

**SCTCMG 2021**  
**International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the Context of  
Modern Globalism»**

**GERMANS' SOCIAL AWARENESS IN RELATION TO RUSSIA IN  
THE XVI–XVII CENTURIES**

Malyshkina Elena Vladimirovna (a)\*, Goroshko Olga Nikolaevna (b),  
Klimova Natalya Yuryevna (c), Privorotskaya Elena Evgenievna (d)

\*Corresponding author

(a) North Caucasus Federal University (branch) in Pyatigorsk, 56, 40 Let Oktyabrya Ave., Pyatigorsk, Russia,  
soft\_25@mail.ru

(b) North Caucasus Federal University (branch) in Pyatigorsk, 56, 40 Let Oktyabrya Ave., Pyatigorsk, Russia,  
goroshko\_olenka@mail.ru

(c) North Caucasus Federal University (branch) in Pyatigorsk, 56, 40 Let Oktyabrya Ave., Pyatigorsk, Russia,  
nazar11081@mail.ru

(d) North Caucasus Federal University (branch) in Pyatigorsk, 56, 40 Let Oktyabrya Ave., Pyatigorsk, Russia,  
eprivo@mail.ru

**Abstract**

The authors touch upon the development of relations between German and Russian peoples in the process of economic and trade relations emergence between Germany and Russia in the period of the XVI–XVII centuries; describe the generalized experience of adaptation of German settlers in a completely new social environment for them and note the fact of increasing Russian authority in Europe, the origins of which were the search for the foundations of mutual understanding and trust, as well as a fairly long period of rapprochement between Russia and Germany. After the Livonian War, a negative stereotype about Russia developed in the national consciousness of the German population, which served as an impulse for migration sentiments, coupled with a desire to see everything for themselves, considering it a backward country with a slavish population. The authors also consider measures to organize the resettlement of German peasants and attempt to identify problematic issues of the arrangement of their future. In relation to foreigners in medieval Russia, there were numerous restrictions due to the internal political state of the country. In Peter the Great years, with the establishment of business contacts with Germany. But despite the multiple attempts to improve the lives of German society representatives, especially those who arrived in Russia as the first batches of immigrants, they could not adapt to local conditions and returned to their homeland. Some, hoping for the best, remained and were taken out to the citizenship of the Russian emperors.

2357-1330 © 2021 Published by European Publisher.

*Keywords:* Foreign merchants, German states, national identity, Russia, resettlement



## **1. Introduction**

One of the first pieces of documentary evidence of the official formation of German settlements in the Russian state, which has survived, is the Decree of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich "On the allocation of land for a building in the German Quarter", dated 1652. The document refers to the allotment of land plots to residents of the "German Quarter beyond the Pokrovsky Gate" on the banks of the Yauza River in Moscow (Puzeikina, 2013). However, this fact was preceded by a rather long period of rapprochement between Russia and Germany, whose peoples were searching for the foundations of mutual understanding and trust. Researchers of the history of developing mutual relations between the two peoples note that its origins date back to the times of Kievan Rus when the Germans gained the first experience of meeting Russians (Lobanov, 2001).

Until the end of the XIX century, Russia was the only country in the world where a powerful and almost constant migration flow from Germany was directed (Vasyutin & Shishigin, 2007). This conclusion can be confirmed by the results of the first All-Russian population census conducted in 1897. There were 1.8 million Germans registered in the Russian state (Matsuk, 2012). But before the Germans decided to resettle and find a second homeland for themselves, it took almost three centuries to overcome the very unfavourable image of Russia that had developed at that time. In their understanding, it combined both love and hate at the same time, its image was based mainly on acquaintance with the works of travellers who visited Russia at different times. They began to appear around the middle of the XVI century and were quite lengthy and detailed descriptions of Russian life. Some researchers believe that it was during this period that the close interaction began of "two worlds significantly different in many parameters and insufficiently aware of each other but already predominated by the burden of tradition and predetermined attitudes, both ideological and worldview" (Lobanov, 2001, p. 141).

## **2. Problem Statement**

From the standpoint of domestic policy, the Russian state has constantly set itself the task of expanding the space from an economic perspective and made attempts to create a powerful state on this basis. The solution to this problem was seen in attracting additional labor resources for the development of uninhabited land. It was decided to plan the relocation of certain population segments to remote regions of the country, including German settlers.

In the historical period under study, the problem of settling uninhabited territories remained relevant, despite the nature and intensity of the processes in the state development sphere.

The topic of the article is determined by the need to search for new theoretical approaches to the scientific understanding of the Russian resettlement policy, in this case, concerning the German population.

## **3. Research Questions**

Examining the prerequisites and the process itself the resettlement of Germans to the territory of the Russian state is seen as necessary:

- determine the dependence of the intensity of the resettlement of German people to Russia from the specifics of international relations and foreign policy;
- describe the main stages of the spread of the German colonies, which are an integral part of the internal Russian policy, the priority of which was the economic development of new territories;
- consider the measures taken by the Russian state on the resettlement policy of the Germans, their settlement on new lands through the prism of revealing the true intentions of Russia for their use.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this article is a comprehensive study of the prerequisites and factors for the resettlement of individual representatives of the German population to the territory of the Russian Empire in the context of political, economic, and scientific international relations development. Of greatest interest is the question of studying the legislative framework and legal aspects of life in the German colonies; description of the norms of reception and accommodation of foreigners.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The existing achievements of domestic and foreign historians in the field of studying the resettlement policy of the Russian state have undoubtedly helped in the study of this issue. The methodological basis of the work is such principles of scientific knowledge as consistency, historicism, and objectivity, which indicate the complex application of general scientific approaches that allow analyzing the problem and its individual elements. The origin and spread of German colonies on the territory of Russia were studied in a broad historical context, taking into account the experience of various historical periods and regions, confirming the predominance of a concrete historical approach, on its basis, each method was used to solve the tasks set. For example, the comparative-historical method and the method of retrospective analysis helped to identify the main factors and components of the relationship between Germany and Russia, affecting the resettlement of German peasants, the motives, nature and dynamics of the movement of colonists, to find a justification for the desire of foreigners to develop Russian territories. Using the problem-chronological method, it was possible to identify the dominant aspects of the analysis of relationships evolution between representatives of the German peoples and the central, regional government.

#### **6. Findings**

The Livonian War was of great importance for the formation of a negative stereotype towards Russia, during which the "myth of the Russian threat" began to spread in Europe. The German leadership, really fearing an attack from the "Muscovites", hatched plans for a pre-emptive strike, and even the creation of an interstate "anti-Moscow league" to seize Muscovy and turn it into a province controlled by European states (Lobanov, 2001). It is quite possible that the propaganda campaign that unfolded on this occasion played a role in the fact that many representatives of the German people had a desire to see for themselves and know the hotbed of danger on the European continent.

Actually, there were not so many people willing to, but the written heritage left by them to a certain extent contributed to the dissemination of objective information about Russia and the Russian people. For example, Groeneveg, not being a professional traveller, had been travelling to different countries for more than ten years. In Moscow, he was an assistant to an Armenian merchant at the end of 1584 – the first half of 1585. Three years later, in the seclusion at a monastery, he spent several years describing his experiences of travel. In relation to the Russian capital, the author provided a detailed description of Kitay-gorod, Vasilyevsky Descent and many other places of interest, paying special attention to the "Gostiny Dvor for foreign Merchants", which really existed in Moscow since the beginning of the XVI century (Seleznev, 2007). From the existing historical descriptions of the Russian capital, it is better known as the "Lithuanian Court", which was located at the time of Groeneveg on Pokrovskaya Street (Seleznev, 2007). But even at that time, according to witnesses, a fairly large number of foreigners were permanently living and temporarily staying in Moscow. Among them, Germans who were captured during the Livonian War, as well as those who voluntarily entered the military service of the Grand Duke, predominated.

In addition to the settlement of Livonian captives in Bronnaya Sloboda (Vasyutin & Shishigin, 2007), there were also Rugodiv and Yuriev settlements of Germans in Moscow at that time, which were later resettled in Nizhny Novgorod (Lobanov, 2001) and Kazan. Here the "Germans" lived until the beginning of the XVII century in the private estates of Knyazh Nurushev, located along the Kazanka River. Apparently, for reasons of facilitating communication, the owners usually gave them Tatar or Russian names, under which they entered them in the corresponding registration sheets (Seleznev, 2007).

Likely, this was also done for the reason that there were quite a lot of restrictions for foreigners in medieval Russia. They were forbidden to move freely on the streets of cities, not to mention deviations from the established trade routes. A foreign merchant could only trade in a strictly designated place. The exception was merchants who gave local residents goods on credit, freedom of movement was granted to them, on the one hand, in the form of incentives for installment payments and favourable organization of trade, on the other – to collect debts from buyers. However, it did not mean freedom of action. Even for the purchase of an icon in the workshops, a special permit from the local authorities was required, otherwise, the violator would be severely punished. Icon painters who violated the ban on selling icons to foreigners would be subject to the death penalty (Lobanov, 2001). This strictness was due to the internal political situation in the country during the period under review. At that time, it was believed that the icon could be poisoned and used for malicious intent, and this crime was equated with an attack on the sovereign or treason. The lightest punishments for such offences included public whipping (Vasyutin & Shishigin, 2007).

Information about Russia, gleaned by travellers, merchants, officials of various levels, in Germany became the subject of heated discussions, the nature of which testified to the keen interest of the Germans in the everyday, spiritual, cultural, and economic life of the Russians. Gradually, the image of Muscovy was formed in the public consciousness of Europeans as, first of all, a backward country with a despotic government and a slavishly submissive population. This perception reflected the specifics of the sources of information about the Russian state mentioned above. Travel notes and essays focused primarily on creating a national image, as well as a description of the environment in which these people lived and

developed (Bogoslovskaya & Shchegolikhina, 2015). It is possible that there was also an element of bias in the perception and evaluation of the events described, which is traditionally inherent in German thinking. At the same time, these assessments of medieval German authors were not only the key to understanding Russia and its people but also represented an integral part of the system of norms and priorities in which they and their readers lived, which guided their actions. In other words, the perception of Russia in German publications could not be separated from the perception of their authors and readers themselves. Thus, on the basis of standard judgments, stereotypical attitudes were created in the national consciousness of the German population.

Despite this, political relations were constantly strengthened and expanded at the interstate level. In the second half of the XVII century, several treaties were concluded with territorial states in Germany for various purposes. For example, the treaty of 1656 with the Elector of Brandenburg provided for neutral attitude of Moscow to its war with Sweden. During the reign of Alexey Mikhailovich, the number of German military personnel in the Russian army increased significantly, and the share of German craftsmen and artisans in the production of consumer goods also multiplied. German merchants began to appear more often in Russia, and many engineers and doctors who were temporarily in Moscow on some business decided to stay here permanent residence.

At the end of the XVII – beginning of the XVIII century, during the reign of Peter the Great relations between Russia and Germany became more stable and businesslike. This took place against the background of the strengthening of Russian political positions in European life, as well as in the internal affairs of the German states. Especially strong connections were established with Brandenburg, the development of these relations led to the Polish throne the Elector of Saxony August. At the turn of the century, in alliance with Saxony and Denmark, Russia entered a war with Sweden. Not without Russian support, to the detriment of Polish interests, in 1701 in Königsberg, Frederick I was proclaimed King of Prussia (Lobanov, 2001). Naturally, all these events were shared with the German public and had a significant impact on the evolution of ideas about Russia as a new reliable political partner.

This period also includes the establishment of business contacts between Russia and Germany, due to the desire of both states to strengthen their military power. Even before the new century, Ivan V and Peter I issued a joint decree, based on which samples of ore rocks were sent to Germany to study for the possible lead and silver precipitation. The fact that the Russian embassy in this document was instructed to "explore, find, and persuade experienced and necessary ore-smelters and ask if they will serve the Great Sovereigns" is of great interest (Erokhina, 2012). Apparently, this was one of the first official attempts to invite foreign specialists to work in Russia.

In a more concrete form, it was already expressed in the independent Peter the Great's manifesto dated April 16, 1702 "On the invitation of foreigners for the settlement in Russia promising freedom of religion" (Milostivaya, 2016). It is noteworthy that this decree no longer referred to representatives of any specific professions. The tsar addressed to all strata of the German population, regardless of rank, status and class. The legal status of the migrants was also specified, which was planned to be provided with the obligatory consideration of their national customs and mores, as well as the norms of Roman civil law, which was widespread in Europe. Special attention was paid to the promise of free worship. In this regard, it was pointed out that the Russian authorities will not "force" anyone and will permit "... to every

Christian on his responsibility to care for the bliss of his soul" (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2003, p. 79). In the absence of the required spiritual dignitary or the church itself in any place, the decree provided for permission

Not only to perform the service of the Lord God in his house, by himself and with his family but also to receive those who wish to gather with him, according to the general decree of the Christian churches, unanimously praise God and thus perform divine service. (Matsuk, 2012, p. 5)

For the time under study, this was an important addition, since spiritual life was given priority not only in Russia but in all European countries. The analyzed document is also important in the sense that it confirmed the readiness of the Russian authorities to comply with the established standards of reception and accommodation of foreigners in the European Community. In particular, it contained an obligation to resolve all disputable issues in the same way as "it is customary for other European Monarchs". It is possible that it was the content of this decree that served as the basis for the formation of migratory sentiments in a part of German society in the subsequent historical period.

It should be noted that during the reign of Peter the Great a lot of immigrants from Germany came to live in Russia. Some of them achieved high positions in various spheres of state and military service and became prominent political figures. So, Osterman, as you know, left leave an indelible mark on the diplomatic history of Russia, heading the foreign ministry for more than fifteen years even after Tsar Peter had died.

In addition to politics and military service, the Germans played a large part in the development of Russian science and education. During his stay in Germany, Tsar Peter often met with representatives of the German academic community. He developed a close relationship with Leibniz, the founder of the Berlin Academy of Sciences. It was he who suggested to the Russian tsar the idea of creating an Academy of Sciences in Russia, which was implemented with the active participation of the German scientific elite in 1724.

At the same time, at the level of the middle strata of German society, Russia was not perceived as a fully European state. Despite the expanding political, economic, and scientific connections, the increase in trade between the countries and cultural exchange, the intensive process of Europeanization of interstate relations, for most Germans, the Russians remained representatives of the "barbaric Asian country", that caused contradictory impressions bordering on a sense of fear. In their thoughts, the peasants constantly returned to the past and compared it with the present times. Based on the only criteria known to them, they concluded that life used to be easier and more understandable (Bondar et al., 2020). Some Germans who came to Russia for residence as part of the first batches of immigrants, could not adapt to local conditions and returned to their homeland. The other part, who managed to satisfy their needs and hoped for better prospects, remained and were taken out to the citizenship of the Russian emperors.

The process of resettlement from the territorial states of the Roman Empire was not the only way to increase the number of the German population of Russia. According to the Treaty of Nystad, which summed up the Northern War with Sweden, Esthonia and Livonia were included in the Russian Empire,

in which the positions of the German nobility, burghers, and clergy traditionally remained strong. But even ten years before the signing of this treaty, the Livonian and Esthonian nobles received Letters of Commendations of Peter I, in which they were guaranteed the preservation of "rights, statutes, liberties, virtues", as well as the return of "their estate, ... which, being hereditary, were illegally taken away" (Seleznev, 2007). Representatives of the Baltic nobility of German origin in the subsequent historical period occupied a worthy place in the Russian administrative and military structure. Many of them had senior government positions, served as ministers, governors, and were awarded high military ranks.

## 7. Conclusion

Russia at the beginning of the XVII century was turning into a Great Power and became the subject of the political development of Germany. In turn, the life of German society and the Russian-German dynastic ties established under the reign of Peter I had a direct impact on the course of Russian history. Not least of all, this factor left its mark on the further relations between the two states. The measures taken by the Russian leadership to preserve the integrity of Prussia also served to strengthen their alliance. At that time, England was striving for its division, seriously fearing the strengthening of power and role of Russia in European affairs and jealously guarding its commercial hegemony in the world. The unsatisfied British still managed to spread the myth of the growing Russian threat to European countries using a broad propaganda campaign and convince some German princes of this. The attitude towards Russia did not change dramatically, but there were still certain doubts and apprehension in the public opinion.

Nevertheless, the list of outstanding personalities of German origin in Russian history is quite representative, the merit of each of them is also that they contributed to a certain extent to the growth of Russian international status, and for their former compatriots were the guarantors of trustworthiness of Russia. As a result, at first tens, and then hundreds of thousands of Germans decided to move to an unknown and mysterious country, which was highly attractive due to its inexhaustible territorial and economic potential.

## References

- Bogoslovskaya, Z. M., & Shchegolikhina, Y. V. (2015). Features of the Concept FAMILIE Represented in the Biographical Discourse of Russian Germans. *European Proceedings of Social and Behavioral Sciences* 200, 167.
- Bondar, I. A., Malyshkina, E. V., Kolesnikov, I. N., & Klimova, N. Yu. (2020). Rural tradition in the peasant conception of the collectivized village life. *Issues of History*, 8(191), 288.
- Erokhina, E. A. (2012). *Siberian vector of internal geopolitics of Russia*. Novosibirsk: Institute of Philosophy and Law of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences.
- Jasinskaja-Lahti, I., Lebkind, K., Horenczyk, G., & Schmitz, P. (2003). The interactive nature of acculturation: perceived discrimination, acculturation attitudes and stress among young ethnic repatriates in Finland, Israel and Germany. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27(1), 79.
- Lobanov, N. A. (2001). The image of Russia in German society of the XVI–XVII centuries. In: *Studies on the Source Study of the History of Russia (before 1917)* (pp 133–152). Institute of Russian History of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

- Matsuk, M. A. (2012). On the question of the reasons for the transition from descriptions to censuses in Russia in the XVII century. *Historical Demography, 1*, 4–11. Institute of Language, Literature and History of the Komi National Center of the Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences.
- Milostivaya, A. (2016). On Perception of Culture Codes in German Translations (Based on Works by Bulgakov, M.). *European Proceedings of Social and Behavioral Sciences, 231*, 229.
- Puzeikina, L. N. (2013). *The germans in the St. Petersburg province: history, language, songs*. St. Petersburg: Limited Liability Company “Nestor-Istoriya”.
- Seleznev, R. S. (2007). Mental history of the Middle Ages in the works of Gurevich, A. Ya. In: *Political violence in the Historical Memory of Germany and Russia* (pp. 609–625). Kuzbassvuzizdat.
- Vasyutin, S. A., & Shishigin, K. A. (2007). Confessional violence in Germany in the XVI century. In: *Political violence in the Historical Memory of Germany and Russia* (pp. 57–76). Kuzbassvuzizdat.