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CULTURAL RUSSIFICATION IN LITHUANIA AND THE BALTIC PROVINCES IN THE LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURIES: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES

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The article reviews the phenomenon of cultural Russification among the Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians in the late tsarist era. The author concludes that the main result of attempts at Russification was a counterproductive one from the point of view of the tsarist regime: all the three nationalities became more, not less, aware of their national identity.

Despite numerous parallels in their experience in the 20th century, the earlier history of the Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians was significantly contrasting. What mattered, above all, in previous centuries was the political and cultural orbit in which the Baltic [1] peoples moved: a Polish-dominated world in the Lithuanian case and a Baltic German one in the Latvian and Estonian instances. Nevertheless, the three ethnic groups all came under tsarist Russian rule by the end of the 18th century, and certain commonalities began to appear by the second half of the 19th century as all three nationalities followed the general eastern and northern European pattern and developed their respective national movements.

It can be argued that the convergence of modern Baltic history began in the last decades of the 19th century and culminated in its first phase during the Revolution of 1905. In all three cases a major political congress with broadly based representation took place in the latter part of November 1905 [2]: the Congress of Rural Representatives in Riga (November 19—20), the Grand Vilnius (Wilno) [3] Assembly (November 21—22), and the All-Estonian Congress in Tartu (Dorpat) (November 27—29). Several important common points emerged in the resolutions passed by each of these bodies: (1) administrative unification of the ethnic homeland, (2) democratization on both the empirewide and local levels, and (3) political and cultural autonomy, including the repeal of culturally Russificatory legislation.[4] This striking commonality in aims

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, the term "Baltic" will be used in the contemporary sense to refer to three nationalities — Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians.

[2] All dates will be given according to the Julian Calendar, i.e., Old Style.

[3] Baltic place names will be given in their current or English-language form. At their first appearance in the text the German or Polish equivalents will be included in parentheses.

[4] **Longworth, J. G.** The Latvian Congress of Rural Delegates in 1905. New York, 1959, 56—57n, 103; **Hellman, M.** Die litauische nationale Bewegung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. — Zeitschrift für Ostforschung, 2 (1953), 93—94; **Raun, T. U.** Estonian social and political thought, 1905—February 1917. — In: **Ezergailis, A., Pistohlkors, G. v.** (eds.). Die baltischen Provinzen Russlands zwischen den Revolutionen von 1905 und 1917. Cologne, 1982, 63—65.

in 1905 suggests that similar historical processes were underway among all three nationalities. Thus, a comparative perspective on the decades preceding 1905 could be fruitful and may help explain how this beginning convergence of Baltic history came about.

As a vehicle for comparison, the following article will focus on the phenomenon of cultural Russification among the Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians in the late tsarist era. In particular, the treatment here will raise the issue of whether Russification was a determining or marginal factor in Baltic development in this period. However, before proceeding any further it is necessary to touch on the problematic nature of the term "Russification". There is no doubt that traditional studies of the era in question used this concept loosely and often in an overly sweeping manner. For example, K. J. Čeginskas refers to the goal of Russification as *die endgültige Einverleibung Litauens in das russische Reich*.[5] If Russification is used to mean "total integration", as Čeginskas suggests, then its explanatory value is reduced to virtually zero. More recently, there have been attempts to employ the term in a more limited and specific manner. For example, Edward C. Thaden and four co-authors (Michael H. Haltzel, C. Leonard Lundin, Andrejs Plakans, and Toivo U. Raun) divide the phenomenon into two major categories, administrative (institutions of government and laws) and cultural (e.g., language, education, religion, and the printed word).[6]

Other authors have questioned the concept of Russification altogether or posited a strictly limited definition. Gert von Pistohlkors argues that the process of bureaucratic centralization by the tsarist regime hardly deserves the rather grandiloquent term "administrative Russification". Moreover, since cultural Russification was so strikingly unsuccessful, stressing its role in this period leas to a misreading of the historical record.[7] Andreas Kappeler suggests that the usefulness of the concept of Russification is limited to its "linguistic-cultural" (*sprachlich-kulturelle*) aspects.[8] Indeed there is broad agreement in recent historiography that if "Russification" is to serve as a useful analytical tool for research, it must be employed in a specific and clearly delimited manner. In this article "cultural Russification" will refer to the actions of the tsarist government that sought to promote the role of the Russian language and culture among non-Russians in the following areas: language, education, and religion. The use of this term leaves open a question that is beyond the scope of this article: what were the ultimate aims of tsarist policymakers in employing cultural Russification-denationalization of non-Russians or simply rapprochement with the Russian nationality?

A few comments are also in order about the goals and viability of cultural Russification in the late tsarist era. Once again, in contrast to traditional interpretations, more recent works emphasize the inconsistency and unsystematic quality of tsarist efforts in this area.[9] Cer-

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[5] **Čeginskas, K. J.** Die Russifizierung und ihre Folgen in Litauen unter zaristischer Herrschaft. — Commentationes Balticae, 1959, 2, 5.

[6] **Thaden, E. C. et al.** Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855—1914. Princeton, N.J., 1981, 9.

[7] **Pistohlkors, G. v.** Regionalismus als Konzept der baltischen Geschichte: Überlegungen zum Stand der Geschichtsschreibung über die Baltischen Pronvinzen Russlands im 19. Jahrhundert. — Journal of Baltic Studies, 15 (1984), 111, 118n; **Pistohlkors, G. v.** Russifizierung in den Baltischen Provinzen und in Finnland im. 19. und beginnenden 20. Jahrhundert. — Zeitschrift für Ostforschung, 33 (1984), 592—593, 600, 604—606.

[8] **Kappeler, A.** Russland als Vielvölkerreich. Munich, 1992, 203—204.

[9] See for example, **Thaden, E. C. et al.** Russification: Special Issue: Finland and the Baltic Provinces in the Russian Empire. — Journal of Baltic Studies, 15 (1984), 2/3; **Kappeler, A.** Russland.

tainly, it is now clear that there was no single or unified tsarist nationality policy for all or even most regions of the empire. Given its level of modernization, the imperial Russian government lacked the means — and the will, it should be noted — to implement cultural Russification in any serious way. It possessed neither the human and material resources nor the knowledge and understanding of the non-Russian borderlands to be able to carry out such a policy.

If we now turn to some comparative perspectives on the Baltic national movements in the second half of the 19th century, it is striking that the impact of tsarist cultural policies was much more far-reaching in the Lithuanian case than in either the Latvian or Estonian one. First of all, there was the chronological dimension. Because they were historically tied to Poland and participated in the uprisings of 1830—1831 and 1863—1864, cultural Russification began relatively early in the Lithuanian lands, at least two decades before its onset in the Baltic Provinces. The thrust of tsarist policy was not so much anti-Lithuanian as it was anti-Polish, i.e., animated by a fear that non-Poles living under Polish hegemony would be led astray and prove disloyal to the Russian Empire.

The most important act of cultural Russification in Lithuania was the institution of a 40-year ban on publication in the Lithuanian language using the Latin alphabet (1864—1904). In its place the Cyrillic alphabet was to be used with a view toward drawing the Lithuanians closer to the Russian nationality. However, the Lithuanians refused to accept the change and boycotted the new alphabet.[10] The negative impact of this measure was heightened by its timing since it was implemented in the early stages of the Lithuanian national movement. It was no accident that the first native newspapers in Latvian *Mājas Viesis* (The Houseguest, 1856) and Estonian *Perno Postimees* (The Pärnu (Pernau) Courier, 1857) were established a quarter of a century before the first one in Lithuanian *Auszra* (The Dawn, 1883). Because of the press ban in Lithuania itself, *Auszra* had to be published abroad in East Prussia. The dates for the founding of the first daily newspapers in the Baltic languages followed a similar pattern, although the Estonian publication lagged behind the Latvian one in this case: *Rigas Lapa* (The Riga Newspaper, 1877), *Postimees* (The Courier, 1891), and *Vilniaus Žinios* (The Vilnius News, 1904).[11]

Although Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian were all considered peasant tongues by the tsarist authorities and thus incapable of developing to the level of a *Kultursprache*, the Lithuanian language suffered the earliest and most severe restrictions in the key sphere of rural elementary education. In immediate reaction to the uprising of 1863—1864, the tsarist regime removed primary schools from the control of the Catholic Church in Lithuania, and established a new government-sponsored system that used Russian as the language of instruction.[12] In contrast, in the Baltic Provinces, Russian was first introduced as the language of instruction beginning in the third year of rural elementary schools in 1887, and only in 1892 was it required to be used from the

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[10] **Hellman, M.** Die litauische nationale Bewegung, 76, 92; **Senn, A. E.** The Lithuanian intelligentsia of the nineteenth century. — In: **Loit, A.** (ed.). National Movements in the Baltic Countries During the 19th Century. Stockholm, 1985, 311.

[11] **Raun, T. U.** The Latvian and Estonian national movements, 1860—1914. — Slavonic and East European Review, 64 (1986), 73; **Silvanto, R.** Liettua muinoin ja nyt. Helsinki, 1920, 60; **Čeginskas, K. J.** Die Russifizierung, 50.

[12] **Loit, A.** Die nationalen Bewegungen im Baltikum während des 19. Jahrhunderts in vergleichender Perspektive. — In: **Loit, A.** (ed.). National Movements in the Baltic Countries During the 19th Century. Stockholm, 1985, 72; **Chase, T. G.** The Story of Lithuania. New York, 1946, 230—231; **Silvanto, R.** Liettua, 56.

first year of education.[13] In Lithuania, Bishop Motiejus Valančius helped to organize a boycott of official Russian schools that lasted until the Revolution of 1905. For example, in the province of Kaunas (Kowno) in 1897, where most of the ethnic Lithuanians in the Russian Empire were concentrated, only 6.8 percent of schoolage children actually attended the state-run institutions of education. Instead Bishop Valančius and other Lithuanian leaders encouraged the establishment of unofficial schools, taught in Lithuanian, and the practice of home instruction.[14]

With regard to religion, Lithuania was also subjected to greater and earlier persecution than was the case in the Baltic Provinces. Restrictions on the Catholic Church and its members began already under Nicholas I, but tsarist policy became especially harsh after the 1863—1864 rebellion. For example, Catholic monasteries and churches were closed, and some were handed over to the Orthodox Church. The regime pursued its aims even to the point of violent confrontation, as in the Kražiai case in 1893. Beginning with 1864, Catholics were also forbidden to hold certain local civil service positions.[15] In the Baltic Provinces, the tsarist authorities proved less vigorous in carrying out an anti-Lutheran policy, taking a strongly activist position only during the reign of Alexander III, and at no point were Lutherans excluded from local officialdom.[16] Propagation of the Orthodox religion was tried at various times with varying degrees of enthusiasm in both Lithuania and the Baltic Provinces. In neither case was there much success.[17]

In addition to subjection to more sweeping cultural Russification, the Lithuanian national movement faced numerous disadvantages in comparison to the Latvian and Estonian ones. First, literacy rates for Estonians and Latvians were nearly twice those for Lithuanians according to the 1897 census. For the population 10 years of age and older, 96.1 percent of the Estonians and 91.1 percent of the Latvians in the Baltic Provinces could read, while only 48.3 percent of the Lithuanians in their traditional areas of settlement (the provinces of Kaunas, Suvalki, and Vilnius) could do so.[18] Second, the Lithuanians were among the most rural of the major nationalities of the Russian Empire and had a minimal presence in the leading urban centres of their region as late as the end of the 19th century. In 1897, ethnic Lithuanians comprised only 2.1 percent of the population of Vilnius and 6.6 percent of that of Kaunas. In contrast, Estonians formed 62.7 percent of the population of Tallinn (Reval) and 68.6 percent of that of Tartu. Latvians also showed substantial urbanization and constituted 45.0 percent of Riga and 38.6 percent of Liepāja (Libau).[19]

Third, the level of socioeconomic modernization was significantly

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[13] **Raun, T. U.** The Estonians. — In: **Thaden, E. C.** (ed.). The Russification of the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855—1914. Princeton, N.J., 1981, 316.

[14] **Thaden, E. C.** Russia's Western Borderlands, 1710—1870. Princeton, N.J., 1984, 142; **Ochmański, J.** Historia Litwy, 2nd ed. Wroclaw, 1982, 226; **Chase, T. G.** The Story, 244.

[15] **Hellman, M.** Die litauische nationale Bewegung, 76; **Čeginskas, K. J.** Die Russifizierung, 35, 40—41, 46—47; **Silvanto, R.** Liettua, 50.

[16] **Haltzel, M. H.** The Baltic Germans. — In: **Thaden, E. C.** (ed.). The Russification of the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855—1914. Princeton, N.J., 1981, 162—166; **Raun, T. U.** The Estonians, 325—326.

[17] Православие и лютеранство в Прибалтийском крае по новейшим данным русской периодической печати. С.-Петербург, 1911, 10; Encyclopedia Lituanica, 6 vols. Boston, 1970—1978, vol. 4, 134.

[18] **Тройницкий Н. А.** (ed.). Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской империи 1897 г. С.-Петербург, 1899—1905, vols. 4, 17, 19, 21, 49, 59, Table XV.

[19] **Тройницкий Н. А.** (ed.). Первая всеобщая перепись, vols. 4, 17, 19, 21, 49, Table XIII.

lower in the Lithuanian regions. In 1897, Riga was the fourth largest city in the Russian Empire, and the Baltic Provinces had become one of its most industrialized areas. It has been argued that the geopolitical location of the Lithuanian areas, bordering on an increasingly hostile Great Power—Germany, discouraged any active industrialization policy.[20] Fourth, in the reaction against the 1863—1864 uprising, the tsarist regime forbade all grass-roots cultural and social organizations in Lithuania.[21] In the Baltic Provinces these associations played a key role in fostering the spread of national consciousness and mobilizing the population. Of particular importance was the song festival tradition and its contribution to the Estonian and Latvian national movements. In Estonia seven national song festivals were held in the late tsarist era (1869—1910), while in Latvia five took place in about the same period (1873—1910). It is striking that in Lithuania the first national song festival could only be organized in 1924 — after the establishment of independence.[22] Fifth, as noted above, because of the press ban, the Lithuanian national movement had much less access to the use of newspapers and periodicals, making its task considerably more difficult than in the Latvian and Estonian cases.

Nevertheless, certain compensating factors were present in the Lithuanian case that helped to overcome the substantial handicaps noted above.

1. In contrast to the Latvians and Estonians who had been conquered in the 13th century and had lost their elites, the Lithuanians retained an historical memory of independence which could be utilized for the purposes of the national movement in the 19th century.

2. Despite the tension and ambivalence in Lithuania's relationship with Poland, the Polish example played an important role in Lithuanian's development. For example, it was hardly a coincidence that the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party was founded in 1896, earlier than a Latvian or Estonian ones and only a few years after the establishment of the Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna*).[23]

3. By the mid-1860s when the tsarist regime's clumsy efforts at cultural Russification began in earnest, a Lithuanian national identity was already forming. The impact of such measures as the attack on the traditional Latin alphabet only served to heighten the sense of national awareness among Lithuanians. Moreover, the attempts at Russification also contributed to loosening the existing cultural ties between Lithuanians and Poles, leaving the former freer to pursue their own national agenda.

4. A key factor in Lithuanian development during the last half-century of the tsarist regime was the role of ethnic Lithuanians outside the Russian Empire. It is estimated that one-fourth of the Lithuanians in the empire emigrated in the years 1864—1914, especially to the United States.[24] In addition, the Lithuanian community across the border in East Prussia had been there for centuries. Both these groups helped compensate for the lack of Lithuanian publications in the Russian Empire

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[20] **Senn, A. E.** The Great Powers, Lithuania and the Vilna Question, 1920—1928. Leiden, 1966, 2.

[21] **Benedictsen, Å. M.** Lithuania: The Awakening of a Nation. Copenhagen, 1924, 191; **Loit, A.** Die nationalen Bewegungen, 76.

[22] **Raun, T. U.** The Latvian and Estonian national movements, 75; Lithuania: An Encyclopedic Survey. Vilnius, 1986, 367.

[23] On the Lithuanian Social Democrats, see **Sabaliūnas, L.** Lithuanian Social Democracy in Perspective, 1893—1914. Durham, N. C., 1990.

[24] **Wandycz, P. S.** The Lands of Partitioned Poland, 1795—1918. Seattle, 1974, 243.

by publishing and smuggling into Lithuania vast quantities of books and newspapers.[25]

5. The social structure of the Lithuanian nationality differed considerably from that of the Latvians and Estonians. Lithuanians were significantly represented among the clergy and lower nobility, and a substantial number of them contributed to the national movement.[26] In the Baltic Provinces elite social positions were still dominated by the Baltic Germans.

6. Although the Lithuanian literacy rate lagged behind the Estonian and Latvian ones, it was sufficiently high to promote mobilization of the native population. Laurence Stone argues that the "three great modernizing revolutions of the West, English, French, and Russian, have taken place when the rate of male literacy has been between one third and two thirds, not less, not more."[27] Judging by the strides in development made by the Lithuanians in the late tsarist era, the gap in literacy compared to their Baltic neighbours was not a serious problem.

7. The absence of formal education for Lithuanian children was counterbalanced by a widespread network of unofficial schools and instruction at home. Moreover, the education that a three-year rural elementary school could offer in the late tsarist era should not be overrated.

8. Although Polish influence in Lithuanian Catholicism remained strong, there was also a significant orientation in the Church that supported the Lithuanian national movement. Such an institutional base was almost entirely absent in the Baltic Provinces.[28]

9. Both Lithuania and the Baltic Provinces lacked any significant or prominent Russian society. Thus, there was little attraction for the native population to react positively to cultural Russification, such as they had in previous centuries to Polonization or Germanization. Furthermore, the Russian officials who were sent to both regions had only a meager understanding of local conditions and were ill-equipped to handle the tasks they were assigned.[29]

In conclusion, it should be noted that all three nationalities discussed in this article were treated as "ethnographic material" by Russian elite and the tsarist government. Their only choice — or so it seemed from the perspective of a large nation — was cultural Russification, Polonization, or Gemanization. Nevertheless, the main result of attempts at cultural Russification was a counterproductive one from the point of view of the tsarist regime: the Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians became more, not less, aware of their national identity. Cultural Russification also had the unintended impact of emancipating the Lithuanians from Polish cultural hegemony, on the one hand, and Estonians and Latvians from Germanic cultural domination, on the other. In short, it can be argued that Russification was a determining factor in Baltic development in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but not in the way intended by the tsarist regime. The clumsy and ill-advised actions orchestrated by St. Petersburg only served to hasten the pace of development of all three Baltic national movements and contributed to the beginning convergence of Baltic history by the Revolution of 1905.

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[25] **Senn, A. E.** Tsarist authorities and Lithuanian book-smuggling. — Journal of Baltic Studies, 11 (1980), 334—340; **Kaupas, V.** Die Presse Litauens I; Von Anfang bis 1904. Klaipeda, 1934, 134.

[26] **Loit, A.** Die nationalen Bewegungen, 77.

[27] **Stone, L.** Literacy and education in England 1640—1900. — Past and Present, 1969, 42, 138.

[28] **Benedictsen, Å. M.** Lithuania, 228; **Raun, T. U.** The Estonians, 323—326.

[29] **Benedictsen, Å. M.** Lithuania, 191; **Raun, T. U.** The Estonians, 304—305.

KULTUURILINE VENESTAMINE LEEDUS JA BALTI KUBERMANGUDES 19. SAJANDI LÕPUL JA 20. SAJANDI ALGUL: VÕRDLEV ASPEKT

Toivo Ü. RAUN

Artiklis on käsitletud leedulaste, lätlaste ja eestlaste venestamist keele, hariduse ja religiooni sfääris. Võrreldes Eesti ja Lätiga oli venestamine Leedus 19. sajandi teisel poolel intensiivsem ja algas paarkümmend aastat varem. Sellega taotles tsaarivalitsus Poola mõju eliminеerimist Leedus. Samas toimisid Leedus venestamise negatiivset mõju kompenseerivad ja rahvuslikku liikumist stimuleerivad faktorid. Kultuuriline venestamine aitas kaasa leedulaste vabanemisele poola kultuuri hegemooniast, eestlaste ja lätlaste puhul aga saksa kultuuri domineerimisest. Venestamine oli küll determineeriv faktor Baltimaade arengus, kuid andis tsaari režiimi soovidele vastupidise tulemuse. St. Peterburgi saamatud ja läbimõtlematud venestusaktsioonid ainult kiirendasid Balti rahvuslikke liikumisi.

РУСИФИКАЦИЯ В СФЕРЕ КУЛЬТУРЫ В ЛИТВЕ И ПРИБАЛТИЙСКИХ ГУБЕРНИЯХ В КОНЦЕ XIX—НАЧАЛЕ XX ВЕКОВ: СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ АСПЕКТ

Тойво Ю. РАУН

В статье рассматривается вопрос о культурной русификации литовцев, латышей и эстонцев в сфере языка, образования и религии. По сравнению с Эстонией и Латвией русификация в Литве была более интенсивной и началась на два десятка лет раньше. Этим царское правительство пыталось элиминировать польское влияние в Литве. В то же время в Литве действовали такие факторы, которые компенсировали негативное воздействие русификации и стимулировали национальное движение. Культурная русификация содействовала освобождению литовцев от польской культурной гегемонии и эстонцев, латышей от доминирования немецкой культуры. Русификация являлась детерминирующим фактором в развитии Прибалтики, но дала противоположный результат. Неловкие и непродуманные обрусительные акции только подталкивали национальные движения прибалтийских народов.