and to develop confidence – all of which would prove useful in meeting the challenges of the new twentieth century.

¹⁹Manfred Hagen, “‘Russification via ‘Democratization’? Civil Service in the Baltic after 1905,” *Journal of Baltic Studies* 9 (1978): 56-58.