

POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE IN DORPAT IN EMIL KRAEPELIN'S PERIOD

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Abstract. The period the German psychiatrist Emil Kraepelin (1856–1926) spent in Dorpat (today Tartu) (1886–1891) had a great effect on his further career as a psychiatrist and psychologist and has been studied and written about in detail (Steinberg, Angermeyer 2001, Engstrom, Weber 2005, Engstrom, Engler 2015, Allik 2016, Engstrom 2016). Kraepelin described the life in Dorpat in his memoirs (Kraepelin 1987), where it follows that before going to Dorpat, he did not know that Germans were in a minority in the Baltic provinces of the Russian empire. Nor did he know anything about the local political atmosphere and what attitude to take towards it as a national of the German state. In 2003, a special book, “Emil Kraepelin in Dorpat, 1886–1891” (Burgmair, Engstrom, Hirschmüller, Weber, 2003), based on the sources available in the Estonian archives was published, which is a valuable addition to the personal memories of Kraepelin. However, it was very difficult for the authors of the book, historians of psychiatry, to estimate the role of Dorpat in the life of Kraepelin. The few Baltic German studies they used (Gernet 1902, Tobien 1930) and memoirs (Hoerschelmann 1926, Hueck-Dehio 1953) do not provide an objective picture of the tense situation in Dorpat on the eve of Russification, the more so that the subject of those sources was quite different. The aim of this article is to shed light on the political atmosphere surrounding Kraepelin in Dorpat and his reactions to it.

Keywords: Emil Kraepelin, University of Dorpat/Tartu, Baltic provinces of the Russian empire, Baltic German politics, Russification

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1. Historical background

Since the 13th century up to World War I, the German minority, who Christianized the Estonians and Latvians, had been the ruling class in the Estonian area. Although the Livonian Order founded by the Teutonic Order ceased to exist in the middle of the 16th century and the territory of today's Republic of Estonia, mainly inhabited by Estonians, was in the 17th century under the reign of Poland

and Sweden, and since the 18th century of the Russian empire, the Germans maintained their privilege to rule in the area. The Russian empire even granted an extensive autonomy to the Estonian and Livonian Ritterschaften (Russian Baltic Sea provinces), which enabled to manage all the living spheres in German and guaranteed the superiority of the Lutheran church in the Estonian area (Schirren 1865, 1869, Pistohlkors 2006, Ungern-Sternberg 2013). The university that opened in Dorpat in accordance with the ukase of Emperor Alexander I in 1802 used German as the official language and its theological faculty propagated Lutheran religion. The first professors of the University of Dorpat mainly (with a few exceptions) came from German-speaking countries and territories in Europe, later local Germans, born in the areas of present-day Estonia and Latvia, were also employed. It was the German language used in instruction that guaranteed a very high academic level similar to that in universities of Germany and such a situation lasted almost until the last decades of the 19th century (Engelhardt 1933).

During the 19th century, the class-conscious Russian empire as well as the German-governed Estonian area underwent great changes. The national consciousness awaking slowly among the peoples of the empire: the Russians, Estonians, Latvians, Polish and other ethnic groups since the mid-nineteenth century seriously undermined the basis of the class-society in Russia and in the 1860s the government considered necessary to react to that (Kappeler 1992, Miller 2008). It means that Russian began to be increasingly introduced in the whole empire as the official language, including the University of Dorpat, some limits were established to religious freedom, an attempt was made to unify the legislation of different parts of the empire and some other steps were taken. The measures taken with the aim to modernize the country, but, at the same time, maintain the class-system, generated different feelings among the nations of the empire. The term Russification was introduced. The American historian Edward C. Thaden and his pupils proved in the 1980s already that the term Russification was an ambiguous notion and the Russification policy differed regionally to a great extent (Thaden 1981, Thaden, Thaden 1984, Haltzel 1977). Most recent studies concerning the borderland areas of the Russian empire confirm that point of view (Bobrovnikov, Babich 2007, Dameshek, Remnev 2007, Dolbilov 2010, Beauvois 2011, Dolbilov, Miller 2007, Kushko, Taki 2012).

Another aspect is how different nations of the Russian empire perceived Russification, in our case the Germans living in the Estonian and Livonian areas. The loyalty of Germans living in the Baltic Sea provinces to the Russian emperor was remarkable. They often held high military and civil positions in the empire, worked as leading officials at ministries, were outstanding scholars greatly contributing to the development of Russian science. That is why the increasing interference of the central government of Russia in the life of the Russian Baltic Sea provinces since the 1840s was so painful to local Germans (often called Baltic Germans). The following steps were classified as Russification: attempts to increase the role of the Russian language in everyday affairs and the school system of the Baltic provinces, including the University of Dorpat, attempts to put an end

to teaching Lutheranism in Dorpat University in 1843 and the interference in ruling the province, giving the Estonians and Latvians passports and the freedom to move and freeing them from the patronization of landlords (passport law 1863, parish reform 1866, court reform 1889) (Bock 1869, Schirren 1869, Eckardt 1869, 1870, [Buchholtz] 1883, 1888, Anonymous 1886, cf. Pistohlkors 1995a,b, Anepaio 2000, 2005, Tammiksaar 2013, Pae, Tammiksaar 2015). The more extensive introduction of the Russian language and setting restrictions to religious freedoms were certainly the evidences of Russification, whereas the law of passports, the reforms of parishes and the judicial law served as means of the modernization of the state. Local Germans, primarily the members of the Estonian and Livonian Ritterschaften regarded these steps as limiting their power over the Estonians and Latvians, also as acts of Russification (cf. Engelhardt 1916, Tobien 1925–1930, Wittram 1934, Pistohlkors 1978). A very clear example of Russification was the closing of the Estländische Ritter- und Domschule in 1893 marking the end of German-language secondary education in the Estonian province. As a matter of fact, this was the only reason why Franz Eduard Köhler, former rector of the Domschule, moved to Germany taking with him his sixty-year-old son Wolfgang who later became one the most renowned psychologists of the 20th century and the the main theoretician of the Gestalt psychology school (Allik 2007). Estonians and Latvians, unlike the conservative majority of Ritterschaften, welcomed such steps.

The relations between the Russian central authorities and Baltic Germans became particularly grievous beginning from 1881 when Alexander III became the Russian Emperor. He was the first Russian autocrat who did not sign the privileges for the Ritterschaften of the Russian Baltic Sea provinces (Wittram 1954:216). It was a clear sign that the central power began to interfere more in the inner affairs of the Russian Baltic Sea provinces, which ended in official renaming the German town and university of Dorpat as Yur'ev. The new name was derived from the Russian chronicles which read that in 1031 Yaroslav the Wise (the Christian name Yurij) had besieged a fortress on the territory of today's Tartu and named it Yur'ev (Viskovatov 1894). Now it was certain that Russian would be the instruction language in the University of Dorpat. Beyond doubt, it was very painful to Baltic Germans and special studies published on the history of Dorpat University at the end of the 19th century (Neander 1882, Dorneth 1887) and in the first decades of the 20th century (Gernet 1902, Anonymous, 1908, Semel 1918, Engelhardt 1928, 1933), as well as contemporary memoirs (Hoerschelmann 1926, Volck 1930, Hueck-Dehio 1953) reveal that quite well.

2. The University of Dorpat in the Russian scientific system

The Germans considered Dorpat University as part of the German universities network. As both the reputation and the scientific level of the only German-language university in the Russian empire were good, German professors gladly

accepted invitations to work for the University in the 19th century. It is certainly not a coincidence that Hermann von Helmholtz, one of the most influential German scientists of the 19th century, in his inaugural lecture as Rector of the University of Berlin spoke about academic freedom in German universities and pointed out as one manifestation of it a complete freedom of the students and professors to move between all the German-language universities, from Dorpat to Zürich, Vienna, and Graz (Helmholtz 1896:201). But most of them, including Emil Kraepelin, were not aware of the local political situation in Dorpat. In 1886, after he had received an invitation to the post of professor, he wrote: “As I had already told my wife that if I was ever to be appointed at all, then I would be appointed to the University of Dorpat; my prediction came true” (Kraepelin 1987:34). What was behind such a success, why did scholars want to teach and carry out their research in Dorpat?

To provide an answer to the question, we have to look back at not a very close past, i.e. at the measures taken by Emperor Peter I at the beginning of the 18th century that had an immediate impact on the further development of the Russian empire. In 1724, he founded an academy of sciences in St Petersburg. But Russia lacked scientists and the tradition of academic research was unknown, thus the academic staff had to be imported from abroad. Almost exclusively, these were German (and Swiss) scholars who settled in St Petersburg and mainly began to control the academic management in the Russian empire. German as the language of science was acknowledged in the empire until the 1860s–1870s (cf. *Istorija...*, 1958–1964, Zubov 1956, Vucinich 1970).

Four new universities were founded in the Russian empire at the beginning of the 19th century: Dorpat, Vilnius, Kazan and Kharkov universities. The Moscow University (founded in 1755) was reorganized. Of all these above-mentioned universities, Dorpat had the best position as all the students were German speaking and there was no language barrier between the teaching staff from Germany and the students. As for Russian universities, the language problem disturbed research work. To prepare Russian-speaking teachers for Russian universities, a so-called institute of professors was set up at Dorpat University in 1828 (existed until 1838) (Tamul 1992).

By 1820, there were no vacancies in the teaching staff of the University of Dorpat and close contacts between German-speaking students and lecturers provided good results in instruction and were favourable for academic research. The new trends of German science introduced, the liberal atmosphere dominating in Dorpat and good financial support to the University contributed greatly to the development of academic research. Finances began to decrease when a new university statute was adopted in Russia in the second half of the 1830s. As the University of Dorpat had its own regulatory laws, several positive items contained in the regulations of Russian universities, such as setting up new chairs and increasing financing, did not apply to the Dorpat University (Engelhardt 1933). Medical science suffered most of all in these conditions. New disciplines came into being, but money for employing new professors had to be asked directly from

the Minister of Public Education, which required a lot of time (cf. Tammiksaar 2002).

The financial problems, however, did not change the general atmosphere in Dorpat and numerous Baltic German students who, after graduating from the Dorpat University, continued their studies at universities of Germany contributed to the good reputation of the Dorpat University. As a result it was quite simple to fill vacant positions at the Dorpat University, and those coming later contributed greatly to the quality of academic research. The heyday for Dorpat University in fact lasted until the 1870s. From that time, the number of natives of Germany among the academic staff of the Dorpat University began to decrease slowly but continuously, while the role of the Baltic Germans began to grow. The only exception was the medical department, where most of the professors were native Germans even at the end of the 1880s (cf. Käbin 1986). It was thus a perfect time to go to Dorpat, as Kraepelin (1987:46) has mentioned in his memoirs: “the general scientific life in Dorpat was stimulating, as there were always a number of younger professors present, who worked with enthusiasm”.

Although the university looked as it had before, the situation in the University of Dorpat in the 1880s could not be compared with that in the 1840s. In the first place, by the 1840s, there was a sufficient number of Russian-speaking scholars in the humanities and natural science disciplines in Russian universities, and they had to be preferred in appointments to positions of professors (that also applied to Baltic Germans who were citizens of the empire). It was quite simple to receive a doctoral degree in Germany without defending a respective thesis. That enabled to start one’s career in Russia and apply later for professorship in Germany. Such a chance was used by several Germans who intended to start their academic career at the Dorpat University. To defend its own scientists, the German doctoral degree was equalized with the Russian Master’s degree, which enabled to be appointed to the position of an associated professor at first, after three years one could defend the doctoral thesis corresponding to the requirements of the Russian state, and then apply to the post of full professor (Ivanov 1994, Tamul 2013:19). Such measures helped the Russian empire augment its own scientific personnel and the need to invite scientists from abroad diminished. The only field in which there was still no sufficient competency was medicine.

3. Kraepelin and local politics

It means that the way to Dorpat was open for Kraepelin who had worked as a general practitioner in Dresden. Dorpat should have been quite astonishing to Kraepelin who came from monocultural Germany enjoying rapid industrial development to an industrially poorly developed, but multicultural Russian Baltic Sea province. He himself has described his first impressions of Reval, centre of the government of Estonia (today Tallinn), and the journey to Dorpat as follows: “This was the first time we were confronted with our new home surroundings, the

little carts with the shaggy, brisk horses, the street names and shop signs in a foreign language, the rustic figures of the Estonians, the Russian post-office /.../ The incredibly slow, sheer endless journey to Dorpat with long pauses at every small station gave us a good impression of the Russian railways” (Kraepelin 1987:36).

The German-language University of Dorpat, the academic research, the psychiatric clinic with its problems and his colleagues made a good impression on Kraepelin. He was quite successful in his struggle with scanty financial possibilities of the clinic. A greater problem was how to understand his patients as in addition to German-speaking patients, there were also Estonians, Latvians and Russians who did not know German (Kraepelin 1987:40). In this way, the problems of a multicultural society also reached Kraepelin, but thanks to his assistants, he was able to cope with these problems. He was very successful both in academic work and instruction as follows from several memoirs published later. For example, the later Russian writer Vikentij Veresaev has pointed out: “Especially outstanding [among the medical scholars of Dorpat] was by then already famous professor of psychiatry Emil Kraepelin, a young man, over thirty-five of age, with full beard of chestnut colour and clever, bright eyes. Unfortunately, I could not attend his systematic course. As a younger student, I attended some two or three of his clinical lectures, simply out of interest. There was a mentally ill patient present. Kraepelin started giving the patient questions, at the same time carefully watching him/her, and there, at the same moment, with all of us present, the whole picture of the disease opened like a valuable piece of art. The final description, formulated by the professor, was a summary of all the questions given to the patient, which enabled the students to derive a logical and characteristic picture of the disease. Everything seemed so simple that even a strange question arose: what is so special in it? And only when a new man [called Vladimir Chizh, who, like Kraepelin, was a pupil of Wilhelm Wundt -] became the head of the chair to replace him, I understood how talented Kraepelin was. Chizh bustles about a patient, gives an enormous number of stupid questions so that one’s head gets dizzy of dullness; the demonstration ends, but the final picture of the disease is as obscure as at the beginning” (Veresaev 1961:339).

Kraepelin learnt about the inner atmosphere and controversies in the University of Dorpat when he became a member of the university council. The conflicts were mainly caused by different attitudes of professors towards the position of the German-speaking Russian Baltic Sea provinces as parts of the Russian empire. As we know, Alexander III did not confirm the privileges of the Ritterschaften in 1881, which was a sign that the central government might any time cancel the autonomy of the provinces. The majority of Baltic German professors were of the opinion that the Russian central authorities had no right to interfere in the regulations of the life in the Estonian and Livonian provinces and the supreme authority of Germans over Estonians and Latvians had to continue (Engelhardt 1933, Tobien 1925–1930). Several German professors, who had witnessed the realization of the policy of unified Germany by Otto von Bismarck, were not so

critical towards the attempts of the Russian central authorities to unite the state under the central rule. Kraepelin might, at first, have shared such a point of view – some statements in his memoirs (Kraepelin 1987:82) and in an article (Kraepelin 1921) indicate his high respect for Bismarck as a chancellor.

Besides, in Dorpat Kraepelin joined a group of German, not Baltic German professors indicating which circle he belonged to. He has written: “Naturally, I joined a group of German colleagues on my arrival in Dorpat, who knew each other very well.” (Kraepelin 1987:48). Kraepelin has mentioned that the group of scholars which he joined “stood in opposition to the bulk of the Baltic [German] colleagues, headed by the family von Oettingen” (Kraepelin 1987:48).

What was so special about the von Oettingens that Kraepelin has paid particular attention to that family in his memories about Dorpat? Great influence of the von Oettingens upon the whole Baltic society cannot be denied. That becomes evident from memoirs written by different authors (Engelhardt 1928b:86, Schrenck 1928, Volck 1930, Oettingen 1929). There were six brothers of von Oettingen. Three of them (Georg von Oettingen (1824–1916), Arthur von Oettingen (1836–1920), and Alexander von Oettingen (1827–1905)) were professors of Dorpat University, the other three (August von Oettingen (1823–1908), Eduard von Oettingen (1829–1919), and Nicolas von Oettingen (1826–1876)) were experienced politicians. At the beginning of the 1860s, August von Oettingen was Landmarschall (Land marshal) and the leader of liberals in the Livland Land Diet. It is mainly he who has to be given credit for the right of the Estonian and Latvian peasants of Livland to purchase land for perpetuity from local landlords since 1860s. But at the same time, von Oettingen refused to share power with the Estonians and Latvians, i.e. to include Estonians and Latvians, whose national and political awakening started in the 1860s, in the Livland Land Diet (cf. Tammiksaar 2010). Von Oettingen was also against the unification of the legislation of the Russian central power in order to make governing simpler. According to von Oettingen, attempts to regulate the autonomy of Ritterschaften and instruction in the Dorpat University meant Russification (cf. Tobien 1925, 1:42–47, Oettingen 1929:391–412, Wittram 1934:28–40).

Alexander von Oettingen, a brother of August von Oettingen, full professor in theology at the Dorpat University, was one of the founders of moral statistics and formulated sociology’s “One Law” (Lederer 2013). Von Oettingen was the mental leader of a great number of local Germans in the province of Livonia (Oettingen 1926, Frey 1905:188–193, Seeberg 1906, Schrenck 1926, Volck 1930:93–109). He was very energetic and his social activities made him well known in Dorpat. His nickname was Pope, and his residence, consequently, was called Vatican. In the University of Dorpat, the importance of theology was greater than in German universities of the time (Engelhardt 1933:239–245, Wittram 1992). The cause of that was, in the first place, the attempt of Sergej Uvarov, the Russian Minister of Public Education, to close the theological faculty at Dorpat University in 1843 (there were no theological faculties in Russian universities). Thanks to the Baltic Germans and particularly to Karl Ernst von Baer, a Baltic German naturalist,

taking active steps against this in the imperial house, the theological faculty was not closed (cf. Engelhardt 1933:92–96, Tammiksaar 1999; 2011:255–256). But the plan as such shook the Baltic German society to its roots, as a result of which they gathered more tightly around the church in order to protect it against new attacks. Such a situation provided the professors of theology, who as a rule were Baltic Germans, with much power in and outside the University. Those whose academic or political views were unacceptable were forced to quit. That happened to Matthias Jacob Schleiden, one of the authors of the cell theory (cf. Jahn, Schmidt 2005:173–183), and to Ludwig Strümpell, professor of philosophy whose theory of dreams served as one of the main inspirations for Sigmund Freud's *Die Traumdeutung* (Strümpell 1925:36–38).

The inflow of materialistic ideas from Germany receiving a vivid reception in the Baltic German society as the popular lectures of Schleiden indicated in 1863 particularly frightened theologians. The propagation of the Darwinian theory (gathering popularity in Germany) was also opposed in the Russian Baltic Sea provinces and that caused a lot of harm, for example, to Georg von Seidlitz, the first Baltic German to support the evolutionary theory (Seidlitz 1871, Kennel 1902, cf. Kalling, Tammiksaar 2008:219–221). Ideas like these were ridiculed in newspapers by Alexander von Oettingen (1873, 1874) working as a professor of systematic theology since 1856. He, like Schleiden, had 600 attenders at his lectures (Volck 1930:97). It was perhaps just the spread of 'heretic' ideas why von Oettingen and his adherents were against inviting young German scholars to the positions of lecturers at the University of Dorpat. Kraepelin has written: "They [Oettingen and his supporters] favoured filling the vacant academic chairs as far as possible with natives and avoiding appointments from Germany. However, we believed that the employment of young German scholars should be especially promoted. As result, there were many disagreements and funnily enough, some of our German colleagues took sides with the Baltics." (Kraepelin 1987:48, cf. Bücher 1919:304).

The other cause of the opposition between the German liberal and Baltic conservative professors, which also made Kraepelin pick sides, was the attitude concerning the steps of the Russian central authorities to consolidate the whole empire under the control of the central government (Engelhardt 1933, Wittram 1931, 1934, Isakov 1961). The Baltic Germans united in opposition against the Russian central power in 1869 under the guidance of conservative Carl Schirren, professor of Russian history at Dorpat University. In his famous book "Livländische Antwort an Herrn Samarin" published in Leipzig (it was forbidden in Russia) he tried to prove that the Russian central power had no right to change the advantages given to the Baltic Germans by Peter I in 1710 and it was the privilege of Baltic Germans, proceeding from the historical right, to behave as they liked, to Germanize Estonian and Latvian peasants (Schirren 1869, cf. Garleff 2013).

Although Schirren abandoned Dorpat, the process of political reforms starting in the Baltic provinces in the 1860s and taking into account the political and economic interests of local people stopped (cf. Wittram 1934, Tammiksaar 2010,

Tammiksaar, Paatsi 2013). The national pride of the Baltic Germans did not allow them to continue with reforms and thus any step put forward by the central government was qualified as Russification (cf. Tobien 1925–1930).

The opposition to the Russian central authorities, however, proved not to help Baltic professors as in 1893 Russian became the language of instruction in Dorpat University. In spite of the tense atmosphere in the University at the end of the 1880s preceding this change, many of the German and Baltic German professors managed to come to an agreement on appointments in chairs and in standing for the preservation of the German-language Dorpat University. Kraepelin was one of them (1987:49). It does not follow from his memoirs whether he adhered to his principles, or whether he acted like this to find peace of mind and have good relations with local Germans on whom the success of his career in Dorpat greatly depended. But seven German professors (so-called *sieben Kurfürsten*) stood their ground and sided with the Russian central government stating that in Germany it would be impossible that in one university instruction would be carried out in a language that was not the official language of the state (cf. Volck 1930:140). One of the most influential spokesmen of that group in Dorpat was *Kathedersozialist* Karl Bücher (1919:305, cf. Drechsler, Kattel 2000). Kraepelin has summed up the situation as follows: “As a result the uniformity of the teaching staff completely disappeared and the personal relationships amongst the professors suffered seriously /.../ Apart from the excitement of the political happenings in the last few years, which also made personal relationships uncomfortable, life in Dorpat went by rather monotonously” (Kraepelin 1987:49).

Kraepelin was lucky, the invitation to Heidelberg University in 1890 provided him an opportunity to abandon Dorpat University and enter the political environment where there were no such problems as in the multilingual and -political Russian empire.

4. Conclusion

The University of Dorpat, belonging to the cultural sphere of the German language, had a very important role in the development of science in the Russian empire in the 19th century. Instruction carried out in German guaranteed a high level of academic research and enabled to import new capable lecturers from German-speaking countries, although sometimes they stayed in Dorpat only for a short period. As concerns experimentation with most recent scientific ideas, it was positive as it had a permanent effect on the development of science especially in Dorpat University, and, in a broader sense, in the Russian empire. The five years Emil Kraepelin worked for Dorpat University greatly contributed to the development of psychiatry as a scientific discipline. Would Kraepelin have stayed longer in Dorpat, if there had not been such a fierce political opposition between the Russian central authorities and the Baltic Germans, culminating with the defeat of the latter? Even though Kraepelin (1987:101) had some difficulties in communica-

tion with the patients not speaking German, the clinic actually did well financially and there seemed to be no reason to leave. Perhaps he would have stayed in Estonia for a longer period, but his evaluations did not coincide with those of local Germans. Kraepelin evaluated scholars on the basis of their contribution to science, not of their family background, and he valued highly the uniform German-language scientific sphere. But this aspect was not acceptable to Baltic German professors, who preferred members of their own ethnic group, regardless of their scientific abilities. That is why Kraepelin felt himself a stranger in Dorpat. In addition, the complicated political situation that demanded choosing sides differed from that in Germany undergoing what was essentially a national rise. These were the circumstances that made Kraepelin leave Dorpat.

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