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German Perceptions of Poland and Russia in the Early Modern Period

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GERMAN PERCEPTIONS OF POLAND AND RUSSIA
IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
History

by
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Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the views of Germans on the people and institutions of Russia and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Early Modern period. While German opinions of Eastern Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have been well researched, there is a gap in the historiography for the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. German perceptions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia ranged from those who stereotyped the East as a backward, uncivilized place to be dominated or changed to those who appreciated and celebrated various aspects of Polish or Russian culture. By analyzing the views of German intellectuals, travelers, rulers and others on Russia and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, it is possible to understand the complex nature of Early Modern German views of the East before they were influenced by biologically-based racism and ethnic nationalism.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my thesis work to Sarah and my family. It would not have been possible without Sarah's constant support and encouragement during graduate school. Having you in my life has been a blessing. My parents, Donna and Russ, have always loved me unconditionally, provided me with wonderful role models, and instilled in me the idea that I can achieve anything I set my mind to. My sister, Heather, is very special to me and has always been there for me. Thank you all.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The German discourse on the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia in the Early Modern period was not dominated by any single topos. Rather, German opinions of the people, places and institutions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia shifted as politics, rulers and circumstances changed in those nations. German views of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia ranged from positive to neutral to negative; these countries and their people were alternatively described as anarchic and despotic, weak and threatening, or backward but striving toward Enlightened ideas of progress. Some Germans saw the nations to their east as mysterious and exotic, while others decided to immigrate to Krakow or St. Petersburg and embraced local culture and institutions. By studying a range of sources and not focusing exclusively on negative images (as earlier scholars have done), a much more complex narrative emerges.

This study encompasses German views of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, roughly the Early Modern period. During the last half of the fifteenth century, the discovery of Tacitus' *Germania* precipitated an awakening and redefinition of German identity. On the eve of the Protestant Reformation, German proto-nationalists like Conrad Celtes and Ulrich von Hutten championed Germanic origins for the German people instead of Roman origins and defined their 'nation' in opposition to Rome.¹ It was during this time—the late fifteenth to early sixteenth centuries—that the idea of Germanness was developed. For Germans, the end of the Early Modern period came at roughly the same time as the birth

¹ Stephanie Leitch, "The Wild Man, Charlemagne and the German Body," *Art History* 31 (2008), 286.

of German nationalism. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, Prussia's defeat by Napoleon, and Fichte's 1808 *Addresses to the German Nation* all contributed to the development of German nationalism. For the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia, the Early Modern period could be bookended by the Third Partition of Poland in 1795 and Catherine the Great's death in 1796. Periodization is always problematic and the Early Modern period is particularly awkward. This is a vast stretch of time that includes the Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment, but looking at German views of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia during this period nonetheless allows us to see a variety of opinions before ideas of biological racism and ethnic nationalism developed in the Modern era.

German views of the East in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have received much scholarly attention. Historians and literary critics have often analyzed this discourse through the language of colonialism and Orientalism. Historians of German perceptions of their eastern neighbors have tended to focus on negative stereotypes of the East while downplaying or ignoring the positive sources. They have looked at German policies of conquest and domination as well as cultural and literary engagement with the East that have been influenced by imperialism, ethnic nationalism, and biological racism. Some historians have even attempted to show continuity in German history from the German medieval settlement of Eastern Europe (*Ostsiedlung*) to nineteenth and twentieth century ideas such as *Drang nach Osten* ('yearning for the East') and *Lebensraum*. In comparison to these time periods, German views of the East in the Early Modern period have received little scholarly attention.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, German historians of the East tended to focus on German settlement there. The process of German medieval settlement of Eastern Europe is known as the *deutsche Ostsiedlung*, and involved the migration of Germans to parts of modern Poland, Hungary, Romania and the Baltic states by way of military conquest and conversion to Christianity, as well as peaceful settlement. Many historians now regard the movement as less of a purely *deutsche Ostsiedlung* and more as the spread of Western Europe to the east through settlement, conquest, and the transformation of urban centers through German town law.² The *Ostsiedlung*, as is commonly envisioned by historians today, included the settlement of non-Germans (particularly Dutch, Walloons, and Danes) as well as the spread of German town law without Germans. However, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, German *Ostforschung* historians often highlighted the ‘successes’ of Germans in the East.

Ostforschung historians praised the *deutsche Ostsiedlung* for bringing civilization to the ‘barbaric’ East. The nineteenth-century historian Heinrich von Treitschke wrote that German settlement in the East had introduced ‘the gifts of German culture’ to its primitive people, including improved agricultural techniques, stone architecture, and the Church.³ During the Weimar Republic, Heidelberg professor Karl Hampe described the *Ostsiedlung* as the ‘great deed of the German people’ using Social Darwinist terms.⁴ In

² Klaus Zernack, “The Middle Ages,” in *The Germans and the East*, ed. Charles W. Ingrao and Franz A. J. Szabo (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008), 10. Also see Jan M. Piskorski, “The Historiography of the So-Called ‘East Colonisation’ and the Current State of Research,” in *The Man of Many Devices, Who Wandered Full Many Ways: Festschrift in Honor of Janos Bak*, ed. Balazs Nagy and Marcell Sebok, 654-667 (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999).

³ Heinrich von Treitschke, *Das deutsche Ordensland Preußen* (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1862), 12.

⁴ Karl Hampe, *Der Zug nach dem Osten. Die koloniasatorische Großtat des deutschen Volkes im Mittelalter* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1921).

1926, the Ostforschung historian Walter Kuhn went to Ukraine to study German communities there and praised the “strength and beauty of the German Volkstum.”⁵ Kuhn was later involved in Nazi efforts to resettle Jews, Poles and Germans, and participated in a commission that evaluated if German communities in the East should be ‘repatriated.’

Kuhn was one of many Ostforschung scholars whose research informed and aided Nazi racial policies in the East. The pseudoscientific studies of the leading Ostforschung historian, Albert Brackmann, were used as propaganda to support Nazi policies of ethnic cleansing in Eastern Europe. In a 1939 booklet written for the *Ahnenerbe* (a Nazi propaganda institution founded by Heinrich Himmler to research the archaeology and history of the Aryan race), Brackmann wrote: “The German people were the only bearers of civilization in the East, and as the main power in Europe, defended Western civilization and brought it to the uncivilized nations. For centuries Germany formed an eastern bulwark against lack of civilisation, and protected Europe against barbarism.”⁶ Without using the specific term, Brackmann described Germany as the *antemurale christianitatis* against Polish and Russian savagery. Nazi Ostforschung historians saw their work as a continuation of the *Ostsiedlung* and as part of a larger *Drang nach Osten*, furthering the centuries old cause of German expansion in the East. After World War Two, the German medieval historian Walter Schlesinger famously criticized

⁵ Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 336.

⁶ Albert Brackmann, *Krisis und Aufbau in Osteuropa. Ein weltgeschichtliches Bild* (Berlin: Ahnenerbe-Stiftung Verlag, 1939), 11. Quoted in Michael Burleigh, *Germany Turns Eastwards: A Study of Ostforschung in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 151.

Ostforschung for enabling and lending credibility to the Nazi's racial program, and he sought to redirect the study of the *Ostsiedlung*.⁷

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, historians and literary critics have become interested in the West's discourses on the East. In his landmark study *Orientalism*, Edward Said defined the titular concept as a "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."⁸ To Said, Orientalism was the study of how the West imagined the Orient and used it to reinforce colonial rule and dominance. Said's *Orientalism* is concerned almost exclusively with British and French writers, and he claimed that Germans did not have a "sustained national interest in the Orient" though they did maintain "a kind of intellectual authority over the Orient."⁹

By taking Said's framework for Orientalism in its broadest terms, it is possible to incorporate a variety of East vs. West discourses. In fact, scholars have recently written on forms of American, Irish, Polish, Russian, Ottoman, Persian and Japanese Orientalism.¹⁰ Jennifer Jenkins writes, "Breaking the connection between Orientalism and European empire allows a different set of dynamics to emerge, namely those between

⁷ For German criticism of *Ostforschung* research, see Walter Schlesinger, "Die mittelalterliche deutsche Ostbewegung und die deutsche Ostforschung," *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropaforschung* 46 (1977): 427-457.

⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 3.

⁹ Said, 19.

¹⁰ See Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Joseph Lennon, *Irish Orientalism: A Literary and Intellectual History* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004); Thomas Lahusen, "Colonized Colonizers: The Poles of Manchuria," in *Crossed Histories: Manchuria in the Age of Empire*, ed. Mariko Asano Tamanoi (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005): 150-164; David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); Ussama Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," *The American Historical Review* 107 (2002): 768-796; Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Past into History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995).

Orientalism, nationalism, and imperialism.”¹¹ By broadening the definition of Orientalism, scholars have thus been able to look at how western Europeans viewed the people and institutions of Eastern Europe.

In his 1994 book *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, historian Larry Wolff argues that the concept of ‘Eastern Europe’ was created in the eighteenth century by Enlightenment thinkers. Wolff writes that Eastern Europe is a cultural construct that served as a mediator between the civilized West and the barbaric Orient. Wolff refers to the process of describing places such as Croatia and Poland as within Europe but not quite European as an “intellectual project of demi-Orientalization.”¹² Thus, by describing Eastern Europe as backward in relation to the West, Enlightenment thinkers were defining and inventing the West as well. Most of Wolff’s sources were British and French writers, though some Germans, Italians and others are included. Other scholars have looked at how Germans viewed Eastern Europe through the lens of Orientalism.

Historians who have researched German views of Eastern Europe have typically studied the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and focused on the negative discourse. Scholars such as Carroll P. Kakel, Kristin Kopp, Vejas Liulevicius, Suzanne Marchand and Gregor Thum have looked at German perceptions of Eastern Europe in the Modern era and often employ terms such as Orientalism, colonialism, and manifest destiny in

¹¹ Jennifer Jenkins, “German Orientalism: Introduction,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24 (2004): 98.

¹² Wolff, 7.

their writing.¹³ In *German Orientalisms*, Todd Kontje provides an overview of German literary representations of the East—including Eastern Europe and the typical Orient—from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century and argues that the East was essential to the formation of German identity.¹⁴ David Pickus writes of how Germans considered the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth a foil to Germany during the Partitions Era, an example of what a modern state should not be.¹⁵ While Marshall Poe traces European representations of Russia throughout the Early Modern period and contends that rather than an exoticized, orientalized portrayal, his sources provided reliable accounts of Russia.¹⁶ In his study of Germans and the East from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century, German historian Wolfgang Wippermann has broken with the trend of highlighting negative perceptions of the East, though he does write that Germans who orientalized the East or saw it as a threat outnumber those who saw it as a dreamland.¹⁷

Perhaps more than any other scholar, Bernhard Struck has sought to undermine the arguments of Said and Wolff in the context of Germans and the East. Although the majority of Wolff's sources are British or French, Struck uses accounts by German travelers to Poland and France in his book *Nicht West - nicht Ost: Frankreich und Polen*

¹³ See Carroll P. Kakel, *The American West and the Nazi East: A Comparative and Interpretive Perspective* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Kristin Kopp, *Germany's Wild East: Constructing Poland as Colonial Space* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012); Vejas Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East: 1800 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Suzanne Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Race, Religion, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Gregor Thum, *Traumland Osten. Deutsche Bilder vom östlichen Europa im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

¹⁴ Todd Kontje, *German Orientalisms* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004).

¹⁵ David Pickus, "Dying With an Enlightening Fall: Poland in the Eyes of German Intellectuals, 1764-1800" (PhD diss. University of Chicago, 1995).

¹⁶ Marshall T. Poe, *A People Born to Slavery: Russia in Early Modern European Ethnography, 1476-1748* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).

¹⁷ Wolfgang Wippermann, *Die Deutschen und der Osten. Feindbild und Traumland* (Frankfurt: Primus Verlag, 2007).

in der Wahrnehmung deutscher Reisender zwischen 1750 und 1850.¹⁸ Struck argues convincingly that the primary dichotomies that led western Europeans to label parts of Europe as backward or civilized were not an invented East-West divide, but rather the differences between urban and rural, Protestant and Catholic. It is important to look past the binary opposition of East and West to see that it is possible for there to be engagement with the East where the West does not see itself as dominant.

This research project was initially conceived as an attempt to understand Early Modern German views of Eastern Europe, but it became clear that Europeans had no concept of 'Eastern Europe' in that time period. We tend to think of Eastern Europe through a twentieth century lens, stretching from 'Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic,' but that is anachronous. Although Larry Wolff's argument in *Inventing Eastern Europe* rests on the 'invention' of 'Eastern Europe' in the eighteenth century, Enlightenment thinkers did not use that terminology. Instead, Wolff relied on paraphrase to insert the idea of Eastern Europe into Enlightenment thinkers' minds.¹⁹ In fact, the term Eastern Europe was not used until the Swedish historian Johann Erich Thunmann's 1774 book *Untersuchungen über die Geschichte der östlichen europäischen Völker* (Studies on the History of the Eastern European Peoples).²⁰ Early Modern Europeans

¹⁸ Bernhard Struck, *Nicht West - nicht Ost: Frankreich und Polen in der Wahrnehmung deutscher Reisender zwischen 1750 und 1850*, Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006.

¹⁹ For example, take Wolff's description of Voltaire's *History of Charles the Twelfth*. Wolff writes, "When Voltaire followed Charles into the Ukraine, the book could no longer pretend to be about "the North" of Europe. The Ukraine was introduced by Voltaire as the "land of the Cossacks, situated between Little Tartary, Poland, and Muscovy," and that grouping of lands could only make sense as Eastern Europe." Wolff, 91.

²⁰ Johann Erich Thunmann, *Untersuchungen über die Geschichte der östlichen europäischen Völker* (Leipzig: Siegfried Leberecht Crusius, 1774). Quoted in Alex Drace-Francis, "Towards a Natural History of East European Travel Writing," in *Under Eastern Eyes: A Comparative Introduction to East European Travel Writing on Europe*, ed. Wendy Bracewell (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008), 2.

divided their continent more along the lines of North/South than East/West, and Germans often defined their ‘nation’ in opposition to Rome during this time.²¹

Since Early Modern Europeans did not think in terms of Eastern Europe and Western Europe, it makes sense to focus on German views of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia. Other than the Ottoman Empire, Russia and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were the two largest and most powerful states of Eastern Europe in the Early Modern era.²² As such, they provided Germans at various times with educational or economic opportunities, something to compare their homeland to, and at other times something to fear or disparage. In addition, there are a relatively large amount of German sources on the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia in the Early Modern period. That is not the case for other regions and entities of Eastern Europe that were considered for this project, including Bohemia, Silesia, Hungary, Livonia and others, which were under foreign rule for much or all of the Early Modern period. German sources on these regions are limited and there is little in the sources to indicate that Early Modern Germans linked Croatia and Courland or Moravia with Moldavia. Thus, the focus of this project is on the two large states that existed in Eastern Europe for the majority of the Early Modern period: the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia.

Thus, the topic of this research project is not the whole of Eastern Europe, nor is it concerned with the typical Orient—the lands of the Near East, Far East and the Indian

²¹ Gerald Strauss, *Manifestations of Discontent in Germany on the Eve of the Reformation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1971), 56.

²² What I refer to as Poland was actually the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from 1569-1795, and Russia was often referred to as Muscovy during this period.

subcontinent—but rather two critical regions of what can be called the European Orient. Unlike the traditional Orient or the European territories of the Ottoman Empire, Poland and Russia were under Christian rule. Although there were often sectarian differences between German observers and the mostly Catholic Poles and Orthodox Russians, their views of these people of other Christian sects were bound to be different from their views of Muslim Turks or Jewish Poles.

While there were religious differences between Early Modern Germans and the Poles and Russians they wrote about, it is also important to note the differences between the background of the German writers. By claiming to reproduce the opinions of Germans toward the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia I am retroactively ascribing the term German to a diverse group of people that shared little other than language. In fact, this shared language differed greatly throughout the German-speaking regions of Central Europe prior to standardization efforts in the nineteenth century, though the spread of literacy due to the printing press and vernacular translations of the Bible did much to standardize the language. These people may have considered themselves primarily as Saxons or Austrians, as citizens of the Holy Roman Empire, or simply as Christians. In the Early Modern period, there was no unified Germany. Instead, the weak Holy Roman Empire was made up of hundreds of small entities called *Kleinstaaterei*, several medium-sized states (such as Bavaria and Saxony), and two large states (Austria and Prussia).²³ Thus, the focus of this research is primarily on the opinions of German-speaking citizens of the various constituent states of the Holy Roman Empire.

²³ Mary Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 69.

This means simplifying a diverse group of people who spoke different dialects and practiced different religions into a single category and in turn analyzing their views on the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia.

The sources consulted for my thesis largely come from the upper and middle classes, and most authors received some degree of formal education. These sources include scholars, philosophers, rulers, scientists, poets, travelers and diplomats. Because the vast majority of scholars, writers and diplomats in the Early Modern period were men, there are few female sources. The types of sources used to ascertain German views include political tracts, philosophical treatises, travelers' accounts, personal correspondence, diaries, fiction, encyclopedic texts, and the lives of Germans who moved to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth or Russia. While all these writers spoke German and most written sources are in that language, some wrote in Latin (like Conrad Celtes) while others wrote in French (such as Frederick the Great). Some of the sources visited the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth or Russia, but many did not as neither was on any Grand Tour itinerary. In the absence of empirical evidence from travel, German thinkers of the Renaissance and Enlightenment leaned heavily on existing narratives and tended to base their views of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia on stereotypes established by other travelers.

Another issue that arises with trying to ascertain German views of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia in the Early Modern period is that these countries were not a primary concern of Germans. While the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was geographically close to Germany and there were trade relations between the two,

Poland attracted the attention of Germans only intermittently in the Early Modern period. That said, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had significantly more commercial, cultural and political relations with the German states than Russia did before the reign of Peter the Great. In general, German interest in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia peaked during periods of transformation or war, such as the reign of Peter the Great and the Partitions of Poland. However, for most of the Early Modern period, German interest in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia was overshadowed by more pressing events such as their fear of ‘the Turk’ or the religious conflicts that followed the Protestant Reformation.

When Germans did write about the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth or Russia, they often followed the narrative set by their predecessors. Certain themes recur in accounts of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia, but not all German writers shared these views. Contemporaries could produce wildly different images of the East, as is the case with Adam Olearius and Paul Fleming who visited Russia as part of the same diplomatic mission in the 1630s, or when analyzing the views of Frederick the Great and Lorenz Christoph Mizler on Poland in the mid-eighteenth century. With the idea of progress in their heads, some Germans found the people and institutions of Eastern Europe to be inferior to their Western counterparts. In this reading of history, societies develop linearly from primitive to advanced. To some, the East was an unenlightened land of barbarian customs, ‘Asiatic’ despotism, serfdom and slavery, mysterious and superstitious religious sects, underdeveloped economies, and anarchy. Even the geography of Eastern Europe was frequently portrayed as inferior to the West; travelers

to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth often commented on the marshes and sandy soil, while those in Russia saw steppe and vast tracts of uncleared forest. Painting a picture of the East as backward, in opposition to the modern West, made it easier to justify conquest and colonization of the East.

German perceptions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia nonetheless changed with the circumstances in those countries. Both Poland and Russia were little known during the Renaissance, but that began to change in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the eighteenth century, these two nations were on completely different trajectories, as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth faltered while Russia expanded and grew closer to Europe. In the sixteenth century, Poland was considered little different from other European states, while Russia was a barbaric, 'Asiatic' realm ruled by a despot. During the reign of Peter the Great, Germans began to see Russia as striving for Enlightenment. Eighteenth-century Poland, however, was seen as an anarchic and anachronistic abomination; it was a feudal state in a time of constitutional monarchies and absolutism. Though some cheered the partitions that wiped Poland off the map, many Germans voiced sympathy for Poland and condemned the partitions. Furthermore, thousands of Germans chose to immigrate to Poland or Russia for the various opportunities they offered during the Early Modern period.

It is important to study German views of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia in the Early Modern period because they were multifaceted, not monolithic, as some historians have argued. Although negative stereotypes of the East certainly existed before the ideas of ethnic nationalism and biologically based racism were

widespread, they were only one part of a complex German discourse on the East. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was a shift in German perceptions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia to a more hegemonic view, with disastrous effects. Stripped of the binary opposition of East and West as modern and backward, civilized and savage, a much more complex narrative of German views of Poland and Russia emerges.

CHAPTER 2: POLAND

German Views of Poland from 1500 to the Partitions Era

Poland's relationship with its German neighbors to the west stretches back to German settlement east of the Elbe and Oder rivers in the Middle Ages. Through the Northern Crusades and the *Ostsiedlung*, Germans conquered and settled east of the Elbe, along the shores of the Baltic Sea, and in the towns and cities of Poland. The towns of Elbing, Danzig, Toruń and Krakow became members of the Hanseatic League and German merchants frequented Poland. In the thirteenth century, the German military order called the Teutonic Knights firmly established itself on the southern shores of the Baltic Sea. The Teutonic Knights came into conflict with the Kingdom of Poland in the fourteenth century, and what followed was almost continuous warfare between Poland and the Teutonic Knights until 1525. In that year, Grand Master Albert was invested as Duke of Prussia and the Teutonic state became a fief of the Polish crown. Conflict between Poland and the German states was infrequent for the rest of the Early Modern period.

In the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern period, Poland was considered part of Europe (unlike Russia). The country became part of 'Christendom' in 966 upon the baptism of Duke Mieszko I, considered the founder of the Polish state. From its beginnings, Poland shared a land border with German states, and commercial, cultural and political ties grew over time. Unlike Russia, Poland was not an exotic, alien land far beyond the accepted borders of Christendom. Poland's people were largely Catholic, and

Latin was spoken widely. The University of Krakow, which became one of Europe's great centers of learning, was founded in 1364, a year before the first university in German speaking lands.²⁴ The University of Krakow produced Polish scholars such as Copernicus and the poet Jan Kochanowski, and foreign scholars such as the German Conrad Celtes and the Italian humanist Filippo Buonaccorsi came to Krakow to study and teach at the university. Thus, Poland took part in the intellectual exchange of ideas that blossomed in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and Polish scholars' ideas were disseminated across Europe.

Although Germans were familiar with Poland, relatively little was written about the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from roughly 1500 to 1750. David Pickus argues that Germans neglected to write about Poland in the sixteenth century because "This was a time when German lands were torn apart by internecine religious warfare, and the Polish Commonwealth was both relatively peaceful and at the height of its powers."²⁵ In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Germans had to contend with the Protestant Reformation which led to the Peasants' War, the Schmalkaldic War, and the Thirty Years' War (fought almost exclusively in German lands), as well as the perceived existential threat of 'the Turk.' At this time, Poland's enemies were largely to the North, East and South, not the West. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth fought numerous wars against Sweden, Russia, the Cossacks, Crimean Tatars, and the Ottoman Empire and its vassals (including Moldavia and

²⁴ Duke Rudolph IV of Austria founded the University of Vienna in 1365, and the University of Heidelberg was founded by Rupert I, Elector Palatine in 1386.

²⁵ David Pickus, "German Writers, Power and Collapse: The Emergence of *Polenliteratur* in Eighteenth-Century Germany," in *Germans and the East*, ed. Charles W. Ingrao and Franz A. J. Szabo (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008), 79.

Transylvania). There were very few conflicts between Poland and German states prior to the Partitions, though Maximilian III of Austria besieged Krakow in 1587 and Austria, Prussia and Saxony supported the Elector of Saxony, Augustus III, in the War of Polish Succession (1733-1738). Furthermore, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was not on any Grand Tour itineraries, so fewer people traveled to or wrote about Poland than France or Italy, for instance. With the exception of a few events and Germans who visited or immigrated to Krakow or Warsaw, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was largely neglected by German writers until the last half of the eighteenth century.

One way in which Early Modern western Europeans viewed the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was as a bulwark against threats from the East. Although the term *antemurale christianitatis*—bulwark of Christendom—eventually came to denote a nation that defended Europe’s eastern border against Muslim attacks, its meaning evolved over time. The notion of *antemurale christianitatis* presupposed a unified Christendom, which served as a precursor to the idea of Europe. The idea of a ‘bulwark of Christendom’ was not limited to Poland (it was also ascribed to Croatia and Hungary), nor was it used exclusively to refer to threats from Islamic powers such as the Turks or Tatars. The term was often evoked in wars against Muscovy, even though Russians were Orthodox Christians.²⁶

²⁶ Wiktor Weintraub, “Renaissance Poland and ‘Antemurale Christianitatis,’” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3/4 (1979-1980), 920.

The earliest recognition of Poland as a defender of Christendom came in the aftermath of the Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century.²⁷ In a 1343 letter to Pope Clement VI, King Casimir III of Poland described Tatars and Lithuanians as “enemies of the Christian faith,” providing the first Polish claim of defending Christendom.²⁸ The Italian humanist Francesco Filelfo was likely the first to use the term *antemurale christianitatis* in reference to Poland. In November 1444, less than a week before crusading forces were soundly defeated by the Ottomans at the Battle of Varna, Filelfo wrote a letter to King Władysław III of Poland in which he called the Polish king a “bulwark for the whole Christian Commonwealth.”²⁹ Although Władysław III was killed at Varna, the idea of Poland as *antemurale christianitatis* remained in the minds of western Europeans.

The German humanist Sebastian Brant described Poland as a defender of Europe in his *Thurcorum terror et potentia* (‘Terror and Power of the Turks,’ 1498).³⁰ Brant was the first German writer to describe Poland as a bulwark of Christendom. The Tuscan humanist Filippo Buonaccorsi, who went by the adopted Latin name Callimachus, spent much of his life in Krakow after fleeing Italy following his involvement in an assassination attempt on Pope Paul II in 1468. When Buonaccorsi was sent to meet Pope Innocent VIII in 1490, he delivered his *Oratio* in which he argued that Poland “would alone be able to chase the Turks from Europe, thanks to its might, its geographical

²⁷ Paul W. Knoll, “Poland as “Antemurale Christianitatis” in the Late Middle Ages,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 60 (1974), 386. Poland was referred to as the defender of Christendom following the 1240-1241 Mongol invasion under the general Subutai.

²⁸ Knoll, 392.

²⁹ Knoll, 381.

³⁰ Knoll, 399.

position, and its tradition of warfare against the Tartars (whom he represented as more dangerous than the Turks), which had earned Poland the name of "religionis nostrae arx et propugnaculum."³¹ Although he did not use the exact phrase *antemurale christianitatis*, Desiderius Erasmus viewed Poland as such and praised the Polish king "for his many great victories over his Tatar and Muscovite enemies, victories needed more than any others to protect the boundaries of Christendom."³² Erasmus extended his praise of Poland to its relative tranquility at a time when Europe was tearing at the seams due to the Protestant Reformation.³³

Despite being lauded as the defenders of Christendom, Poles were reluctant to claim the title of *antemurale christianitatis* that was assigned to them. *Antemurale christianitatis* was not only a defensive term, but also implied that the nation was Europe's best hope for offensive actions against the Turks. However, during the seventeenth century, the many conflicts between Poland and the Ottoman Empire shifted public opinion. Polish King John III Sobieski's astounding victory at the Battle of Vienna in 1683 solidified Poland's standing as the bulwark of Christendom and was the beginning of the end of the Turkish threat to Europe. By the end of the seventeenth century, Poland enthusiastically promoted itself as the last bastion of Europe in defense against the non-Christian East, and European writers followed suit.

One way of ascertaining German perceptions of Poland is to look at Germans who immigrated to Poland. The major cities of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth,

³¹ Buonaccorsi described Poland as a "Fortress and bulwark of our faith." Weintraub, 925.

³² Erasmus, *The Lord's Prayer*, in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, ed. John O'Malley and Louis Perraud, vol. 69, *Spiritualia and Pastoralia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 58.

³³ Howard Louthan, "A Model for Christendom? Erasmus, Poland, and the Reformation," *Church History* 83 (2014), 34.

including Krakow, Lviv, Vilnius and Warsaw, were multicultural hubs that attracted Italians, Scots, Jews, Armenians, and many Germans in the Early Modern period.³⁴ These immigrants saw Poland as a land of opportunity; not as somewhere to dominate, but somewhere to live. Thus, these transnational figures provide examples of Germans with positive views of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

The first books printed in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were all produced by Germans from Bavaria or Franconia, including Kasper Straube, Johann Haller, and Florian Ungler, who set up their printing houses in Krakow.³⁵ At a time when the teachings of Luther were spreading throughout Germany and Europe, these German printers worked to suppress his teachings in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Johann Haller's Krakow workshop "produced a compendium of anti-Lutheran edicts and texts which included King Zygmunt's first mandates against Luther, Charles V's Edict of Worms, a polemical anti-Luther oration delivered before the Polish court by Zaccaria Ferreri... and a deposition by Ferreri describing his burning of Lutheran books in Thorn."³⁶ German printers in Krakow also produced sixteen devotional works in the Polish vernacular in the first half of the sixteenth century, including the *Żywot Pana Jezusa Krysta* of Polish writer Baltazar Opec.³⁷ German printers were critical to the spread of

³⁴ See Wojciech Tygielski, *Italians in Early Modern Poland: The Lost Opportunity for Modernization?* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2015); or Richard Unger and Jakub Basista, *Britain and Poland-Lithuania: Contact and Comparison from the Middle Ages to 1795* (Boston: Brill, 2008).

³⁵ Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland: Volume 1: The Origins to 1795* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005), 118.

³⁶ Natalia Nowakowska, "High Clergy and Printers: anti-Reformation Polemic in the Kingdom of Poland, 1520-36," *Historical Research* 87 (2014), 49.

³⁷ Nowakowska, 61.

literacy in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but German contributions there also extended the arts.

One of the earliest German artists to move to Poland was Veit Stoss, a sculptor from the Black Forest town of Horb am Neckar. Stoss is mostly remembered for his altarpiece *Dormition of the Virgin Mary* created for St. Mary's Basilica in Krakow, but he also carved the tomb of King Casimir IV.³⁸ After nearly twenty years in Poland, Stoss returned to Nuremberg where he likely inspired other Germans to move east. In fact, many German artists, especially those from Nuremberg, moved to Krakow during the reign of King Sigismund I of Poland (1506-1548). King Sigismund and his Milanese wife Bona Sforza were major patrons of the Polish Renaissance and invited dozens of Italian and German artists to Krakow. One of these artists was Hans Dürer, the younger brother of the more famous Albrecht Dürer. Hans became the court painter to King Sigismund in 1524, and lived the last fifteen years of his life in Krakow. During Sigismund's reign, Italian architects designed the Sigismund Chapel of Wawel Cathedral in Krakow, but its altar was designed and created by Hans Dürer and his team of Nuremberg artists which included George Pencz, Peter Flotner, Melchior Baier, and Pancrace Labenwolf.³⁹ The massive Sigismund Bell of Wawel Cathedral was cast by Hans Beham of Nuremberg. Hans Holdfelder, a weaver from Nuremberg, moved to Krakow in 1518 to create

³⁸ Robin Pilch Craren, "Veit Stoss/Wit Stwosz Contextualized within the Polish Tradition of Sculpture in the Late Fifteenth Century," (MA Thesis, Temple University, 2012), 1. Veit Stoss, known in Polish as Wit Stwosz, was a contemporary of Albrecht Dürer and died in Nuremberg in 1533.

³⁹ Kenneth F. Lewalski, "Sigismund I of Poland: Renaissance King and Patron," *Studies in the Renaissance* 14 (1967): 65. The Florentine architect Bartolommeo Berrecci completed the rebuilding of Wawel Castle after a 1499 fire, and also designed the Sigismund Chapel.

ceremonial embroideries for King Sigismund.⁴⁰ These Germans moved to Poland for the opportunities it offered, and often stayed there and made lives for themselves and their families.

King Sigismund I also invited German musicians to his court including Christoph Borek and Hans Klaus.⁴¹ Sigismund financed his building and patronage of art and music by taking out loans from the German Boner family who moved to Krakow in 1464 and served as the principal moneylenders to the Polish kings. Hans Boner became the official treasurer of King Sigismund and was the manager of the extremely lucrative Wieliczka salt mine.⁴² These Germans, as well as countless others who moved to other Eastern cities, ‘voted with their feet’ by choosing to live in the East where there were ample opportunities.

The blossoming of Krakow during the Polish Renaissance attracted countless German artists and artisans seeking patronage, as well as scholars who came to study at the city’s prestigious university. Conrad Celtes, an eminent German humanist and poet, traveled to Krakow after a disappointing trip to Italy. In 1487, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III conferred the title of poet laureate upon Celtes and presented him the title doctor of philosophy at an imperial ceremony in Nuremberg.⁴³ Celtes then began a lecture tour of Italy with high expectations, visiting Bologna, Florence, Rome and Venice, but was met with indifference.⁴⁴ Celtes decided to travel to Poland and study at

⁴⁰ Lewalski, 67.

⁴¹ Lewalski, 68.

⁴² Lewalski, 60.

⁴³ Harold B. Segel, *Renaissance Culture in Poland: The Rise of Humanism, 1470-1543* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 82.

⁴⁴ Segel, 83.

the University of Krakow, where he stayed from 1489 to 1491. It is unknown exactly why Celtes chose to visit Poland, but the University of Krakow was then a fairly prestigious center of humanism and there he could study under Copernicus' Polish teacher, the astronomer Albert Brudzewski.⁴⁵

A major reason for Celtes' journey to Krakow was that he believed it to be a German city. Indeed, there were many Germans in Krakow, including the city's largely German burgher class and new arrivals like Celtes. His greatest literary work, the *Amores* (1502), was a telling of his love affairs with four women in four cities of what Celtes believed constituted the boundaries of Germany.⁴⁶ The full title of the *Amores* was *Quattuor libri amorum secundum quattuor latera Germaniae* (Four Books of Love According to the Four Borders of Germany). The four 'German' cities of the poem were Regensburg in the south, Mainz in the west, Lübeck in the north, and Krakow in the east.

Although he believed he was traveling to a German city on a mission to spread humanism, Celtes was still wary of the journey to Krakow. He wrote, "I, Celtes, with bad omens, head for eastern realms where the primitive Pole [*crudus Sarmata*] works the empty plains and inhabits poorly built huts."⁴⁷ Celtes was somewhat reluctant to travel to Krakow because it meant passing through lands of barbaric Sarmatians. The term Sarmatian stemmed from Greek and Roman geographers who used it to refer to the people who inhabited what is now Poland and Ukraine. Sarmatia could carry negative connotations, but it was commonly used by humanist scholars writing in Latin to refer to

⁴⁵ Segel, 86.

⁴⁶ Segel, 88.

⁴⁷ Segel, 89.

Poland, and Polish scholars such as poet Jan Kochanowski referred to their homeland as such.⁴⁸ While Celtes believed Poles to be savages, he did not believe Germans were entirely civilized either. In his “Public Oration Delivered in the University of Ingolstadt” (*Oratio in gymnasio in Ingelstadio publice recitata*, 1492), Celtes “exhorted his fellow Germans to ‘emulate the ancient nobility of Rome... shake off your repulsive coarseness and acquire Roman culture.’”⁴⁹ Celtes was embarrassed by the relative backwardness of his own culture.

Upon reaching the outskirts of Krakow, a storm arose and Celtes was struck by lightning.⁵⁰ He considered this a bad omen, but felt compelled to continue his mission to the ‘frontiers of Germany.’⁵¹ Once in Krakow, Celtes studied and taught at the university. Celtes’ greatest contribution to the intellectual life of Krakow was his founding of the *Sodalitas Litteraria Vistulana* (Literary Society of the Vistula), the first humanist organization in Poland.⁵² Harold B. Segel writes that Celtes’ “dream was the emergence of a great German literary culture symbolized by a renowned literary society strategically located at each boundary of the German world.”⁵³ Celtes’ Krakow sodality quickly received the support of local elites and members of the royal court. The sodality functioned much like a Parisian salon; members met at a private residence to discuss literature, read their own works, and socialize while enjoying good food and drink. While in Krakow, Celtes wrote multiple epigrams and odes dedicated to members of his

⁴⁸ Segel, 257.

⁴⁹ Segel, 85.

⁵⁰ Segel, 89.

⁵¹ Segel, 90.

⁵² Segel, 92. In total, Celtes established four literary societies that he called *sodales*. In addition to the one in Krakow, he also founded *sodales* in Heidelberg, Vienna and Lübeck.

⁵³ Segel, 88.

sodality. Celtes wrote odes to the Polish scholars Albert Brudzewski, Stanislaw Selig, and Jan Ursinus, praising them for their contributions as physicians and astronomers.⁵⁴

This shows that Celtes acknowledged that the University of Krakow had become a center of humanist thought in the fields of medicine and astronomy.

While Celtes furthered the intellectual climate of Krakow and had nothing but praise for his Polish acquaintances in the city, his views of Poland were not all rosy. In fact, some of his descriptions of the country echoed contemporary Europeans' perceptions of Russia. In his poem 'De cena Miricae' (A Dinner Party at Mirica's), Celtes complained that he made a fool of himself at a social gathering because he drank so much wine "to come to know Sarmatian ways."⁵⁵ Celtes could not handle his drink, and blamed Poles for making him drink to excess. In an ode to his friend Sigismund Fusilius, Celtes described Poland as "the cold land of the Sarmatians close to the icy sky where the North Pole... sleeps between the two bears."⁵⁶ While Polish winters are notoriously cold, the city in which Celtes spent most of his time in Poland, Krakow, is only marginally colder than Nuremberg (another city where he spent some time). Celtes nonetheless perceived Poland as polar, thus far away and unpleasant.

In the same ode to Fusilius, Celtes praised his Polish friend for learning Latin because his native language contained 'barbarous expressions' and the "ancestral growling of an uncouth language."⁵⁷ While in Krakow, Celtes carried out an affair with a

⁵⁴ Segel, 94.

⁵⁵ Conradus Celtes, *Libri odarum quattuor. Liber epodon. Carmen saeculare*, ed. Felicitas Pindter (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1937), I, 21. Quoted in Segel, 94.

⁵⁶ Celtes, I, 11. Quoted in Segel, 95.

⁵⁷ Segel, 95.

Polish woman named Hasilina, the young wife of an old aristocrat.⁵⁸ Celtes wrote love poems and erotica for Hasilina, but initially neither knew each other's language.

Bernardus Viliscus (known to be Wilczek z Boczowa), a secretary of the Polish king and eventually Archbishop of Lviv, acted as their interpreter. Celtes had Viliscus teach him the "barbarous words of the girl's Sarmatian language" because Hasilina "scorned [the] German tongue."⁵⁹ Celtes' affair with Hasilina ended unhappily when she refused to leave her husband, and Celtes quickly left Krakow. Celtes' perception of Poland as a cold land where people drank heavily and spoke a barbarous language echoed European perceptions of Russia.

Another German poet who moved to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and quickly ingratiated himself with the local elites was the Silesian Martin Opitz. Like Celtes, Opitz was made poet laureate by the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II, and he was a member of a German literary society, the Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft (Fruitbearing Society). Also like Celtes, Opitz championed German literature and advocated for a purified national German language. In his short life (1597-1639), Opitz traveled across Germany, France, and even Transylvania before settling in the Polish city of Danzig in 1635. After meeting King Wladyslaw IV of Poland, Opitz presented the poem *Lobgedicht an die Königliche Majestät zu Polen und Schweden* (Poem of Praise in Honor of His Royal Majesty, King of Poland and Sweden) to the king.⁶⁰ The king was so impressed with Opitz's poem that he appointed the poet as his secretary and historian.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Segel, 97.

⁵⁹ Segel, 103.

⁶⁰ Bernhard Ulmer, *Martin Opitz* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1971), 33.

⁶¹ Ulmer, 34.

Opitz spent the last four years of his life in Poland, during which he wrote a series of essays and notes on Polish history titled *Variorum lectionum liber, in quo praecipue Sarmatica* and a panegyric to King Wladyslaw upon his wedding to Cecilia Renata of Austria. Opitz clearly liked Poland enough to live there and take an interest in its history.

At the end of the seventeenth century, Polish nobility selected a German prince to become King of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Frederick Augustus I, the Elector of Saxony, was chosen to be king with the backing of Austria and Russia, and came to be known as King Augustus II of Poland. The unsteady reigns of Augustus II (1697-1706, 1709-1733) and his son Augustus III (1733-1763) are called Poland's 'Saxon period.' The 'Saxon period' was a time of weakness and decline, both in relation to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's past and in comparison to neighboring states. Augustus II's disastrous participation in the Great Northern War led to a two-year civil war in Poland and his ouster in 1706. Augustus II was replaced on the throne by the Polish magnate Stanisław Leszczyński, and was only reinstated as king in 1709 with Russian support. When Augustus II tried to force a real union of Poland and Saxony and institute absolutism to the former, Polish nobles formed the Tarnogród Confederation. This confederation resisted Augustus II's attempt at introducing absolutism to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from 1715-1716 until Peter the Great stepped in and quashed the rebellion.⁶² After Augustus II's death in 1733, the War of Polish Succession raged for five years until Augustus II's son achieved victory with the help of Austria, Prussia and

⁶² Michael G. Müller, "Absolutism and Reform in Central and Eastern Europe," in *Germans and the East*, ed. Charles W. Ingrao and Franz A. J. Szabo (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008), 72.

Russia. Overall, the ‘Saxon period’ is remembered by historians for the increasing anarchy, weakness, and increasing dominance of foreign powers in Poland’s affairs.

Augustus II and Augustus III were both great patrons of art and were more concerned with leisure than ruling. Augustus III spent only about three years of his thirty-year reign in Poland, and left the administration of Poland to his chief adviser, Heinrich von Brühl. While the kings of the ‘Saxon period’ were not particularly concerned with ruling Poland, the German administrators they appointed tried to reform the country. Although Augustus II converted to Catholicism prior to his election as king, Poles viewed him and his administrators with suspicion. Fears that Polish traditions would be replaced with German Protestant customs seemed to be confirmed when Augustus tried to institute direct Saxon rule through a coup d’état with the help of his ministers Ernst Christoph von Manteuffel and Jakob Heinrich von Flemming. Actions like this are why historians have often associated the ‘Saxon period’ with little more than weakness, decline, and foreign meddling.

Saxon rule was not entirely detrimental to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, however. The ‘Saxon period’ saw an influx of German skilled artisans, artists, scholars, and administrators into Poland. One of the Germans who moved to Poland during the ‘Saxon period’ and became interested in Polish culture was Georg Philipp Telemann. Telemann, the prolific Baroque composer from Magdeburg and friend of Johann Sebastian Bach, was appointed Kapellmeister to Count Erdmann II of Promnitz in June 1705.⁶³ Telemann lived at the Erdmann’s court in Sorau (now Żary, Poland), for two

⁶³ Eric Cross, “The Eclectic Telemann,” *Early Music* 22 (1994), 357.

years and wrote French instrumental music for the Count. When the court spent six months at the town of Pleß (now Pszczyna) and made visits to nearby Krakow, Telemann was able to hear and study Polish folk music. Telemann was fascinated by Polish music, and produced more Polish-inspired musical pieces than any non-Polish composer. In all, Telemann composed six multi-movement instrumental works and fifty-one movements with Polish themes.⁶⁴

In his 1718 autobiography, Telemann described his elation at first hearing folk music at a Polish tavern:

I became acquainted with Polish music, about which I must confess to having found much that is good and agreeable to serve me subsequently in many endeavors, including serious ones. With regard to this style, so poorly regarded by the musically literate world, I cannot refrain from writing a small panegyric:

One praises everything except that which pleases.
Now a Polish song sets the entire world a-leaping;
Therefore it's no trouble for me to conclude:
Polish music must not be made of wood.⁶⁵

Telemann was fascinated with Polish music and advocated incorporating it into classical music as other musicians did with Hungarian and Turkish music.⁶⁶ Telemann particularly enjoyed that Polish music was often accompanied with dancing.⁶⁷ In his 1740 autobiography, Telemann described the “true barbaric beauty” of Polish music, which inspired him to write “various large concertos and trios in this style, clothing them in an

⁶⁴ Steven Zohn, *Music for a Mixed Taste: Style, Genre, and Meaning in Telemann's Instrumental Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 469.

⁶⁵ Georg Philipp Telemann, “Lebens-Lauff mein Georg Philipp Telemanns; Entworffen In Frankfurth am Mayn d.10.[-14.] Sept. A. 1718,” in Johann Mattheson, *Grosse General-Baß-Schule. Oder: Der exemplarischen Organisten-Probe* (Hamburg: Johann Christoph Kibner, 1731. Reprinted Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1968), 175.

⁶⁶ Examples of *style hongrois* and *alla turca* in European classical music include Brahms' *Hungarian Dances* and Mozart's “Rondo Alla Turca” in his Piano Sonata No. 11, among others.

⁶⁷ Zohn, 472.

Italian dress with alternating adagios and allegros.”⁶⁸ Telemann’s characterization of Polish folk music as barbarous and crude may have had more to do with the fact that this music was produced and performed by peasants in taverns than that they were Polish. It was common for Telemann’s contemporaries to disparage lower-class musicians, who were often referred to as *Bierfiedler* (Beer fiddlers).⁶⁹ Nonetheless, Telemann’s description of Polish music as beautiful yet barbaric illustrates the ambivalence that often accompanied German discourse on Poland.

Lorenz Christoph Mizler, later known by the Polish name Wawrzyniec Mitlzer de Kolof, was another transnational figure who chose to live in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Mizler was born in Württemberg in 1711 and studied theology at Leipzig University before moving to Końskie, Poland in 1743 to become the teacher and librarian of Count Jan Małachowski. Mizler learned Polish from the Count, and also studied Polish history and literature.⁷⁰ Mizler was many things: a musical theorist and composer who studied under J.S. Bach, publisher, historian, librarian, and even the court physician to King Augustus III.⁷¹ Mizler spent the last half of his life in Warsaw (1749-78), during which he became a leader of the Polish Enlightenment and a mouthpiece for reform in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by publishing literary, scholarly and scientific journals. Mizler’s many publications included: the *Monitor*, which published Enlightenment ideas in Polish and imitated the British *Spectator*; *Polak Patriota* (The

⁶⁸ Johann Mattheson, *Grundlage einer Ehren-Pforte* (Hamburg: Mattheson, 1740. Reprinted Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1969), 360.

⁶⁹ Zohn, 479.

⁷⁰ Lutz Felbick, *Lorenz Christoph Mizler de Kolof: Schüler Bachs und pythagoreischer "Apostel der Wolffischen Philosophie"* (Hildesheim: Georg-Olms-Verlag, 2012), 361.

⁷¹ Sandra Pinegar, “Perspectives on the Musical Essays of Lorenz Christoph Mizler (1711-1778),” (MA Thesis, North Texas State University, 1984), 13.

Polish Patriot), a moral periodical that stressed virtues such as honesty and hard work which was aimed at middle class burghers;⁷² and the *Warschauer Bibliothek*, which advertised Polish scholarship and literature in German.⁷³ Mizler believed in the Enlightenment and improving the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth because he had favorable views of Poland. This could be attributed to the fact that he spent the last half of his life in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and put forth the effort to learn the Polish language.

In the eighteenth century, the cultural and intellectual scene of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was changing, but the country's political system did not keep pace. During the reign of Augustus II, Warsaw was remade with Baroque splendor and transformed into a major cultural hub.⁷⁴ Poland's first public library, the Załuski Library, was founded and other educational institutions such as the *Collegium Nobilium* were founded in Warsaw during the 'Saxon period.' Beginning in the 1720s, the German architect Joachim Daniel von Jauch oversaw the restoration of Warsaw's Royal Castle, rebuilt the Kazimierz Palace, and designed the city's Lubomirski Palace. However, the changes to Poland of the 'Saxon period' were not just aesthetic. Perhaps more important than the architectural transformation of Warsaw were the institutional changes that the 'Saxon period' made possible. Michael G. Müller argues that the 'Saxon period' laid the

⁷² Scholars in Poland may have learned about Enlightenment periodicals like *The Spectator* through travel to western Europe, correspondence, or the presence of large numbers of Brits in Poland. Teresa Kostkiewiczowa, "Reflections on Patriotism in Polish Literature in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century," in *Whose Love of Which Country? Composite States, National Histories and Patriotic Discourses in Early Modern East Central Europe*, ed. Márton Zászkaliczky and Balázs Trencsényi (Boston: Brill, 2010), 690.

⁷³ S. D. Chrostowska, *Literature on Trial: The Emergence of Critical Discourse in Germany, Poland, and Russia, 1700-1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 238.

⁷⁴ Müller, 73. As Elector of Saxony, Augustus II also transformed Dresden by having palaces constructed and supporting the development of Meissen porcelain.

groundwork for reforms during the rule of King Stanisław Poniatowski (1764-1795) because the nobility “were trained as an elitist service class at the Dresden cadet corps or the court’s pages corps—in order to subsequently benefit from such qualification in privileged military and civil careers at home.”⁷⁵ Since many Polish nobles were educated and trained according to German standards, a new, pro-reformist political class emerged in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the reign of the country’s last king. Unfortunately, it was too little, too late. Within five years of Stanisław Poniatowski’s ascension to the throne, his reforms provoked open rebellion and ultimately led to the First Partition of Poland in 1772.

⁷⁵ Müller, 73.

***Polenliteratur* in the Late Eighteenth Century**

In the last half of the eighteenth century, German writers created stereotypes of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a backward, anarchic land filled with ignorant and superstitious people. This negative discourse came to be known as *Polenliteratur*. The term *Polenliteratur* was coined by Robert Franz Arnold, a fin-de-siècle Austrian literary historian who, in 1900, defined the genre with the publication of *Geschichte der deutschen Polenlitteratur von den Anfängen bis 1800*.⁷⁶ *Polenliteratur* includes philosophical texts, political commentaries, histories, travel accounts, poems and novels by German writers describing and evaluating the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and its people, largely in a disparaging way.

Polenliteratur emerged in the late eighteenth century for several reasons. The political system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was unique, and this led to much commentary from western Europeans. The Polish government in the early modern era was an elective monarchy with strict checks on the monarch's power at a time when absolutist hereditary monarchies were prevalent in Europe. The Polish king's power was increasingly curtailed in the sixteenth century, and authority was transferred to the nobility, which was Europe's largest.⁷⁷ The nobility of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, known as *szlachta*, enjoyed a remarkable set of freedoms called the Golden Liberty (*Złota wolność*). After the passage of the *nihil novi* in 1505, the king could not pass laws without the approval of the *sejm*, the Polish parliament. Due to this

⁷⁶ David Pickus, "Dying With an Enlightening Fall," 1.

⁷⁷ Almut Bues, "The Formation of the Polish-Lithuanian Monarchy in the Sixteenth Century," in *Polish-Lithuanian Monarchy in European Context: c. 1500-1795*, ed. Richard Butterwick (Gordonsville, VA: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 60. The *szlachta* made up 6-10 percent of the total population of Poland, one of the highest proportions of nobility in Europe.

act, the king was unable to pass legislation on foreign policy, taxation or budgetary matters. Starting with the death of Sigismund II Augustus in 1572, elections were held for the King of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. All nobles who wanted to attend the election *sejm* could vote for the new king. After the election of Henry of Valois in 1573, all Polish kings had to agree to the Henrician Articles, which further increased the rights of the nobility. In addition, the *szlachta* increasingly used their right to veto any legislation at a *sejm*, which paralyzed the country. The cumulative effect of all these checks and balances on royal power was that the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was essentially ruled by large magnate families, and ultimately nothing got done.

Throughout the ‘Saxon period,’ the political stalemate in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth worsened and the country got weaker. In the eighteenth century, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth suffered through multiple civil wars, the War of the Polish Succession, and the increased meddling of foreign powers in the nation’s affairs. During these crises, the country was divided into advocates and opponents of reform. Anti-reformists were closely associated with Sarmatianism. Sarmatianism was a cultural and political ideology popular among the nobility during the early modern era, which favored republican government and stressed the freedoms and power of the nobility.⁷⁸ Proponents of Sarmatianism defended and clung to traditional Polish institutions such as the ‘golden liberty’ of the nobility and the Catholic Church, and claimed that they were

⁷⁸ Arkadiusz Michał Stasiak, “Republican and Monarchial Patriotism in Polish Political Thought During the Enlightenment,” in *Whose Love of Which Country? Composite States, National Histories and Patriotic Discourses in Early Modern East Central Europe*, ed. Márton Zászkaliczky and Balázs Trencsényi (Boston: Brill, 2010), 712.

superior to all foreign political systems.⁷⁹ Sarmatianism was seen by many in western Europe as a defense of Polish particularism, and thus in opposition to Enlightenment ideas of good governance and individual rights. In reality, proponents of Sarmatianism espoused democratic and republican ideas instead of absolutism, and offered arguments that were similar to Enlightenment thinkers in the American and French revolutions.⁸⁰

The last king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Stanislaw Poniatowski (1764-1795), was elected with the help of his lover, Catherine the Great of Russia. When Stanislaw Poniatowski tried to centralize the country and limit the power and privileges of the nobility, the Sarmatianist *szlachta* resisted.⁸¹ The anti-reformist nobility formed the Bar Confederation, led by powerful magnates including Casimir Pulaski, and a civil war ensued. From 1768 to 1772, the Bar Confederation, with French backing, resisted Poniatowski's move away from republicanism until they were defeated by Russian troops. The civil war further weakened the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and led to its first partition in 1772, in which Austria, Prussia and Russia annexed about thirty percent of the country's territory.

The First Partition of Poland was celebrated by many western Europeans as progress because the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was seen as a backward state. Since the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's political system for much of the eighteenth century was dysfunctional, German observers singled it out as an anarchic and

⁷⁹ Henryk Hinz, "The Philosophy of the Polish Enlightenment and Its Opponents: The Origins of the Modern Polish Mind," *Slavic Review* 30 (1971), 345.

⁸⁰ Hinz, "The Philosophy of the Polish Enlightenment and Its Opponents," 346.

⁸¹ Bernhard Struck, "*Terra Incognita*, European Civilisation and Colonised Land: Poland in Mid-eighteenth to Mid-nineteenth Century German Travel Accounts," in *Unravelling Civilisation: European Travel and Travel Writing*, ed. Hagen Schulz-Forberg (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2005), 162.

anachronous state that did not belong in Europe. The persistence of feudalism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was deemed incompatible with Enlightenment ideas.⁸² David Pickus argues that *Polenliteratur* emerged as a literature of ‘bad examples.’⁸³ The existence of a backward state on the eastern doorstep of Europe begged comment and condemnation from Germans, and, to many, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth perfectly represented how not to achieve a modern civil society.⁸⁴ Throughout the Partitions era—encompassing the three partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793 and 1795—some German thinkers praised these unprecedented actions as the triumph of Enlightenment ideas over barbarism.

The discourse of *Polenliteratur* in the late eighteenth century primarily relied on stereotypes, but some Germans tried to use statistics to ‘prove’ that Poles were inferior. August Friedrich Wilhelm Crome was a political scientist and Cameralist who created thematic maps of Europe and used statistics to compare nations in the late eighteenth century. Crome believed that a nation’s population density was the “surest sign of culture,” and that statistics combined with economic and military power showed the strength of a nation.⁸⁵ By Crome’s calculations, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had a population density of 895 people per square mile compared to over 2500 for France.⁸⁶ Using these statistics, Crome concluded that there was “infinitely less life and activity” in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth than France, and because there was

⁸² Karin Friedrich, *The Other Prussia: Royal Prussia, Poland and Liberty, 1569-1772* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 189.

⁸³ Pickus, “German Writers, Power and Collapse,” 84.

⁸⁴ Pickus, “German Writers, Power and Collapse,” 87.

⁸⁵ Sybilla Nikolow, “A. F. W. Crome’s Measurements of the ‘Strength of the State’: Statistical Representations in Central Europe around 1800,” *History of Political Economy* 33 (2001), 23.

⁸⁶ Nikolow, 34.

less economic activity in the former, Poland's arts and sciences were also less advanced.⁸⁷ Although some Germans attempted to use objective statistics to support their claims of Polish backwardness, most resorted to stereotypes to reinforce their prejudices.

In German *Polenliteratur*, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was portrayed as a weak state that was a danger to itself and its neighbors because of its dysfunctional and lawless government. Prussian king Frederick the Great, as a major proponent of Enlightened Absolutism, detested Poland. In a letter to Voltaire, Frederick wrote, "Montesquieu would have wasted his time trying to find the principles of republicanism or sovereign government" in the Polish state.⁸⁸ Frederick thought and wrote much about his eastern neighbor, which he believed lacked all semblance of good governance. In his *Histoire de mon temps* (1746), Frederick wrote that Poland was in perpetual anarchy because the magnates were only concerned with their own interests. He wrote that Polish nobles were frivolous with money and fickle in their political affiliations. Frederick knew that the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had laws, but wrote that they were not obeyed because there were no agencies to enforce them.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ August Friedrich Wilhelm Crome, *Über die Größe und Bevölkerung der sämtlichen Europäischen Staaten. Ein Beytrag zur Kenntnis der Staatenverhältnisse und zur Erklärung der neuen Größen-Karte von Europa* (Leipzig: Weygandsche Buchhandlung, 1785), 233, <http://digital.bibliothek.uni-halle.de/hd/content/titleinfo/1688783>.

⁸⁸ Frederick II, "Frederick to Voltaire, January 12, 1772," Letter, in *Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand, Vol. 23*, ed. Johann David Erdman Preuß, Berlin: Imprimerie Royale, 1846-1856, 235. "Aucun sujet ne m'aurait fourni une aussi abondante matière que les Polonais; Montesquieu aurait perdu son temps à trouver chez eux les principes des républiques ou des gouvernements souverains."

⁸⁹ Frederick II, *Histoire de Mon Temps*, in *Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand, Vol 2*, 27. "Ce royaume est dans une anarchie perpétuelle: les grandes familles sont toutes divisées d'intérêt; ils préfèrent leurs avantages au bien public, et ne se réunissent qu'en usant de la même dureté, pour opprimer leurs sujets, qu'ils traitent moins en hommes qu'en bêtes de somme. Les Polonais sont vains; hauts dans la fortune, rampants dans l'adversité; capables des plus grandes infamies pour amasser de l'argent, qu'ils jettent aussitôt par les fenêtres lorsqu'ils l'ont; frivoles, sans jugement, capables de prendre et de quitter un parti sans raison, et de se précipiter, par l'inconséquence de leur conduite, dans les plus mauvaises affaires: ils ont des lois; mais personne ne les observe, faute de justice coercitive."

One result of the lawlessness that Frederick perceived was a general state of dilapidation in the cities and countryside of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. After acquiring territory in the First Partition, Frederick planned to rebuild towns that were in a “most pitiful state.” Frederick singled out the towns of Culm (Chełmno) and Bromberg (Bydgoszcz) in particular.⁹⁰ He wrote that Culm had good walls and large churches, but of the forty houses on the main square, twenty-eight had no doors, roofs or windows. The ruins in Culm and Bromberg dated to 1709, but the Polish inhabitants had not rebuilt the city by the time Frederick was writing about them in the 1770s.⁹¹ In a 1772 letter to his brother Prince Henry, Frederick wrote that Canada was just as civilized as the newly-acquired Polish territory of Pomerelia.⁹² Since this territory was so backward, it would take time to modernize and bring civilization to it.

Although Frederick repeatedly portrayed the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as undeveloped, that same letter to his brother reveals his true feelings. In the letter, Frederick expressed gratitude to his brother for negotiating the First Partition: “This is a very good and advantageous acquisition, both for the political situation of the state and for its finances; but to inspire less jealousy, I tell anyone who will listen that I have seen

⁹⁰ Frederick referred to the Polish towns of Chełmno and Bydgoszcz by their German names.

⁹¹ Frederick II, *Mémoires depuis la paix de Hubertsbourg 1763, jusqu'à la fin du partage de la Pologne, 1775*, in *Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand*, Vol 6, 99. Les villes étaient dans l'état le plus pitoyable. Culm avait de bonnes murailles, de grandes églises; mais au lieu de rues, on ne voyait que les caves des maisons qui avaient existé autrefois. Quarante maisons formaient la grande place, dont vingt-huit, sans portes, sans toit ni fenêtres, manquaient de propriétaires. Bromberg était dans le même état. Leur ruine datait de l'année 1709, où la peste avait ravagé cette province; mais les Polonais n'imaginaient pas qu'il fallût réparer les malheurs.”

⁹² Frederick II, “Frederick to Prince Henry, June 12, 1772,” in *Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand*, Vol 26, 406. “Il est vrai que ce morceau me prépare bien de l'ouvrage, car je crois le Canada tout aussi policé que cette Pomérellie. Point d'ordre, point d'arrangement; les villes y sont dans un état déplorable.”

nothing but sand, pine, heather and Jews [in my travels through Poland].”⁹³ Frederick knew the territory of West Prussia was more than just sand, pine trees and Jews; when he disparaged Poland as backward, Frederick was being a shrewd diplomat. Although Austria and Russia gained more territory than Prussia in the First Partition, Frederick’s portion was the most strategic because it connected Brandenburg with East Prussia. Thus, Frederick achieved a goal he had set out to achieve at least as early as 1752. In that year, Frederick had written his Machiavellian *Political Testament* in which he advised his son on how best to add Polish Prussia to his kingdom. Frederick wrote that Polish territory should be taken gradually, as one eats an artichoke, “leaf by leaf.”⁹⁴ Frederick had planned to conquer Poland at least twenty years before the First Partition.

While Frederick clearly had ulterior motives for disparaging the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, other Germans did not necessarily share his intentions. In 1791, the German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte traveled to Warsaw to take up a job as a private tutor to a Polish noble family.⁹⁵ In all, Fichte only spent a month in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth because the countess was not satisfied with Fichte’s knowledge of French, but he recorded his experiences in a diary and wrote scathing remarks on Poland and its people.⁹⁶ Like Fichte, Georg Forster traveled to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to take a position as an educator. Forster had become

⁹³ Frederick II, “Frederick to Prince Henry, June 12, 1772,” 407. “C'est une très-bonne acquisition et très-avantageuse, tant pour la situation politique de l'État que pour les finances; mais pour avoir moins de jaloux, je dis à qui veut l'entendre que je n'ai vu sur tout mon passage que du sable, des sapins, de la bruyère et des juifs.”

⁹⁴ Frederick II, “Political Testament of Frederick II (1752),” in *The Habsburg and Hohenzollern Dynasties in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. C.A. Macartney, *Documentary History of Western Civilization* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 343.

⁹⁵ Wolff, 333.

⁹⁶ Wolff, 342.

somewhat of a celebrity after the publication of *A Voyage Round the World*, which recounted his experiences with his father Johann Reinhold Forster as naturalists on Captain Cook's second voyage to the South Pacific.⁹⁷ Forster was recruited by the University of Vilnius in 1784 to increase the prestige of the university. He found Vilnius lacking intellectually, and felt isolated from German intellectual life. Forster held harsh views of Poles and Lithuanians, as can be seen in his correspondence below, but he never published these views during his lifetime.⁹⁸

Fichte and Forster, like other German travelers, noticed a transformation taking place as they crossed borders on their way to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Fichte traveled from Leipzig through Silesia to Poland. Even before he entered Polish territory, Fichte sensed that the lands he passed through were less and less developed. In his diary, Fichte wrote that the Silesian villages he passed were 'worse' than Saxon villages, and they already appeared "very Polish."⁹⁹ Upon crossing the border into Polish territory and reaching the village of Ponikowo, Fichte was overcome by a shudder as he saw large dogs running around and peasants dressed in exotic clothing.¹⁰⁰ Fichte's first impression of Poland was a land of wild animals and uncivilized people. When Georg Forster entered the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, he wept for "a lonely hour for myself and... for the so deeply sunken people" because of the "dilapidation, the filthiness in the moral and physical sense, the halfwildness (*Halbwildheit*) and half-civilization

⁹⁷ Thomas Saine, *Georg Forster* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972), 19.

⁹⁸ Dalia Švambarytė, "Georg Forster in Vilnius: Reverberations of the Great Age of Ocean Navigation," *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia* 10 (2009), 158.

⁹⁹ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Hans Schulz, Vol. 1 (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), 171.

¹⁰⁰ Fichte, 175.

(*Halbkultur*) of the people” that he saw there.¹⁰¹ By crossing borders into Poland, Fichte and Forster believed they were moving from civilization to barbarism.

Many German observers and travelers commented on what they viewed as deplorable living conditions of the Polish peasantry. Fichte described the streets of Polish villages as “full of straw, garbage and manure.”¹⁰² Georg Forster referred to Polish peasants as the ‘Polish Pécherai,’ a reference to the native people of Tierra del Fuego who the French explorer Bougainville had described as suspicious and hideous people.¹⁰³ In his *Histoire de mon temps*, Frederick the Great wrote that Polish serfs were treated more like cattle than men.¹⁰⁴ Forster, who was also critical of Polish serfdom, wrote:

Among all the nations in Europe the Poles alone have taken ignorance and barbarism so far, as to almost extinguish (*vertilgen*) the last trace of brain power (*Denkkraft*) in their serfs; but they themselves bear the hardest punishment for it, partly because the cattle-like (*viehische*) vassal brings them in scarcely the tenth part of the income that the freer, happier, more rational peasant would bring them, partly because they themselves... through their impotence have become the mockery and amusement of all their neighbors.¹⁰⁵

Because Polish nobles treated their serfs so poorly, their profits suffered.

Georg Forster so detested Poland that he coined the phrase ‘*polnische wirtschaft*’ (Polish economy) to refer to absurd amounts of mismanagement and inefficiency. He first used the phrase ‘*polnische wirtschaft*’ in a 1785 letter to his wife, writing:

¹⁰¹ Georg Forster, *Briefe*, in *Werke*, ed. Gerhard Steiner, Vol. 4 (Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 1970), 320. Quoted in Wolff, 337.

¹⁰² Fichte, 181.

¹⁰³ Švamarytè, 158.

¹⁰⁴ Frederick II, *Histoire de Mon Temps*, 27. “Les grandes familles sont toutes divisées d'intérêt; ils préfèrent leurs avantages au bien public, et ne se réunissent qu'en usant de la même dureté, pour opprimer leurs sujets, qu'ils traitent moins en hommes qu'en bêtes de somme.”

¹⁰⁵ Robert Franz Arnold, *Geschichte der Deutschen Polenlitteratur: von den Anfängen bis 1800* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1900), 109. Quoted in Wolff, 337.

Whole pages are not sufficient to give you an idea of what is called - with an emphatic expression - Polish economy... The Poles are natural pigs, masters as well as servants, everybody is badly dressed, especially the female sex; when they dress up they resemble a pig with a golden collar. Certainly, there exist exceptions; yet I am talking of a general rule. [...] Polish nobility as such is something very pitiful. Without respect, Countesses comb their lice out of the window. Knights of the Order of Stanislaus blow their noses into bare fingers during the Dukebishop's assembly.¹⁰⁶

With his phrase '*polnische wirtschaft*,' Forster described Poles as a crude, ignorant, and uncivilized people. Forster's harsh description of Poles is all the more surprising considering he believed in something similar to cultural relativism and "opposed racist assumptions about the natural inferiority of non-Europeans" such as Tahitians when he described them in his *A Voyage Round the World*.¹⁰⁷

Germans often saw Poles as ignorant and backward. In a letter to Voltaire on the eve of the First Partition, Frederick wrote that the Poles deserved the partition because of "the stupidities of the Potockis, Krasinskis, Oginskis and that whole imbecile crowd whose names end in -ki."¹⁰⁸ In his poem "La guerre des Confedédérés" about Poland's civil war, Frederick called Poland "a land of fools, madmen and war."¹⁰⁹ One major reason that German Protestants saw Poles as unintelligent was because Polish people were largely Catholic. In a different letter to Voltaire, Frederick the Great wrote that in Poland, "instead of *philosophes*, you will find minds brutalized by the most stupid

¹⁰⁶ Georg Forster, "Forster to Therese Heyne, January 22, 1785," Letter, in Georg Forster, *Schriften*, Vol. 14 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1958-1989), 267-269. Quoted in Struck, "*Terra Incognita*," 163-164.

¹⁰⁷ Pauline Kleingeld, "Six Varieties of Cosmopolitanism in Late Eighteenth-Century Germany," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60 (1999), 516.

¹⁰⁸ Frederick II, "Frederick to Voltaire, November 18, 1771," in *Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand*, Vol 23, 232.

¹⁰⁹ Frederick II, "La guerre des Confedédérés," in *Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand*, Vol 14, 219.

superstition.”¹¹⁰ Catholic Poles did not receive the brunt of German observers’ intolerance alone. In Fichte’s diary, he complained that Polish towns “swarm with Jews.”¹¹¹ Unlike most of Europe, Poland was incredibly diverse religiously. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth contained large numbers of Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, and Jews owing to religious toleration that was granted in the Middle Ages and affirmed in the sixteenth century.¹¹² The multicultural and multiconfessional nature of the Polish state is celebrated today, but was looked down upon by some Germans at the time.

¹¹⁰ Frederick II, “Frederick to Voltaire, January 12, 1772,” 235-236. “Au lieu de philosophes, vous y trouvez des esprits abrutis par la plus stupide superstition.”

¹¹¹ Fichte, 181.

¹¹² James Lenaghan, “The Sweetness of Polish Liberty: Sixteenth-Century British Jesuit Exiles to Poland-Lithuania,” *Reformation* 15 (2010), 143.

Sympathy and Support for Poland in the Partitions Era: Towards a New Discourse

Many Europeans were more than happy to laugh at Poles' suffering in the eighteenth century. David Pickus refers to these as '*polenfeindlich*' authors who showed "standard scenes of Poles misusing and squandering their freedom, bringing destruction down on their heads."¹¹³ Chief among the '*polenfeindlich*' authors were men like Frederick the Great and Voltaire who were continuously critical and condescending in their treatment of Poles and Poland. Since Robert Franz Arnold published his book on *Polenliteratur* in 1900, historians have primarily focused on negative depictions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Early Modern era. Scholars such as Larry Wolff have emphasized how European writers belittled, Othered, or Orientalized Poland while glossing over positive or sympathetic views of Poland during the Partitions Era.

German historian Bernhard Struck has undermined the argument of Wolff and others for the dominance of a negative *Polenliteratur* in German views of Poland. In his 2006 monograph *Nicht West - nicht Ost: Frankreich und Polen in der Wahrnehmung deutscher Reisender zwischen 1750 und 1850*, Struck compares German travelers' perceptions of Poland and France between 1750 and 1850. In an article on a related topic, Struck writes:

From the perception of a bourgeois, well educated, mostly protestant traveler, originating from an urban background, the main dichotomy around 1800 was not the division between Eastern and Western Europe. Rather the cleavages followed the division between urban and rural culture, bourgeois and peasant milieu, or between denominations, such as Protestantism and Catholicism.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Pickus, "German Writers, Power and Collapse," 87.

¹¹⁴ Bernhard Struck, "Historical Regions Between Construction and Perception: Viewing France and Poland in the Late-Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries," *East Central Europe/L'Europe du Centre Est* 32 (2005), 79.

Struck refutes Wolff's thesis that Europeans (particularly Germans) found places in Eastern Europe like Poland backward because of some imagined or invented East - West divide. Rather, Struck argues that German travelers found Poland and France to be similar in many ways. For example, while the Magdeburg-born historian Joachim Christoph Friedrich Schulz compared the post-system and roads of Poland favorably with the infrastructure of Prussia in his *Reise nach Warschau*, he noted how poorly dressed the Polish coachmen were.¹¹⁵ A few decades after Schulz, the German lawyer Anton Fahne wrote that his carriage driver in Alsace was dressed like a beggar. In these comparisons, Poland's coachmen came out no worse than those from a part of rural France.

Traveling through the countryside near Krakow in the 1790s, the physician Johann Joseph Kausch commented on the poor construction of peasant houses using clay and brushwood, which was like nothing you would find in Germany. To him this was an example of how poor the Polish peasants were.¹¹⁶ During her travels through Bavaria, Elisa von der Recke, one of the most prominent Early Modern female poets, wrote that the Bavarians are agriculturally far behind other regions because of their superstition.¹¹⁷ As a Protestant from a Baltic German family, it is clear that she meant Catholicism was the cause of the Bavarians' backwardness. While Early Modern travelers may have waxed poetic about metropolises like Paris or London, they often complained about the

¹¹⁵ Struck, "Historical Regions Between Construction and Perception," 86.

¹¹⁶ Johann Joseph Kausch, *Nachrichten über Polen*, vol. 2 (Salzburg: Mayr, 1793), 112-113. "Außer Oberschlesien, wo noch ähnliche Hütten Statt finden, wird man in Deutschland wohl nichts finden, was sich hiermit vergleichen läßt."

¹¹⁷ Elisa von der Recke, *Tagebuch einer Reise durch einen Theil Deutschlands und durch Italien, in den Jahren 1804 bis 1806*, Vol. 1 (Berlin: Nicolai, 1815), 7. "Baiern sieht jetzt noch in der Kultur des Landes eben daher so weit zuruck, weil finsterner Aberglaube es so lange beherrschte, und Geistesdruck den Fortgang alles Guten hemmte."

poor quality of roads and inns, and the backwardness of the peasantry, regardless of whether they were passing through Bavaria, Burgundy or Białystok.

Although Bernhard Struck argues that German travelers' negative perceptions of rural regions and their inhabitants were not particular to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, he does not go so far as to say that Germans held positive images of Poland. While '*polenfeindlich*' authors were likely the majority of the observers of Poland, voices that were sympathetic toward Poland's plight did exist. David Pickus refers to the minority of European thinkers who felt pity for Poles' suffering as '*polenfreundlich*,' although his scholarship tends to highlight and focus on unfavorable German views of Poland.¹¹⁸ During the Partitions Era, '*polenfreundlich*' writers included Edmund Burke, Rousseau, and the German poet Daniel Schubart, among others. These '*polenfreundlich*' writers condemned the partitions, acknowledged Poland's attempts at reform and in some cases praised aspects of Polish culture and institutions.

One event that stirred up sympathy for Poland in particular was the First Partition in 1772. Although many western European thinkers supported the First Partition as a "progressive and praiseworthy event," the unprecedented actions of Austria, Prussia and Russia provoked condemnation from others.¹¹⁹ In a letter to a Prussian statesman, the British Whig philosopher Edmund Burke wrote, "Poland was but a breakfast, and there are not many Polands to be found. Where will they dine?"¹²⁰ Burke was clearly worried

¹¹⁸ Pickus, "German Writers, Power and Collapse," 86.

¹¹⁹ William H. Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews: The Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1772-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 36.

¹²⁰ Edmund Burke, "Burke to A.H. von Borcke, January 8, 1774," in *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ed. L. S. Sutherland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 514.

about the precedent set by the First Partition and how it upset the balance of power in Europe. In the *Annual Register*, Burke wrote:

The present violent dismemberment and partition of Poland, without the pretence of war, or even the colour of right, is to be considered as the first very great breach in the modern political system of Europe... We now behold the destruction of a great kingdom, with the consequent disarrangement of power, dominion, and commerce, with as total an indifference and unconcern, as we could read an account of the exterminating one hord of Tartars by another, in the days of Genhizan or Tamerlane.¹²¹

Burke was taken aback by how muted the reaction to the First Partition was among his peers.

Although French *philosophe* Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had plenty of problems, he offered recommendations for how to reform the state in his *Considerations on the Government of Poland*. By the time Rousseau finished this work, the First Partition had already been agreed to, and it went unpublished in his lifetime. Rousseau believed that Poland's problems could be fixed, but the partition was not the solution. Thus, Burke and Rousseau offered rational responses to the First Partition and decried it for its treatment of Poles and disregard for Polish sovereignty.

If in England and France the First Partition evoked horror and condemnation from some leading Enlightenment thinkers, the event was largely celebrated by Prussians who blamed Poland for its faults.¹²² However, a minority of Germans expressed pity and sympathy for Poland. The sympathetic German literary response most notably included

¹²¹ Edmund Burke, "The History of Europe," in *The Annual Register for the Year 1772* (London: James Dooley, 1773), 2.

¹²² Agnieszka B. Nance, *Literary and Cultural Images of a Nation without a State: The Case of Nineteenth-Century Poland* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 14.

the writings of the Swabian poet, composer and journalist Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart. The founder of the political journal *Deutsche Chronik* (published from 1774-1777), Schubart often criticized the actions of contemporary rulers and institutions. In fact, he was held in prison from 1777 to 1787 for his criticism of the absolutist tendencies of Charles Eugene, the Duke of Württemberg. Schubart was only freed due to the efforts of Frederick the Great, whose policies toward Poland he had been highly critical of a decade and a half earlier.

In one of the first issues of the *Deutsche Chronik*, Schubart published the poem “Polonia.” In “Polonia,” Schubart lamented the damage done to the Polish state and its people by the First Partition:

Da irrt Polonia
Mit fliegendem Haare,
Mit jammerbleichem Gesichte,
Ringt über dem Haupte
Die Hände. Grosse Tropfen
Hangen am Auge, das bricht
Und langsam starrt—und stirbt,
Doch sie stirbt nicht !
Versagt ist ihr des Todes Trost.
Sie fährt auf, schwankt und sinkt
Nieder an der Felsenwand
Und schreit: ach, meine Kinder,
Wo seid ihr? Ausgesät
In fremdes Volk und hilflos.
O Sobieski, grosser Sohn,
Wo bist du ? schau herab !
Horst du nicht am Arme
Deines tapfern Volks die Fessel rasseln?
Siehst du nicht den Räuber
Aus Wäldern stürzen
Und dein Land verwüsten? —
Ach, der Greis versammelt seine Kinder,
Seine Enkel um sich her
Und zückt das Schwert und würgt sie nieder.

Sterbt! so spricht er wütend,
Was ist ein Leben ohne Freiheit?
Ha, er rollt die offenen Augen,
Durchstosst die Brust und sinkt
Auf seiner Kinder Leichen nieder. —
So klagt Polonia.¹²³

In Schubart's poem, the nation is personified as the female Polonia whose eyes grow dim and tears well up after a grave injustice has been done to her, a reference to the First Partition. Polonia is denied the comfort of death, and laments that her children are scattered helpless across foreign lands. Polonia appeals to John III Sobieski, the great warrior king of Poland who defeated the Turks at Vienna in 1683, to save the Polish people from their captivity. Since Sobieski died almost a century before the First Partition, he cannot come to save the nation from the 'robbers' who storm out of the forest to "devastate thy fields." With no hope of a savior, the ancestor of Poles gathers his descendants and asks the question "What is life without liberty?" Schubart concludes the poem by having the ancestor kill his children and commit suicide. Thus, Schubart depicts Poles as victims to be pitied.

In an April 1775 article in the *Deutsche Chronik*, Schubart wrote of how Poland suffered a phantom pain from its "amputated limbs."¹²⁴ He wrote that while the Austrians and Russians are happy with their spoils, the King of Prussia looked longingly at Gdansk (Danzig), and criticized Frederick the Great for his greed. Schubart's sympathy and affinity for Poland were not limited to the country's political situation. As a composer, he

¹²³ Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, "Polonia," *Deutsche Chronik*, May 19, 1774.

¹²⁴ Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, "Aus Warschau," *Deutsche Chronik*, April 10, 1775. "Man schnitt' nmal einem Menschen den Fuß weg. Des andern Tags beklagte sich der Patient über Schmerzen im großen Zähnen des abgeschnittenen Fußes. So gehts just Polen! Man hat eine gewaltige Amputation mit ihm vorgenommen, und doch fühlt's noch Schmerzen in den amputirten Gliedern."

was quite fond of Polish music. In his *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst* Schubart wrote that Polish melodies “are so majestic and at the same time so graceful that they are imitated all over Europe. Who is not familiar with the serious, proudly solemn pace of the so-called polonaise, or the softly nasal bagpipe melodies of the Poles? Their songs and dances are among the most beautiful and charming of all peoples.”¹²⁵ Schubart decried the First Partition as an injustice to the Polish people whom he praised for their contributions to European culture.

During the Partitions Era, some German writers went beyond pitying Poland and expressed admiration for the country’s institutions. Johann III Bernoulli was an astronomer, geographer and mathematician who traveled across Europe. He was the last prominent member of the Bernoulli family of notable Swiss-German mathematicians, though he never achieved the fame of his uncle Daniel or grandfather Johann I. Bernoulli published travel accounts of his journeys, and was particularly impressed with some of Poland’s institutions. In his travel account of a journey through Prussia, Russia and Poland, Bernoulli spoke highly of Poland’s Ministry of Education. Bernoulli wrote, “Nothing could add more to the glory of today’s government than the foundation of this institution, which no other country can boast - and how many would not be in need of such an institution! which, in a country where science lies in decay, is much more useful to rebuild this science than all the world’s Academies.”¹²⁶ Poland’s *Komisja Edukacji*

¹²⁵ Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1969), 248. Quoted in Zohn, 484-485.

¹²⁶ Johann Bernoulli, *Reisen durch Brandenburg, Pommern, Preußen, Curland, Rußland und Polen in den Jahren 1777 und 1778: Rückreise von St. Petersburg über Mietau und Warschau nach Berlin: nebst Register über alle sechs Bände*, Vol. 6 (Leipzig: Caspar Fritsch, 1780), 234. Quoted in Struck, “*Terra Incognita*,” 164.

Narodowej (Commission of National Education) was founded in 1773 with the support of King Stanisław August Poniatowski and was Europe's first ministry of education.

Bernoulli celebrated this Polish institution as a landmark achievement of the Enlightenment, more important for spreading knowledge than any scientific academy - and he was a member of the scientific academies in Berlin, Stockholm and St. Petersburg.

While Bernoulli believed Poland was progressing, he did not shy away from pointing out its 'barbarous' past. Bernoulli seems to harken back to the achievements of Poles like Copernicus when he writes that "one seems to have forgotten how many scientific merits the Poles had gained throughout the last centuries, in a time when in more than one other country, which today thinks highly of itself, the prospects were more than dark."¹²⁷ He continues, saying that Poland's 'so-called barbarism' lasted only about fifty years and encompassed the 'Saxon period.' Bernoulli wrote that contemporary Polish scholarship "strides towards a bright noon" which serves to "illustrate the glory of the Polish nation."¹²⁸ Bernoulli painted a picture of Poland under Stanisław August Poniatowski as a nation of hope and progress. He believed that Stanisław's reforms were working to bring civilization to Poland. In fact, Stanisław's reforms were so radical to leading Polish nobles that they provoked resentment and rebellion among the *szlachta*, and ultimately led to Poland's demise.

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, there was a clear shift away from negative depictions of Poland and an outpouring of more sympathetic views followed. If European thinkers rationalized the First Partition as an ethical action done to save the

¹²⁷ Bernoulli, 282-283. Quoted in Struck, "*Terra Incognita*," 165.

¹²⁸ Bernoulli, 284. Quoted in Struck, "*Terra Incognita*," 165.

Polish people from themselves, the Second and Third Partitions were seen in an entirely different light. The Second and Third Partitions followed and undid attempts to reform the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and shifted public opinion of Poland. From 1788 to 1792, the Great Sejm met with the goal of reforming the nation. The Great Sejm produced the Constitution of May 3, 1791, the first democratic constitution in Europe. The Polish constitution enfranchised the bourgeoisie, created a separation of powers among three branches of government, and tried to establish a constitutional monarchy similar to the English model. Written while the French Revolution was unfolding, the May 3 Constitution was hailed across Europe for adhering to Enlightenment ideas of good governance. Edmund Burke, who famously denounced the French Revolution, believed in Poland's reforms and described its constitution as "probably the most pure... public good which ever has been conferred on mankind."¹²⁹ Burke's praise for the Polish constitution was echoed by German writers.

The new Polish constitution provoked a wave of sympathy among German writers, particularly in Enlightenment journals. An anonymous writer in Gottlob Benedikt von Schirach's *Politisches Journal* spoke very highly of the constitution:

In the history of this century, May 3 has been made eternal by the intelligence, determinacy and bravery of Stanislaus Augustus. A new Polish constitution, a truly wise constitution that is diametrically opposed to the anarchic French one, a masterpiece of governance - was finished, accepted, sworn to, and implemented long before other countries had even developed the possibility of the mere idea. Through its constitution, Poland was endowed with truly new forces, with a truly new existence.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Edmund Burke, *An Appeal From the New to the Old Whigs: In Consequence of Some Late Discussions in Parliament, Relative to the Reflections on the French Revolution* (London: J. Dodsley, 1791), 127.

¹³⁰ Anonymous, "Historisch-politische Übersicht des Jahrs 1791," in *Politisches Journal nebst Anzeige von gelehrten und andern Sachen*, ed. von einer Gesellschaft von Gelehrten, vol. 1 (1792), 10. Quoted in

The anonymous writer in the *Politisches Journal* believed that Poland's constitution was far better than that of France. Johann Erich Biester, a writer and editor of the journal *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, traveled to Warsaw in May and June of 1791, attracted by the political situation following the constitution of May 3. Biester believed the constitution would solve Poland's problems:

Many mistakes will surely fade away with its erroneous constitution. Once the country has come to rest, once neither the agitation of parties nor the nepotism and greed of the election agitates the spirits; where will there consolidate better principles, not only in politics, but also in the whole moral behaviour [...]? When the tough servitude decreases, through laws and through common sense; a noble idea of human and civil rights will become more common.¹³¹

Biester believed that Poland was backward and its political system flawed, but he saw the reform efforts as moving the country in the right direction. Biester was hopeful that the constitutional changes would in turn improve Poland's economy, writing: "Once the country's industry will finally increase, a certain average wealth will soon enough spread, with all its blessed consequences."¹³² Biester continued by providing a romanticized depiction of Poles' physical appearance and intellectual capacities. Biester wrote that Poles were blessed with a 'playful spirit,' a 'beautiful body,' and a 'praiseworthy practical mind' proficient at the 'learning of science and art.'¹³³ Poland's new enlightened constitution inspired Biester to heap praise on Polish people for their intelligence.

Support for Poland's May 3 Constitution spread amongst German thinkers and even Prussian statesmen. Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, who had earlier lamented

Struck, "*Terra Incognita*," 167. The *Politisches Journal* was a mouthpiece of the Enlightenment published by von Schirach from 1781 until his death in 1804.

¹³¹ Johann Erich Biester, "Einige Briefe über Polen geschrieben im Sommer 1791," *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, Vol. 19 (1792), 602-603. Quoted in Struck, "*Terra Incognita*," 166.

¹³² Biester, 603. Quoted in Struck, "*Terra Incognita*," 166.

¹³³ Biester, 602-603. Quoted in Struck, "*Terra Incognita*," 166-167.

Poland's losses in the First Partition, celebrated the May 3 Constitution in verse:

“Rejoice, Polonia, now! your night is forever illuminated.”¹³⁴ The merriment of Schubart and other Germans was unfortunately premature and short lived. Although the Prussian foreign minister von Hertzberg professed his support for the constitution in an address to the Academy of Sciences in Berlin and the Prussian King Frederick William I had his envoy to Poland congratulate the reformers, Prussia took part in the Second Partition of Poland in 1793.¹³⁵

While many Europeans enthusiastically supported the Polish constitution, it provoked the ire of some Polish magnates and Catherine the Great of Russia. In response to King Stanisław Augustus' reforms limiting the privileges of the nobility, namely the end of *liberum veto* and monarchical elections, Polish magnates established the Targowica Confederation in Saint Petersburg in 1792 with the support of the Empress Catherine.¹³⁶ Catherine argued that Poland was inspired by radicals in France, and Russian troops invaded Poland in 1792. The Russians and Confederates were victorious, and Polish territory was further divided between Russia and Prussia through the Second Partition of Poland in 1793.¹³⁷ The Second Partition robbed Poland of three-fifths of its land and over half its people, leaving a rump state that included the cities of Krakow, Vilnius and Warsaw but not much else. Four months after the coerced Grodno Sejm

¹³⁴ Arnold, 78. Quoted in Wolff, 340.

¹³⁵ William H. Hagen, “The Partitions of Poland and the Crisis of the Old Regime in Prussia 1772-1806,” *Central European History* 9 (1976), 125-126.

¹³⁶ Jerzy Lukowski and Hubert Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 126.

¹³⁷ Austria was left out of the Second Partition of Poland, but included in the Third Partition two years later.

capitulated to the Second Partition, Tadeusz Kościuszko declared his uprising against Russian and Prussian oppressors on March 24, 1794.

Kościuszko's uprising further inspired Europeans' sympathy for Poland. Kościuszko rallied the nation and gained early victories against the Russians, but the *szlachta* refused to allow him to liberate the peasantry and eventually the rebels were defeated. To European intellectuals, Kościuszko fought bravely against Russian and Prussian 'oppressors.' Kościuszko was seen as a hero, and he was celebrated throughout Germany as "Kutschuzky."¹³⁸ The Königsberg-born poet and dramatist Zacharias Werner composed the poems "Battle Song of the Poles under Kosciusko" and "To a People" for Poland.¹³⁹ In the latter poem, Werner expresses hope that Poland will one day awaken and rise again. Werner believed Kościuszko was a champion of liberty heroically fighting his nation's oppressors.

After Kościuszko was captured at the Battle of Maciejowice, the uprising was defeated by Russian and Prussian forces. In October 1795, representatives of Austria, Prussia and Russia met and agreed to divide the rest of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Third Partition of Poland. The final dismemberment of the Polish state prompted outrage from many European thinkers. Carl B. Feyerabend, a writer from Danzig, published an account of his travels from Livonia through former Polish territory in the immediate aftermath of the Third Partition. Passing through the city of Grodno, where the *sejm* that agreed to the Second Partition had met and where King Stanisław formally abdicated in 1795, Feyerabend reflected on the events that had transpired there.

¹³⁸ Arnold, 127.

¹³⁹ Maximilian J. Rudwin, "Sympathy for Poland in German Poetry," *The Open Court* 6 (1917), 343.

Feyerabend lamented that Poland had been left “to Russia’s despotic dominance.”¹⁴⁰

Feyerabend portrayed Poland as a sympathetic victim of Russian barbarism. The historian Ernst Ludwig Posselt also primarily blamed Russia for the injustice done to Poland. Posselt expressed sorrow that European history was "a full chapter shorter" because "a state which had been in the era of its blossoming exists only as an antique."¹⁴¹

Germans also blamed Prussia for the demise of Poland, perhaps out of guilt. Andreas Georg Friedrich Rebmann, a liberal German journalist from Franconia who gained notoriety for publishing translations of Robespierre's speeches, criticized the King of Prussia for his involvement in the dissolution of the Polish state. Rebmann wrote: “A tyrant invades a foreign country to destroy there the Jacobins; he breaks all the promised unions; through his despicable servant, he agitates the citizens of that country to a war with another tyrant, promises support, and then murders first his allies. That is called – state wisdom.”¹⁴² Rebmann was referring to the Polish-Prussian alliance of 1790, which Prussia chose not to honor when Russia invaded Poland in 1792. Many German intellectuals blamed Poland’s ultimate fall on Prussian betrayal in 1792 and their part in suppressing Kościuszko’s uprising in 1794. Germans were even more enraged at the Prussian government for justifying their actions by citing Polish reforms and the new constitution. William H. Hagen writes: “This shift in enlightened opinion not only dampened German and Prussian enthusiasm over the final partitions. It also produced the first romanticization of Poland and Polish nationalism in German high literature. Perhaps

¹⁴⁰ Carl B. Feyerabend, *Kosmopolitische Wanderungen durch Preußen, Liefland, Kurland, Lithauen, Vollanden, Podolien, Gallizien und Schlesien, in den Jahren 1795-1797*, Vol. 2 (Danzig: N.N., 1800), 501. Quoted in Struck, “*Terra Incognita*,” 170.

¹⁴¹ Arnold, 161-162.

¹⁴² Arnold, 238. Quoted in Nance, 17.

most concretely, it changed official Prussian thinking about the state's Polish population and German-Polish relations.”¹⁴³ Hagen argues that German reactions to the final partitions forced Prussian officials to abandon attempts to assimilate Poles and instead encouraged them to become good Prussian citizens by appreciating their own culture.¹⁴⁴

The existing English-language scholarship on German views of Poland in the Partitions era tends to ignore or gloss over positive voices while stressing the negative ones. The dismemberment of the Polish state through the partitions was contemporaneous with the American and French revolutions, and was seen in a similar light. While Poland was making strides to reform itself along Enlightenment ideas, the actions of its neighbors provoked anger from leading German intellectuals. It is important to understand how and why their opinions of Poland shifted during the Partitions Era, and this topic deserves more scholarly attention.

¹⁴³ Hagen, “The Partitions of Poland,” 126.

¹⁴⁴ Hagen, “The Partitions of Poland,” 127.

CHAPTER 3: RUSSIA

The 'Discovery' of Russia

Prior to the sixteenth century, learned Western Europeans knew very little of Russia. While Baltic traders frequented Novgorod as early as the twelfth century, and the Hanseatic League established a Kontor there, writings on the lands that would become Russia were scarce.¹⁴⁵ Renaissance scholars often relied on Herodotus' account of the Scythians as an ethnographic guide for the people who inhabited the lands on the eastern frontiers of Europe, while the works of Ptolemy were used as the source for its geography. Descriptions of the various Russian states appear sporadically in medieval European sources, such as the thirteenth century accounts of Giovanni da Pian del Carpine and William of Rubruck (who wrote of their separate journeys to the Mongol court in Central Asia). By the end of the fifteenth century, however, more accounts of Russia began to appear.

European ignorance of Russia began to change during the reign of Ivan III. Grand Prince of Moscow from 1462 to 1505, Ivan III brought Russia out from under the yoke of Tatar rule, tripled the territory of his country, and fought an unsuccessful war with Livonia and Sweden. Due to expansion and conflict with western powers, the reign of Ivan III saw an influx of foreigners into Muscovy, as artisans and diplomats traveled to

¹⁴⁵ A kontor was a permanent trading post established by the Hanseatic League.

Moscow, thus bringing Russia closer to Europe.¹⁴⁶ The ‘discovery’ of Russia in the late fifteenth century was accompanied by negative stereotypes in western Europe.

The first European account of the Grand Duchy of Moscow, or Muscovy, was published by the Venetian diplomat Ambrogio Contarini in 1486. Contarini visited Moscow and had an audience with Ivan III on his way back from Persia, though his writing on Russia is mostly a complaint about the extreme cold.¹⁴⁷ The goal of Contarini’s embassy was to establish an alliance with Persia (or Muscovy) against the Ottomans while the Venetians and Turks were fighting over Albania and Greece. Contarini was unable to conclude an alliance with either Muscovy or Persia, but his account sparked greater interest in Russia.

Despite the expansion of Muscovy under Ivan, knowledge of Russia at his death in 1505 remained deficient even among neighboring countries. The victory of Poland and Lithuania over Muscovite forces at the Battle of Orsha in 1514, coupled with the latter's conquest of Smolensk a month before, resulted in increased attention focused on Russia. The publication of Polish scholar Maciej Miechowita’s *Tractatus de duabus Sarmatis Europiana et Asiana et de contentis in eis* (Account of the Two Sarmatias, Asian and European) in 1517 further spread knowledge of Muscovy. Miechowita's *Tractatus* was written in Latin, but appeared in a German translation in 1517 by Johann Eck, who

¹⁴⁶ Poe, *A People Born to Slavery*, 13.

¹⁴⁷ Josafa Barbaro and Ambrogio Contarini, *Travels to Tana and Persia*, trans. by William Thomas and S. A. Roy (London: Hakluyt, 1873), 161-162. Contarini was sent as the ambassador of the Republic of Venice to the court of Uzun Hasan, sultan of the Ak Koyunlu dynasty, in 1473 to convince the sultan of forming an alliance against the Turks during the First Ottoman-Venetian War (1463-1479).

famously debated Luther in Leipzig.¹⁴⁸ Miechowita, a rector and professor of history at Jagiellonian University in Kraków, wrote what is considered the first accurate work on the geography of Russia.¹⁴⁹ Although Miechowita never visited the lands he described in his *Tractatus*, he was able to correct mistaken beliefs about the country that had persisted since antiquity. Miechowita challenged the Herodotean belief that somewhere north of Sarmatia there existed a fantastical garden-paradise that was home to the Amazons.¹⁵⁰ In addition, Miechowita rightly disputed the existence of the mythical Ryphean Mountains which had been popularized by Ptolemy and were supposedly located in central Sarmatia.¹⁵¹ Denying the existence of the Ryphean Mountains represented a break with Miechowita's contemporaries, as the mountains were included in the maps of the German Martin Waldseemüller and Bernard Wapowski.¹⁵²

Miechowita's *Tractatus* was a revolutionary work for its time, and it sparked much debate among the learned of Europe who saw it as an assault on the 'prince of geographers,' Ptolemy.¹⁵³ Polish Queen Bona Sforza arranged a scholarly debate on the existence of the Ryphean Mountains in Krakow between Miechowita and Francesco da Colla. Da Colla, the Holy Roman Emperor's emissary to Moscow, won the debate.¹⁵⁴ It did not take long for Miechowita to be validated, however. Sigismund von Herberstein, sent by the emperor to Muscovy in 1516, returned to Vienna in 1518 and confirmed

¹⁴⁸ Sigmund von Herberstein, *Description of Moscow and Muscovy, 1557*, trans. Bertold Picard (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1969), 4.

¹⁴⁹ Konstanty Zantuan, "The Discovery of Modern Russia: Tractatus de Duabus Sarmatiis," *The Russian Review* 27 (1968): 328.

¹⁵⁰ Zantuan, 329.

¹⁵¹ Zantuan, 329.

¹⁵² Zantuan, 330.

¹⁵³ Zantuan, 333.

¹⁵⁴ Zantuan, 334.

Miechowita's discoveries.¹⁵⁵ Herberstein was to play a particularly important position in Europeans' search for knowledge of Muscovy, but other Germans wrote about Russia well before Herberstein's landmark *Rerum moscoviticarum commentarii* was published in 1549.

The early reports on Muscovy that appeared in the sixteenth century were written largely without empirical evidence, and writers often repeated material from the few sources that existed.¹⁵⁶ Albert Kranz, a native of Hamburg and professor at the University of Rostock, gained knowledge of Muscovy second-hand through his contacts in the Hanseatic League. His cosmography of the Slavs, *Wandalia*, was published posthumously in 1519. In the Muscovy section of *Wandalia*, Kranz wrote primarily about the aggression of Ivan III and his war with Livonia. It is clear where Kranz's sympathies lay. As a German who had contacts in the German mercantile cities of Livonia, Kranz portrayed Ivan as an enemy to be feared.¹⁵⁷ Thus, Kranz provided one of the earliest negative accounts of Muscovy by a German.

A little over a decade after the publication of Kranz's *Wandalia*, Willibald Pirckheimer included a description of Muscovy in his *Germany Described from Various Sources* (Nuremberg, 1530).¹⁵⁸ Pirckheimer was a leading German humanist in Nuremberg, the leader of the city's troops against the Swiss in the Swabian War, and a close friend of Albrecht Dürer. Although he never traveled to Russia, Pirckheimer wrote of the vastness of Muscovy, which stretched from the Baltic Sea to Asiatic Scythia, and

¹⁵⁵ Zantuan, 335.

¹⁵⁶ Poe, *A People Born*, 38.

¹⁵⁷ Poe, *A People Born*, 29.

¹⁵⁸ Poe, *A People Born*, 31.

how Ivan III had expanded its territory. Pirckheimer described the cities of Muscovy, including Moscow, Novgorod and Smolensk. Most notably, Pirckheimer wrote that Muscovy is a "rude and completely barbarous" nation where the people are subjected to a system of servitude similar to the Turks.¹⁵⁹ This was the earliest German account of Muscovy that equated its political system with that of the Ottoman Empire, a theme that was often repeated in later descriptions of Russia.

The German humanist theologian Sebastian Franck borrowed much from Pirckheimer's portrayal of Muscovy for his cosmography, the 1534 *Weltbuch*. Born in Donauwörth, Bavaria, Franck attended the universities of Ingolstadt and Heidelberg and was ordained as a priest. However, Franck was exposed to the ideas of Martin Luther and ultimately became a universalist, earning him the ire of both Catholics and Protestants. In his *Weltbuch*, Franck modified Pirckheimer's description of Muscovite civil society into the following:

In sum, the people of the Muscovite state are rude, and furthermore they are subject to great servitude and tyranny, such that, as is the case among the Turks, anything anyone has is considered to be the king's own, and the king holds everything as his property. As a master allows his slaves the profit and use [of his property], so he allows his subjects, and not longer than he desires, and on the condition that they give him what, when, and however much he wants, including themselves, their wives, and children.¹⁶⁰

Franck, who never traveled to Russia, relied heavily on the works of others for his *Weltbuch*. Pirckheimer described servitude in Muscovy similar to how one would describe feudalism in Western Europe. Franck distorted Pirckheimer by explaining that

¹⁵⁹ Willibald Pirckheimer, *Opera politica, historica, philologica et epistolica* (Frankfurt, 1610), 105, quoted in Poe, *A People Born*, 31.

¹⁶⁰ Sebastian Franck, *Weltbuch: Spiegel und Bildnis des gantzen Erdbodens, von Sebastiano Franco Wordensi in vier Bücher, nemlich in Asiam, Aphricam, Europam und Americam gestalt und abteilt*, 30. Quoted in Poe, *A People Born*, 32.

all Muscovites are slaves to the Grand Duke.¹⁶¹ Although early cosmographers of Russia could not agree on a single stereotype of its government or people, the narrative of servitude or slavery was repeated throughout the Western European literature on pre-Petrine Russia. This image was cemented and popularized by the account of the first European to publish a full analysis of Muscovy based on empirical evidence, Sigismund von Herberstein.

Sigismund von Herberstein's *Rerum moscoviticarum commentarii* (Notes on Muscovite Affairs) was published in 1549 in Vienna. It proved to be wildly popular. A second Latin edition appeared two years later in Basel and many other editions were published across Central Europe, including Herberstein's German translation in 1557.¹⁶² In addition to German, it was also translated into Italian and English in the 16th century.¹⁶³ In total, around two dozen editions were published in eight major European cities.¹⁶⁴ Herberstein's *Rerum moscoviticarum* was easily the most popular account of Muscovy in the sixteenth century.

Herberstein was born in 1486 in the town of Wippach which belonged to the Austrian controlled Duchy of Carniola (now Vipava, Slovenia). He was the son of a knight and castellan in the Imperial service.¹⁶⁵ Although his mother tongue was German, Herberstein learned Wendish from Slovenes living in Wippach, which helped him greatly in learning Russian later (as both are Slavic languages). Herberstein studied at the University of Vienna and became a diplomat. He went on sixty-nine diplomatic missions

¹⁶¹ Poe, *A People Born*, 33.

¹⁶² Herberstein, 1.

¹⁶³ Herberstein, 2.

¹⁶⁴ Poe, *A People Born*, 135.

¹⁶⁵ Herberstein, 7.

for the Holy Roman Empire, mostly in Central Europe, but also to Denmark, Spain, Turkey and Russia.¹⁶⁶ Herberstein's many years of Imperial service resulted in Emperor Ferdinand granting him the castle of Klamm near Schottwien, and Charles V raising him to the rank of baron.¹⁶⁷

Much of the material for Herberstein's *Rerum moscoviticarum* came from his own experiences in Muscovy during Imperial diplomatic missions in 1517 and 1526. He was first sent to Russia by Emperor Maximilian I to negotiate a peace settlement between Poland and Muscovy with the ultimate aim of an alliance against the Turks, but failed.¹⁶⁸ His second mission to Russia had essentially the same goal, and again, he was unable to reach a peace treaty. However, Poland and Russia did agree to a five-year armistice.¹⁶⁹ Altogether, Herberstein spent roughly two years in Muscovy. About half of that was spent in Moscow, with the rest split between different cities and towns, and on the road to Moscow. During his time in Russia, Herberstein questioned numerous members of the Muscovite court, nobles, interpreters, other foreigners, and commoners to learn about Muscovite politics and culture. His descriptions of the cities and towns of Muscovy were usually based on his own experiences and observations which he jotted down in notebooks. When Herberstein had to use written sources, they were first-hand accounts, laws and regulations, or civic and ecclesiastical chronicles (since he could read Russian).¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Herberstein, 9.

¹⁶⁷ Herberstein, 11.

¹⁶⁸ Herberstein, 5.

¹⁶⁹ Herberstein, 6.

¹⁷⁰ Herberstein, 5.

Herberstein's book is all the more remarkable for the difficulty he had obtaining information due to the Grand Duke's suspicion. Muscovites were wary of foreigners, and went to great lengths to ensure that "they did not learn too much about Russian affairs or receive the "wrong" impression of the tsar's realm."¹⁷¹ Visitors to the Muscovite court were kept in special quarters and often complained that they were held like prisoners.¹⁷² Foreigners were usually only allowed out of the 'ambassadorial court' for official events such as audiences and banquets. These are just a few of the restrictions and difficulties that Herberstein had to overcome to gain information on Muscovy.

Herberstein's work is extraordinary for its comprehensiveness and accuracy in spite of the difficulties of obtaining the knowledge. As the most complete and popular description of Muscovy in the sixteenth century, Herberstein's work provided the lasting image of Muscovy for much of the Early Modern era. Moreover, as a fairly objective study of Muscovy at a time when his contemporaries were often wildly inaccurate and unfair, it can be said that the scholarly study of Russia began with Herberstein.

Herberstein's *Rerum moscoviticarum* includes descriptions of a wide range of topics, including the history, geography, economy, religion, people and culture of Muscovy and even some information on neighboring states like Lithuania and the Tatar khanates. While Herberstein takes a largely objective approach to describing the geography and economy of Muscovy, his portrayal of the country's customs, political system and the Grand Duke is mostly negative.

¹⁷¹ Poe, *A People Born*, 40.

¹⁷² Poe, *A People Born*, 45.

According to Herberstein, Russians live in servitude to their master, the Grand Duke, and they gladly persist in this condition of slavery. Herberstein first introduces his concept of Russians in extreme servitude in his section on 'The People.' Herberstein writes, "It is in the nature of these people that they should vaunt their bondage more than their freedom. Dying masters often liberate many of their bondsmen in their last dispositions. Few of these stay free, for they sell themselves."¹⁷³ Throughout the book, Herberstein makes it clear that slavery is a Russians' natural state; from the most powerful nobles to the lowest peasants, it affects all aspects of life, even extending to marriage, leisure and transportation.

Herberstein wrote that all Muscovites referred to themselves as the Grand Duke's "*kholopi*, or sold slaves."¹⁷⁴ Indeed, Muscovites used the regalian salutation "*tsariu, gosudariu ivelikomu kniaziiu*. . . [Name] *b'et chelom, kholop tvoi* (To the Tsar, Sovereign, and Grand Prince . . . [Name], your slave, makes obeisance)" in all their official documents in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁷⁵ However, Marshall Poe argues that Ivan III and his successors used this imagery in mimicry of their neighbors the Lithuanians, whose ruler was 'master,' and the Byzantines, as their emperor's subjects called themselves 'slaves.'¹⁷⁶ Muscovites referred to themselves as slaves to the Grand Duke purely for ceremonial purposes to increase the legitimacy of their sovereign. Poe states that Muscovites understood the difference between the slavery implied in the regalian salutation and actual slavery, as chattel slavery existed in the country and the

¹⁷³ Herberstein, 39.

¹⁷⁴ Herberstein, 43.

¹⁷⁵ Marshall T. Poe, "What Did Russians Mean When They Called Themselves 'Slaves of the Tsar?'" *Slavic Review* 57 (1998): 586.

¹⁷⁶ Poe, "What Did Russians Mean," 594.

nobility were quite powerful and wealthy.¹⁷⁷ By accepting the ritual language of slavery as literal, Herberstein popularized a stereotype of Russia that would persist for over a century.

In addition to Muscovites' perceived state of perpetual servitude, Herberstein also wrote of the all-encompassing power of the Grand Duke of Moscow. The power of Vasili III over his people supposedly surpassed all other monarchs.¹⁷⁸ Herberstein mentions a comparison of the Grand Duke and the ruler of Lithuania made by a Russian:

If ever they talk to us about Lithuania they speak mockingly of it, saying for example that when the king or grand-duke there dispatches a man upon an embassy or journey he replies that his wife is ill or his horses lame. 'Here this is not so,' they say with a smile, 'here it is: you will ride off and obey orders if you want to keep your head upon your body.'¹⁷⁹

The Grand Duke was clearly a powerful ruler to be feared. In further evidence of his power, Herberstein cites the belief that the Grand Duke's actions are divinely inspired because his will is the will of God.¹⁸⁰ Although there is little difference between this practice of the Muscovites and the Western European concept of the divine right of kings, Herberstein was convinced that it represented tyranny. Herberstein's attempt at a justification for Muscovite acceptance of such despotism was as follows: "It is debatable whether such a people must have such oppressive rulers or whether the oppressive rulers have made the people so stupid."¹⁸¹ Herberstein believed that Russians got the type of ruler they deserved.

¹⁷⁷ Poe, "What Did Russians Mean," 598.

¹⁷⁸ Herberstein 44.

¹⁷⁹ Herberstein, 46.

¹⁸⁰ Herberstein, 43.

¹⁸¹ Herberstein, 43-44.

According to Herberstein, Vasili III's tyranny extended to his treatment of the commoners and influenced their actions. Herberstein calls Russian peasants 'a pitiable people' who are 'soundly thrashed' by nobles, and describes a pastime of the Grand Duke that involves setting wild bears loose among a group of peasants armed only with pitchforks.¹⁸² Herberstein believed that the Russian sense of servitude informed marital relations as well. He relates the story of a German gunsmith living in Moscow who married a Russian woman. In his conversation with Herberstein, the gunsmith told him that one day the wife asked:

"Why do you not love me?" He replied that he did. 'You gave me no proof of it,' she went on. He asked what proof she was thinking of. 'You have never beaten me,' she said. He rejoined that he had never held blows to be evidence of love, but would not fail her in the matter. Soon after he gave her a sound thrashing. He told me himself that she had never been as affectionate as previously. Finally he struck her dead."¹⁸³

Muscovite men were expected to mete out corporal punishment to their wives, just as a master would to a slave. To Herberstein, this only served as further proof that Russians were servile.

Herberstein praised the *iam*—the official Russian post-route system that provided travelers with housing and fresh horses at regular intervals—for its convenience and efficiency. However, he saw it as another example of subjugation because the *iamshchik* were required to give up their horses to travelers.¹⁸⁴ Although the owners of horses were compensated for the horses, the *iam* represented Muscovite oppression to Herberstein.

¹⁸² Herberstein, 39, 70.

¹⁸³ Herberstein, 41.

¹⁸⁴ John W. Randolph, "The Singing Coachman or, The Road and Russia's Ethnographic Invention in Early Modern Times," *Journal of Early Modern History* 11 (2007): 44. The *iamshchik* were the coachmen of the Russian post system.

Having shown that Vasili III was a tyrant, Herberstein set out to demonstrate the Grand Duke's Machiavellian ways. After conquering the city and principality of Pskov in 1510, Vasili had its rulers and much of the population expelled and replaced by Muscovites.¹⁸⁵ This practice was common among Tatars and Turks, so Herberstein associated it with these 'Asiatic' peoples. Herberstein also relates how Vasili III acquired other territories through unscrupulous means, or in his words, 'oppression and injustice.'¹⁸⁶ In his section on the economy of Russia, Herberstein states that Muscovite merchants are "cunning and deceitful in their trade."¹⁸⁷ Russians were clearly not to be trusted, and their ruler was to be feared.

Although Herberstein portrayed Muscovites as treacherous, he also described them as backward and crude. In his section on the Russian military, Herberstein stated that the Muscovites hired German and Italian gunsmiths because they did not know how to create or use artillery properly.¹⁸⁸ While the Grand Duke could summon vast armies, Muscovite soldiers were not particularly disciplined or persistent fighters, preferring to raid and flee. They fought on horseback and preferred bow and arrow to hand-to-hand combat. This style of fighting was common among nomadic peoples like the Mongols, Tatars and Turks, something Europeans took note of.

Another weakness of Muscovites—a common stereotype of barbarians and particularly Russians—was their tendency to drink excessively. Herberstein wrote that "making people tipsy is here an honour and sign of esteem; the man who is not put under

¹⁸⁵ Herberstein, 44.

¹⁸⁶ Herberstein, 45.

¹⁸⁷ Herberstein, 84.

¹⁸⁸ Herberstein, 79.

the table holds himself ill respected.”¹⁸⁹ He went on to complain of the excessive amounts he was forced to drink at a banquet with the Grand Prince, for he “disliked tippling and could only get out of this by pretending to be drunk or saying [he] was too sleepy to go on and had had [his] fill.”¹⁹⁰ When he got up to leave, the Grand Duke had him drain another cup. Although Herberstein portrayed Russians as backward and technologically inferior, they also exhibited traits typical of barbarians and so they represented a threat.

Herberstein’s image of an all powerful ruler and people willing to accept servitude—Aristotle’s model for oriental despots—had much more of a lasting impact on the perception of pre-Petrine Russia than any other source. Germans and other Europeans repeated his view of Russia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The incredible cruelty of Ivan the Terrible in the 1560s, shortly after the publication of Herberstein’s *Rerum moscoviticarum*, only confirmed his image of Russia in Western Europe.

¹⁸⁹ Herberstein, 66.

¹⁹⁰ Herberstein, 67.

German Perceptions of Russia from Ivan the Terrible to Peter the Great

Herberstein had set the precedent for the image of Muscovy that would last until the reign of Peter, and this image seemed to be corroborated by the cruelty of Ivan IV. Upon the death of Vasili III in 1533, his son Ivan IV came to power at the age of three. Ivan's long reign (1533-1584) is usually divided into two distinct phases. The first part of his reign was incredibly successful; in the 1550s, Ivan revised the law code, established a form of parliament (the *zemsky sobor*), built Saint Basil's Cathedral, and expanded the realm through the conquest of the khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan. After Russia's initial success in the Livonian War (1558-1583) against an alliance of Poland, Denmark, Sweden and Livonia, Ivan's fortunes began to change in the 1560s. Ivan became paranoid following the death of his wife Anastasia Romanovna in 1560, and the defection of his most trusted advisor, Andrey Kurbsky, to the Lithuanians in 1564. It was during the last two decades of his reign that Ivan truly earned the epithet '*grozny*,' or the terrible. In 1565, Ivan established the *oprichnina*, a secret police force which brutally enforced his rule and quashed his rivals. During the period in which the *oprichniki* (members of the *oprichnina*) terrorized Muscovy (to 1572), the Massacre of Novgorod occurred and Crimean Tatars sacked Moscow. In 1581, Ivan struck and killed his heir Ivan Ivanovich in a fit of rage, and the throne passed to his younger son Feodor upon Ivan IV's death in 1584. Ivan clearly was not the most magnanimous ruler, however his atrocities were judged particularly harshly when one considers that his rule was contemporaneous with the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre in France or the Trier witch trials.

Several Germans served at the court of Ivan IV during the *oprichnina* and observed the tsar's actions. The first German eyewitness account of Ivan IV to be published was the propagandistic tract of Johann Taube and Elbert Kruse: *The Shocking, Cruel, and Unheard-of Tyranny of Ivan Vasilevich*.¹⁹¹ Taube and Kruse were Livonian officials who were captured during the Livonian War and served as advisers and diplomats of Ivan IV from 1564 to 1571.¹⁹² They published their tract shortly after fleeing to Poland. Albert Schlichting was another German eyewitness to the reign of Ivan IV who was captured during the Livonian War and entered into Muscovite service as an assistant to the tsar's court doctor.¹⁹³ Schlichting wrote two unpublished reports on his experiences in Russia after escaping to Poland in 1571. Though Kruse, Taube and Schlichting all lived in Muscovy for several years and resided at the court in Moscow, the account of Heinrich von Staden provides even more of an insider's perspective.

Of the German eyewitness accounts of Ivan's reign, Staden's *The Land and Government of Muscovy: A Sixteenth Century Account* is the most informative because he served the tsar from 1564 to 1572 and was a member of the *oprichnina*.¹⁹⁴ Rather than a polemic denouncing Ivan IV, Staden's account consisted of four parts: a petition to Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II, a description of Muscovy, a plan for the conquest of Muscovy, and an autobiography of the author. Of course, nothing ever came of Staden's far-fetched proposal for an invasion of Russia, though he proposed the idea to several

¹⁹¹ Poe, *A People Born*, 133.

¹⁹² Poe, *A People Born*, 87.

¹⁹³ Poe, *A People Born*, 133.

¹⁹⁴ Heinrich von Staden entered Ivan's service after living in Livonia for several years. He had been sent to live with relatives in Riga as an adolescent for stabbing another student at his seminary in the Westphalian town of Ahlen.

other monarchs. His description of Muscovy during the *oprichnina* is the only account in existence by one of the *oprichniki*.¹⁹⁵ Staden was born in the small Westphalian town of Ahlen around 1545, but was sent by his relatives to the German city of Riga in 1560 due to his misbehavior.¹⁹⁶ Thomas Esper argues that Staden's account of Ivan IV's reign is the most objective because "Staden was himself an extremely brutish person" who described how he "cut down a harmless woman with an axe as an interesting [episode]."¹⁹⁷ In his section 'A Plan for the Conquest of Russia,' Staden wrote that after invading Muscovy and capturing the tsar, the Emperor should have all Russian prisoners killed, attach their corpses to logs in groups of thirty to fifty men, and then throw them in the river.¹⁹⁸ Since Staden was himself quite barbaric, he tended not to focus on Ivan's cruelty as much as the other eyewitnesses did.

Heinrich von Staden described Muscovy's bureaucracy and political system in detail. Although he later claimed that Ivan's power was boundless, Staden wrote that nobles from the great families served as judges and "held the entire government in their hands."¹⁹⁹ Boyars from the great families of the kingdom sat on every court and in every chancellery. The German observers also noted the existence of an irregular parliamentary body, the *zemsky sobor*. The *zemsky sobor* was quite similar to the Estates General of France, in that its members were divided into three groups (nobility, clergy, and middle class) and held no real power. Albert Schlichting writes that when the *zemsky sobor*

¹⁹⁵ Heinrich von Staden, *The Land and Government of Muscovy: A Sixteenth Century Account*, trans. by Thomas Esper (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1967), [14].

¹⁹⁶ Staden, [20].

¹⁹⁷ Staden, [13].

¹⁹⁸ Staden, 93.

¹⁹⁹ Staden, 9.

criticized Ivan for his actions, he flew into a rage, had the assembly members imprisoned for five days, and “tore out their tongues, lopped off their hands and feet, and beat them.”²⁰⁰ The semblance of representative government existed, but in reality, Ivan held all authority and applied his rule ruthlessly.

While describing Muscovy’s bureaucracy, Staden wrote at length of institutional corruption. Members of the State Treasury filled their pockets by redirecting tax payments, as did those in the Land Chancellery. The judicial system was even worse. Staden wrote, “If the accused gave money, he was acquitted even if he was guilty. If he did not come, the accuser could then arrest and bind him and have him beaten publicly in the marketplace until he paid. The accuser was also permitted, if he wished, to make the accused a serf.”²⁰¹ In addition, poor petitioners who did not pay were ignored.²⁰² Muscovy was a corrupt and unjust country ruled by a despot with little regard for the law.

Heinrich von Staden, like Herberstein before him, wrote of the tsar’s unlimited power. Staden wrote, “He alone rules, that everything he orders is done and everything he prohibits is not done.”²⁰³ The four German observers of Ivan's reign, Staden, Schlichting, Taube and Kruse, all agreed that the tsar had the power to grant and seize estates (*votchiny*) at will.²⁰⁴ All landholding nobles had to serve in the military, or have their

²⁰⁰ Albert Schlichting, “A Brief Account of the Character and Brutal Rule of Vasilevich, Tyrant of Muscovy” (Albert Schlichting on Ivan Grozny),” trans. Hugh Graham, *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 9 (1975): 249.

²⁰¹ Staden, 11.

²⁰² Staden, 12.

²⁰³ Staden, 55-56.

²⁰⁴ Poe, *A People Born*, 100.

estates appropriated and redistributed.²⁰⁵ Ivan often gave confiscated lands to members of the *oprichnina*.²⁰⁶ Staden emphasized the arbitrariness and injustice of Ivan's despotism.

Although the eyewitnesses often remarked on Ivan's absolutism, they tended to focus more on the cruelty of his regime and personality, particularly during the *oprichnina*. Heinrich von Staden, an *oprichniki* himself, portrayed the group as a bunch of thugs who traveled around Muscovy raping, murdering, and burning everything in their wake. Staden wrote: "The Grand Prince then arrived at the city of Tver and had everything plundered, even churches and monasteries. And he had all the prisoners killed, likewise his own people who had befriended or married foreigners. All the bodies had their legs cut off... and were then stuck under the ice of the Volga River."²⁰⁷ One event involving the *oprichniki* was particularly heinous, the 1570 Massacre of Novgorod. Suspecting that the city was going to defect to Lithuania, Ivan ordered the *oprichniki* to put the city to the sword. Staden wrote that the *oprichniki* pillaged what they could, but "everything that the soldiers could not carry off was thrown into the water or burned."²⁰⁸ None of the three hundred monasteries inside or outside Novgorod were spared.²⁰⁹ According to Schlichting, Ivan's henchmen killed "2770 Novgorod nobles and wealthy men" as well as countless commoners.²¹⁰ The German observers of Ivan's reign of terror agreed that the target of the *oprichnina* was the country's nobility.²¹¹ Although modern

²⁰⁵ Staden, 55.

²⁰⁶ Staden, 18.

²⁰⁷ Staden, 25-26.

²⁰⁸ Staden, 27.

²⁰⁹ Staden, 26.

²¹⁰ Schlichting, 234.

²¹¹ Poe, *A People Born*, 108.

historians have argued that Ivan was selective in eliminating rivals and families he was suspicious of, contemporaries believed he was trying to destroy Russia's nobility.

Muscovite nobles and advisers who questioned Ivan's actions were dealt with swiftly and harshly. Staden wrote, "No one, neither cleric nor layman, stands against [Ivan]."²¹² During the oppression of the *oprichnina*, some Muscovites did speak up. Schlichting wrote that some noblemen sought "to restrain the tyrant from brutally destroying his subjects, who were clearly innocent of wrongdoing."²¹³ Philip II, Metropolitan of Moscow and thus leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, asked Ivan to "live and rule as his forefathers had" instead of executing anyone who displeased him.²¹⁴ Philip was promptly thrown in chains and later strangled by one of Ivan's minions. Similarly, Albert Schlichting writes of how Ivan had the chancellor Ivan Mikhailovich Viskovatyi tortured and killed for "telling the [tsar] to think of God, not to shed so much innocent blood, and, above all, not to exterminate his nobility."²¹⁵ Staden wrote, "Ivan Viskovatyi first had his nose and ears cut off, and then his hands. [Treasurer] Nikita Funikov had his arms bound to poles in the marketplace, and hot water was poured on him and he was thus scalded."²¹⁶ Ivan did not have his rivals or suspected rivals tried in a court of law; they were tortured, mutilated and brutally murdered.

Several of the eyewitnesses to Ivan's terrible reign reflected on his cruelty and prophesied that it would bring about radical change to Muscovy. Heinrich von Staden wondered, "How long such a government can continue" and insinuated that Ivan's

²¹² Staden, 56.

²¹³ Schlichting, 217.

²¹⁴ Staden, 24.

²¹⁵ Schlichting, 272.

²¹⁶ Staden, 28.

brutality and tyranny would be Muscovy's downfall.²¹⁷ Johann Taube and Elbert Kruse wrote that Ivan "destroyed his country and people, diminished his treasury and, as a result of his unheard of tyranny, the people are not true to him and desire some other authority."²¹⁸ Giles Fletcher, an English ambassador to Russia in the 1580s wrote, predicted that Ivan's legacy would be civil war. Fletcher wrote, "[Ivan's] wicked pollicy and tyrannous practise (though now it be ceased) hath so troubled that countrey, and filled it so full of grudge and mortall hatred ever since, that it wil not be quenched (as it seemeth now) till it burne againe into a civill flame."²¹⁹ Indeed, civil war did engulf Russia after the death of Ivan's weak son Feodor I in 1598 as the nation descended into anarchy.

Following the death of Feodor I, Russia was rocked by a fifteen-year succession crisis known as the Time of Troubles. Since Feodor had no male heir, his brother-in-law Boris Godunov was elected tsar by the *zemsky sobor*. Conrad Bussow, a German mercenary from Hanover, was in Russia for much of the Time of Troubles, and later published a history of the period: *Verwirrter Zustand des Russischen Reichs* (The Disturbed State of the Russian Realm). Bussow wrote that Godunov was elected with the support of the "mob," but his rule displeased the "great lords, princes, and boyars."²²⁰ Godunov was an adept ruler, but Russia experienced terrible famine from 1601-1603 in

²¹⁷ Staden, 56.

²¹⁸ Johann Taube and Elbert Kruse, "Poslanie Ioganna Taube i Elberta Kruze kak istoricheskii istochnik," ed. and trans. Mikhail G. Roginskii (*Russkii istoricheskii zhurnal* 8 (1922): 56, quoted in Poe, *A People Born*, 161.

²¹⁹ Giles Fletcher, "Of the Russe Commonwealth" in *The English Works of Giles Fletcher, the Elder*, ed. Lloyd E. Berry (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 201, quoted in Poe, *A People Born*, 161.

²²⁰ Conrad Bussow, *The Disturbed State of the Russian Realm*, trans. G. Edward Orchard (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 11.

which one third of the population perished. Due to the famine, Godunov quickly lost legitimacy and impostors known as the False Dmitrys claimed the throne, as did Feodor's cousin Vasili Shuysky and Władysław IV Vasa, the son of the King of Poland. Bussow wrote of how thousands of peasants who had supported Dmitry were "were suspended by one leg from trees and were shot through with bullets and arrows."²²¹ In all, several million Russians died because of the famines, foreign invasions and civil war. The chaotic period known as the Time of Troubles did not end until the election of Michael Romanov to the throne in 1613.

The end of the Time of Troubles represented more than just a dynastic change (from Rurik to Romanov), it ushered in a series of relatively benign rulers who began to gradually change the image of Russia in western Europe. In the mid-seventeenth century, the travel account of Adam Olearius, the poetry of Paul Fleming, and the novels of Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen all appeared. They represent a range of German religious views, as Olearius and Fleming were Lutheran while Grimmelshausen was Catholic.²²² These three Germans produced images of Russia that were in some ways more favorable than previous accounts, decades before the reign of Peter the Great changed perception of the country even further.

Paul Fleming was born in 1609 in a small town in Saxony and received medical training at the University of Leipzig before moving to Hamburg. Adam Olearius was born in 1603 in a small town in Anhalt, and also studied at the University of Leipzig.

²²¹ Bussow, 41.

²²² Grimmelshausen grew up Lutheran, but converted to Catholicism later in life. However, he often advocated for religious unity under a supradenominational Christianity. See Kenneth Negus, *Grimmelshausen* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974), 87.

Fleming and Olearius became friends and both received positions at the court of Frederick III, Duke of Holstein. When Frederick wanted to establish an overland trade route from Persia to his small duchy through Russia, Fleming and Olearius were selected to join the trade embassy of Otto Brüggemann.²²³ The embassy to Russia and Persia left Holstein in 1633, but did not return until 1639. The commercial mission failed miserably, and Fleming died shortly after returning to Holstein, but Olearius was able to produce a significant work on Russia with the publication of his *Beschreibung der muscowitischen und persischen Reise* in 1647. Olearius's book shaped European views on Russia as profoundly as Herberstein's did before him.²²⁴ Olearius's book was published in over two dozen editions in German, French, English, Dutch and Italian. In total, Olearius visited Moscow four times in the service of Duke Frederick. During his last visit, in 1643, Olearius was offered a position in service of Tsar Michael. Olearius turned down the tsar, however, because he was appointed court mathematician, librarian and counselor to the Duke back in Holstein.²²⁵

After reaching Moscow in late 1634 and negotiating an agreement with Tsar Michael, the trade embassy had to travel back to Holstein for further documents from Duke Frederick. Paul Fleming and much of the embassy remained at the Baltic German city of Reval (Tallinn) for fourteen months until the ambassadors returned and they could make their way back to Moscow.²²⁶ In his sonnet, "He addresses the City of Moscow as

²²³ Marian R. Sperberg-McQueen, *The German Poetry of Paul Fleming: Studies in Genre and History* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 80.

²²⁴ Adam Olearius, *The Travels of Olearius in Seventeenth-century Russia*, trans. Samuel H. Baron (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1967), [7].

²²⁵ Olearius, 13.

²²⁶ Sperberg-McQueen, 81.

he Sees Her Gilded Towers from Afar, March, 1636,” Fleming eulogizes the capital city of Russia. In the first two lines, Fleming writes, “Du edle Kaiserin der Städte der Ruthenen, gross, herlich, schöne, reich” / “You noble empress of these towns in Ruthene air, Great, splendid, lovely, rich.”²²⁷ Here Fleming uses the term *Ruthenen* instead of Slav, and in the eleventh line, he uses *Reussen* instead of Russians; both terms were common in the Early Modern era.²²⁸ Later in the poem, Fleming calls Moscow “der Schönsten unter Schönen” / “fairest of the fair.”²²⁹ Unlike many who visited Moscow before him, Fleming found the city to be a beautiful and divine city. Fleming’s high praise of Moscow is all the more remarkable considering Olearius claimed that much of the city was still in ruins following the fire set by the Crimean Tatars in 1571 and the 1611 fire set by the Poles during the Time of Troubles.²³⁰ Although the outer city had seen better days by the time Fleming and Olearius visited in the 1630s, the Kremlin had survived both disasters untouched. Olearius wrote that the Kremlin contained “many magnificent stone palaces, churches and other buildings” including “a splendid palace in the Italian style.”²³¹ Thus, Fleming was likely referring to the beauty of the Kremlin, though his sonnet did include mention of St. Basil’s Cathedral (located just outside the Kremlin walls): “Es ist das hohe Haar der schönen Basilenen, durch welcher Trefflichkeit ich eingenommen bin” / “It is the high-piled curls that Basilene does wear, To whose

²²⁷ George C. Schoolfield, *The German Lyric of the Baroque in English Translation* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 96-97.

²²⁸ The use of the term Ruthenia for what is now Belarus, Ukraine and Western Russia was common in the late Middle Ages and Early Modern period. It stemmed from the Latin word for Rus.

²²⁹ Schoolfield, 96-97.

²³⁰ Olearius, 112.

²³¹ Olearius, 113.

sweet excellence I captive acquiesce.”²³² Fleming found Moscow to be beautiful enough to write several sonnets about it even after the disasters it had suffered.

Having concluded an agreement with the tsar, the Holsteinian delegation departed Moscow for the journey to Persia. It was at this point that Fleming composed another sonnet on Moscow, “To the Great City of Moscow, As He Was Leaving, June 25, 1636.” In the poem, Russia is personified as a princess who is like a cousin to Holstein following the successful conclusion of the trade agreement. Since Holstein and Russia have made an ‘alliance,’ “Des frommen Himmels Gunst, die müsse dich erfreuen, und alles, was du tust, nach Wunsche dir gedeien” / “May heaven’s pious boon your heart with gladness fill, And all you undertake show fortune at your will.”²³³ At this point, Fleming was happy that the trade mission seemed to have succeeded where other nations had failed. Fleming concludes the sonnet by stating that if he returns to Russia, he will sing its praises once more so that the Rhine shall also hear the sounds of the Volga.²³⁴ Paul Fleming wanted Germans to see Moscow the way he saw it; a different image altogether from Herberstein.

While Fleming had nothing but praise for Moscow and Russia, his friend Olearius was more critical, though not entirely unfair. Olearius corrected several mistaken beliefs about Russia which had been disseminated by earlier observers like Herberstein. For example, Olearius wrote that while domestic violence is not uncommon in Russia, “I did not find that Russian wives regard frequent blows and beatings as a sign of intense love

²³² Schoolfield, 96-97.

²³³ Schoolfield, 98-99.

²³⁴ Schoolfield, 98-99.

and their absence as a mark of their husbands' indifference and dissatisfaction with them."²³⁵ This undercut Herberstein's image of Russians as a people whose natural state was servility.

Another misconception about Russia propagated by earlier writers was that the Russian people were not Christian. This fallacy persisted even though the Christianization of Russia had officially begun in 988 with the baptism of Vladimir the Great, Grand Prince of Kiev. This was roughly the same time as Norway and Sweden were Christianized, and almost four hundred years before Lithuania converted. Despite this fact, Russia's enemies often sought to portray the nation as un-Christian. During the Livonian War, Grand Master Gotthard Kettler of the Livonian Order called Russia 'Christianity's archenemy' in a privateer's patent.²³⁶ In his plan for the conquest of Russia, Heinrich von Staden wrote that when the Grand Prince of Russia had been captured, he should be led as a prisoner "to the Christian world."²³⁷ Staden did not consider Russians to be Christians, but rather heretics. In the seventeenth century, Adam Olearius asked, "Are the Russians Christians?" He went on to write that "there can be found among the Russians the *essentia christiani*, or the most important articles of Christianity."²³⁸ While Olearius, a Protestant, acknowledged that Russians were Christians, he looked down upon the Orthodox Church and believed its adherents to be overly superstitious.

²³⁵ Olearius, 170.

²³⁶ Michael C. Paul, "Western Negative Perceptions of Russia: 'The Cold War Mentality' Over Five Hundred Years," *International Social Science Review* 76 (2001): 107.

²³⁷ Staden, 93.

²³⁸ Olearius, 213.

Although Olearius admitted that the Russians were Christians, his words on Russian behavior were damning. Olearius depicts Russians as morally bankrupt; they were given to drunkenness and sexual promiscuity, fond of swearing and lying, as well as deceptive and cruel. He went on describing at length how Russians were rude and vulgar. Olearius wrote, “When their indignation flares and they use swearwords... they use vile and loathsome words, which, if the historical record did not demand it, I should not impart to chaste ears. They have nothing on their tongue more often than ‘son of a whore,’ ‘son of a bitch,’ ‘cur...’”²³⁹ What struck Olearius the most was who used these curse words. Rather than sailors or commoners in a tavern, Olearius wrote that nobles used this speech in the presence of ambassadors, as did “little children who do not yet know the name of God, or father, or mother.”²⁴⁰ In addition, Russians did not have proper manners according to western European values: “After a meal, they do not refrain, in the presence and hearing of all, from releasing what nature produces, fore and aft. Since they eat a great deal of garlic and onion, it is rather trying to be in their company.”²⁴¹ Olearius went on, “So given are they to the lusts of the flesh and fornication that some are addicted to the vile depravity we call sodomy.”²⁴² Drunkenness was prevalent among “all classes, both secular and ecclesiastical, high and low, men and women, young and old.”²⁴³ It was so common to see Russians passed out drunk on the streets that coachmen often picked them up and drove them to their homes. These were common attributes of barbarians dating back to the term’s Greco-Roman origins. Although Olearius corrected some

²³⁹ Olearius, 139. Some phrases have been omitted.

²⁴⁰ Olearius, 138-139.

²⁴¹ Olearius, 141.

²⁴² Olearius, 142.

²⁴³ Olearius, 143.

mistaken beliefs about Russia, his diatribe against Russian morals and behavior was one of the harshest eyewitness accounts of the country.

Also writing in the seventeenth century, Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen portrayed Russia in a different light than Olearius. Grimmelshausen was born Johann Jacob Christoph to a middle class family in the town of Gelnhausen near Frankfurt in 1621. As a child, he witnessed the brutality of the Thirty Years' War personally, as a group of Croatian soldiers in the Imperial army sacked his hometown.²⁴⁴ Grimmelshausen later served in the Imperial army, and his picaresque novel *Simplicius Simplicissimus*, first published in 1668, was one of the few works to focus on the plight of the lower and middle classes during the Thirty Years' War. Although the protagonist Simplicissimus travels to Moscow in the novel, Grimmelshausen never left the territories that constituted the Holy Roman Empire and certainly never traveled as far east as Russia.

At one point in the novel, a retired Swedish colonel offers the German adventurer Simplicissimus a position in the Swedish army. Simplicissimus travels from the Black Forest to Livonia with the colonel, only to find out that he had been duped. Having no way to return to Germany, Simplicissimus follows the Swedish colonel to Moscow with promises of a high military position in the tsar's army.²⁴⁵ Upon reaching Moscow, Simplicissimus refuses an offer to serve the tsar because the tsar wants him to convert to the Orthodox Church. From that time, Simplicissimus is virtually kept prisoner and

²⁴⁴ Negus, 15.

²⁴⁵ Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen, *Simplicius Simplicissimus*, trans. George Schulz-Behrend (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), 313.

watched at all times.²⁴⁶ Grimmelshausen likely got his belief that the tsar was paranoid and foreigners at the Russian court were restricted from an observer like Herberstein or Staden. Eventually, Simplicissimus is allowed to serve the tsar without converting. His job is to show the Russians how to mine saltpeter and produce gunpowder. It was common for western Europeans to believe that Russians, as a barbaric people, were technologically inferior and thus incapable of manufacturing their own gunpowder.

Later in Grimmelshausen's novel, Simplicissimus leads an army of Russians in battle against Tatars. For the battle, Simplicissimus is given a silk breastplate, "princely headgear with a heron's plume, and a sword all decorated with gold and jewels."²⁴⁷ After leading the Russians to victory, Simplicissimus reports to the tsar and has to return his clothes and equipment. Grimmelshausen writes, "All these goods were borrowed from the czar; they, like everything else in all of Russia, belonged to the czar."²⁴⁸ Thus, Grimmelshausen repeated a common trope, that everything in Russia was the property of the tsar, even its people. Russia, according to Grimmelshausen, was clearly a wealthy country, but one ruled by an all-powerful despot.

Adam Olearius's view of the Russian government and political system during the reign of tsars Michael and Alexei was little different from the tyranny described by Herberstein in the sixteenth century. Olearius wrote that the Russian system of government is what political philosophers call "a dominating and despotic monarchy" and thus must be "considered closely related to tyranny."²⁴⁹ The Tsar was not subject to

²⁴⁶ Grimmelshausen, 316.

²⁴⁷ Grimmelshausen, 318.

²⁴⁸ Grimmelshausen, 319.

²⁴⁹ Olearius, 173.

the law and could appoint, remove, or execute officials as he pleased.²⁵⁰ Olearius also restated a belief that Herberstein had established in the sixteenth century: all of the tsar's subjects, whether low or highborn, called themselves *kholopi*, that is slaves and serfs.²⁵¹ Russians' status as slaves to the tsar suited them; Olearius compared them to what Aristotle said of the Ionians, "They are miserable in freedom and comfortable in slavery."²⁵² Olearius had read Aristotle's *Politics* and believed that slaves deserved to be ruled by despots. A major problem with Olearius's vision of Russian government is that the tsars Michael and Alexei were not cruel or oppressive.

For much of the seventeenth century, Russia experienced tyranny without a tyrant. The tsars of the 1600s had the same powers and limitations as Ivan IV did a century earlier, but Michael and Alexei chose to rule justly. Olearius wrote:

Although they possess the same power, the most recent grand princes have not emulated the former tyrants, who violently assaulted their subjects and their subjects' property. Yet some [of our contemporaries] hold to the contrary view, perhaps basing themselves on old writers such as Herberstein, Jovius, Guagnino, etc., who depicted the Russians' miserable condition under the tyrants' iron scepter. In general, a great deal is written about the Russians which no longer applies, undoubtedly because of general changes in time, regime, and people.²⁵³

Olearius recognized that Russia had changed since the reign of Ivan IV and the Time of Troubles. Having read earlier accounts of Russia, he recognized that the tsars of the mid-seventeenth century were nothing like their predecessors. Olearius continued:

The present Grand Prince is a very pious ruler who, like his father, does not wish a single one of his peasants to be impoverished. If one of them, whether a boyar's serf or his own, is stricken by misfortune as a result of a bad harvest or some other

²⁵⁰ Olearius, 176.

²⁵¹ Olearius, 147.

²⁵² Olearius, 151.

²⁵³ Olearius, 175.

untoward occurrence, the prikaz to whose jurisdiction he is subject gives him assistance and, in general, keeps an eye on his activity so that he may recover.²⁵⁴

The rulers of Russia during Olearius's time in the country were benevolent leaders who cared about their subjects. Because tsars Michael and Alexei were virtuous and just rulers, they chose not to fully exercise their power. As the circumstances and rulers changed in Russia, German views of Russia changed with them. The change of opinion that began during the seventeenth century with the fair rule of tsars Michael and Alexei became even more pronounced during the reign of Peter the Great.

²⁵⁴ Olearius, 175-176.

The 'Changed Russia' of Peter and Catherine

In Alexander Pushkin's 1833 poem "The Bronze Horseman," Tsar Peter II's founding of St. Petersburg created a "window through to Europe."²⁵⁵ During Peter the Great's reign from 1682 to 1725, first as tsar, then as emperor, Russia was literally and figuratively opened to the West. Peter led a cultural revolution from above that affected science, education, industry, government, the military, even dress and cuisine in Russia. Historians have pointed out that Peter did not begin the process of modernization, nor did he complete it. The Westernization of Russia began at least as early as the reforms of Tsar Alexei's advisers Matveyev and Ordin-Nashchokin in the mid-seventeenth century, and lasted throughout the eighteenth century (and beyond).²⁵⁶ However, Peter the Great changed the perception of Russia more than any other ruler did. To contemporary Germans and other western Europeans, Peter embodied the nation's transformation from barbaric to civilized, Asiatic to European.

Before the reign of Peter the Great, it was hard to say that Russia was part of Europe at all. Peter literally put Russia on the map of Europe when he commissioned maps that demarcated the Urals as Europe's eastern border.²⁵⁷ Furthermore, after defeating Sweden in the Great Northern War, Peter discarded the title tsar in favor of emperor. The *tsarstvie* (tsardom) was replaced by an *imperiia* (empire). Mark Bassin writes, "This attempt to transform Russia's political identity made it necessary to recast

²⁵⁵ Waclaw Lednicki, *Pushkin's Bronze Horseman* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1955), 140.

²⁵⁶ L. R. Lewitter, "Peter the Great, Poland and the Westernization of Russia," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 19 (1958): 493.

²⁵⁷ Charles W. Ingrao, "The Early Modern Period," in *Germans and the East*, ed. Charles W. Ingrao and Franz A. J. Szabo (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008), 59.

the geopolitical self-image of the country in order to create something more recognizably European out of the expansive and rather formless agglomeration of lands and peoples sprawling out across the East European plain and northern Asia to the Pacific.”²⁵⁸ Peter sought to mold the image of Russia into a European-style colonial empire with both metropole and periphery. Unlike other colonial empires such as Spain or Britain, Russia did not have a clear geographic border between the European metropole and Asiatic periphery. Vasily Tatishchev, a statesman in Peter’s service, came up with the solution: the Ural Mountains were the natural choice for the border between Europe and Asia.²⁵⁹

Once Peter had put Russia on the map of Europe, Europeans began to depict Russia as a developing European nation, striving to be civilized. While western Europeans acknowledged Peter’s ‘civilizing’ efforts, Russians were still considered barbarians. According to Peter Møller, Europeans repeated sixteenth and seventeenth century stereotypes about Russians, namely that Russians were:

1. strong and have stamina
2. ignorant and backward
3. superstitious and religious in a superficial way
4. rude and unmannered
5. submissive and slave-like
6. corrupt and cheaters
7. unclean and evil-smelling
8. inclined to drink to excess.²⁶⁰

These were the types of stereotypes of Russians that Herberstein, Staden and Olearius spread, though they are little different from what has typically been said of other groups

²⁵⁸ Mark Bassin, “Russia between Europe and Asia: The Ideological Construction of Geographical Space,” *Slavic Review* 50 (1991): 5.

²⁵⁹ Bassin, 6.

²⁶⁰ Peter Ulf Møller, “Russian Identity as an East-West Controversy Outlining a concept,” *Slavica Lundensia* 19 (1999): 7.

deemed barbarians. Iver Neumann writes that Peter “was seen as a bit of a barbarian, but a barbarian who redeemed himself by showing what was constructed as a willingness to shed his ways and learn from Europe.”²⁶¹ Peter’s project of westernization and modernization was an admission of Russia’s backwardness which showed a desire for change.

One area in particular where German opinions of Russia began to shift during the reign of Peter the Great is what are now referred to as war crimes. Throughout much of the Early Modern era, Russians were accused of brutality in warfare by their enemies. Accusations of Russian atrocities appeared most often in anti-Russian war propaganda. In this propaganda, Russians were often equated to ‘barbaric’ Asiatic peoples such as Scythians, Tatars and Turks.

The first large-scale war between Russia and other European nations was the Livonian War (1558-1583). The war pitted an alliance of Poland-Lithuania, Denmark-Norway, Sweden and the Baltic German cities of the Livonian Confederation against Russia. One observer of the Livonian War was Salomon Henning, whose *Chronicle of Courland and Livonia* was published in Leipzig in 1594. Henning was born to a middle class family in Weimar in 1528 and studied at a number of German universities. In 1553, he met Gotthard Kettler, who served as the last Master of the Teutonic Order in Livonia and first Duke of Courland and Semigallia from 1561 to 1587. Henning became Kettler’s secretary in Livonia, and later became a diplomat and chancellor of Courland. Henning was the official chronicler of Livonia and the Duchy of Courland, and styled himself a

²⁶¹ Iver B. Neumann, *Uses of the Other: "The East" in European Identity Formation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 74.

“ducal counsellor in Courland and pastoral inspector” in his chronicle. Henning’s chronicle covers the years 1554 to 1590, and is chiefly focused on the Livonian War.

Salomon Henning’s chronicle is full of derogatory and nasty language describing Russians and their wartime actions. Henning describes Tsar Ivan IV as a ‘tyrant,’ a ‘bloodthirsty savage,’ and a ‘dreadful monster.’ Henning repeatedly describes atrocities committed by Russian forces in the war:

[The Russian commander] slew, murdered, slaughtered, raped, plundered and abducted, sparing neither unborn infants nor old men and women and he once again inflicted atrocities upon all those who had not taken refuge in the remaining fortresses. After he withdrew, one went along all the highways and byways picking up the poor, innocent, little children, taking them off the fence stakes and loading them onto many wagons and sleds so that they might be brought into the cities or to other places for burial. Their heads, arms and legs had been hacked off and their entire bodies dreadfully and monstrously mutilated.²⁶²

All wars are brutal and savage, and the Livonian War was no exception. Salomon Henning’s descriptions of atrocities are fairly unremarkable for accusing an enemy during wartime, with a few exceptions. Henning continues:

Not even in the accounts of the Turks and other heathens, or in those of the most dreadful tyrants, does one find mention of such atrocities. Those who are far removed from such catastrophes and who live in peaceful tranquility are little moved by them and can neither know, believe nor imagine what the Muscovite, Turks, Tatars and similar savage monsters do when they win an upper hand over Christians.²⁶³

Henning equates the brutality of Russians with Tatars, and claims that the Russians’ crimes are even worse than Turks, which was as bad as it got in the sixteenth century. Europeans saw these nomadic, non-Christian peoples as existential enemies of Christendom and the ‘Scourge of God.’ By including Russians as non-Christians

²⁶² Salomon Henning, *Salomon Henning’s Chronicle of Courland and Livonia*, trans. and ed. Zeps Valdis, Jerry C. Smith, William Urban, and Ward Jones (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Baltic Studies, 1992), 45.

²⁶³ Henning, 45.

alongside Tatars and Turks, Henning discredits the piety of Russians. In fact, Russia had been Christian for over 500 years when Henning's chronicle was published. That said, foreign observers often found the Russian Orthodox Church to be mysterious and superstitious.

It is rare for someone to describe an enemy in a positive light. However, Henning's descriptions of Russians stands in contrast to his accounts of Laplanders (Sami people), who actually were not Christian. Henning writes that the Laplanders "Called to their herd in voices as sweet and musical as that of the nightingale, it reminded one of an illustration from Aesop's fables."²⁶⁴ In the sixteenth century, Laplanders were a semi-nomadic people with no writing system who continued to practice their indigenous religion well into the eighteenth century. Russians were abominable heathens to Henning, only comparable to the terrible Turks, while he portrayed actual non-Christians as living idyllic, pastoral lives.

Although he wrote that they were powerful enemies to be feared, Henning saw Russians as inferior. Henning writes that during the war, the Tsar tried to attract skilled artisans and soldiers from Europe, and Germany in particular, to his employment so that he could defeat the German rulers of Livonia because the Tsar's subjects were "ignorant barbarians."²⁶⁵ Because the allied nations believed the inferior Russians were incapable of manufacturing their own artillery and gunpowder, an embargo was set up to prevent the "barbarous and un-Christian Russians' getting modern weapons from Europe."²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ Henning, 46.

²⁶⁵ Henning, 19.

²⁶⁶ Paul, 106.

Russia employed foreign mercenaries and specialists, but they did know how to make gunpowder and weapons for themselves.

A major part of the reason for Russians' reputation as barbaric fighters was that they did not publish 'legitimations of war' as was common among western Europeans in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the Livonian War and subsequent conflicts with Russia prior to the Great Northern War, Poland was able to portray itself as the 'bulwark of Christendom' against the barbaric Russians, just as it had traditionally used this topos in the context of the Turkish threat.²⁶⁷ Polish and Livonian propaganda succeeded in painting Russia as barbaric because the Russians made no attempt to counter it. Pärtel Piirimäe writes, "Before the end of the seventeenth century [Russia] had not been concerned with its image in Europe, and was thus left at the mercy of the propaganda of its western neighbors who were instrumental in constructing the image of Muscovites as Asiatic barbarians, more similar to the Turks than to Christians."²⁶⁸ By issuing legitimations of war, European 'Christian' and civilized rulers contrasted themselves with 'barbaric,' 'savage' rulers who did not.²⁶⁹ In particular, 'civilized' Europe, was defined against Turkish 'barbarity,' and Turkish disregard for the principles of 'just war' was one of the major indications of their barbarity.²⁷⁰

Under Peter the Great's instruction, Peter Shafirov, the Russian Vice-Chancellor, created a pamphlet outlining the historical basis for Russia's claims to territory conquered from Sweden during the Great Northern War (1700-1721). Shafirov's pamphlet, A

²⁶⁷ Pärtel Piirimäe, "Russia, The Turks and Europe: Legitimations of War and the Formation of European Identity in the Early Modern Period," *Journal of Early Modern History* 11 (2007): 78.

²⁶⁸ Piirimäe, 63.

²⁶⁹ Piirimäe, 70.

²⁷⁰ Piirimäe, 75.

Discourse Concerning the Just Reasons, was published in St. Petersburg in 1714.²⁷¹ The tsar took great interest in the project, and even wrote the conclusion of the pamphlet. In addition, Peter had over twenty thousand copies published.²⁷² By justifying war under Peter, Russia began to be considered part of the European community.

Though Germans went to great lengths to describe Russian atrocities and barbarity in war, the rules of engagement were conceived of differently in Russia than in Western Europe. Western notions of so-called civilized warfare only began to be practiced in Russia during the reign of Peter the Great. Victor Taki writes, “Through their participation in European campaigns, Westernized Russian officers came to share the assumption, dominant in the 18th-century European military establishment, that violence should be confined to the battlefield.”²⁷³ By fighting wars against European nations, particularly the Great Northern War and Seven Years’ War, Russian military leaders began to limit harm done to civilians. Though some Europeans noticed a difference in Russian military conduct, the Russian military’s increasingly westernized rules of engagement did not stop Frederick II of Prussia from disparaging them. After the Russians had captured Berlin during the Seven Years’ War, Frederick coined a word for Russians: “*les oursomanes*.”²⁷⁴ He was essentially calling Russians bearlike maniacs, even though the Russian military had ransomed the Prussian capital after minimal looting. With the exception of the slavophobe Frederick II, German perceptions of the

²⁷¹ Piirimäe, 64.

²⁷² Piirimäe, 64.

²⁷³ Victor Taki, “The Horrors of War: Representations of Violence in European, Oriental, and ‘Patriotic’ Wars,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 15 (2014): 290.

²⁷⁴ Giles MacDonogh, *Frederick the Great: A Life in Deed and Letters* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 299.

Russian military evolved with changes in its conduct from ‘barbaric’ Asians to ‘civilized’ Europeans.

One of the Germans who noticed and acknowledged that Russia was in transition during his lifetime was Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Leibniz, born in Leipzig in 1646, was an extraordinary philosopher and mathematician. He was truly a polymath, and a leading intellectual of the Early Modern era. One of his major philosophical projects was the modernization of Russia.

Leibniz’s career began in the service of the Elector of Mainz, who tasked him with supporting the election of Philip William von Neuburg as King of Poland following the abdication of John II Casimir in 1668.²⁷⁵ In his *Specimen demonstrationum politicarum pro rege Polonorum eligendo*, Leibniz argued that von Neuburg, the Elector Palatine, was the most suitable candidate for the Polish crown using calculated probabilities and other mathematical methods. In the essay, Leibniz notably discounted the Russian candidate and called Russians “the Turks of the North.”²⁷⁶ Leibniz’s view of Russia began to change with the ascension of Peter to the throne, and he tried to meet the tsar on his Grand Embassy in 1698. Although their first meeting did not occur until 1711, Leibniz took a keen interest in Russia.

Leibniz believed that Russia offered immense, unexploited possibilities unlike anywhere else. To Leibniz, Russia was a ‘Tabula Rasa’ that would serve as a proving

²⁷⁵ George Gale, “Leibniz, Peter the Great, and the Modernization of Russia. Or Adventures of a Philosopher-King in the East,” *Divinatio* 22 (2005): 8.

²⁷⁶ Paul, 109.

ground for Leibniz's rational ideas.²⁷⁷ Leibniz believed that the lack of institutions was important for the construction of a modern society, but not entirely sufficient. The other key ingredient was a leader willing to undertake this mission, and Leibniz believed Peter was his man.²⁷⁸ Leibniz met Peter three times and during the last two decades of his life, Leibniz was in constant correspondence with many of Peter's statesmen, including Heinrich von Huysen, Johann Christoph von Urbich, Gavriil Golovkin, Jacob Bruce, Peter Shafirov and Ivan Trubetskoy.

Leibniz finally met Tsar Peter at the wedding of Peter's son Alexei to Princess Charlotte of Wolfenbüttel in Torgau in October 1711. Leibniz and Peter spoke several times during their stay at Torgau, and the tsar asked Leibniz to develop a full plan for the modernization of Russia to present to Peter the next year.²⁷⁹ One year after their meeting at the wedding in Torgau, Leibniz presented Peter with the first draft of his plans for Russia at their meeting in the spa city of Karlsbad.²⁸⁰ One of Leibniz's greatest aims was the establishment of academies for science and art. He believed this was the first step in the development of a modern society, and advocated for the establishment of similar institutions in many nations.²⁸¹ His second major point was that Russia should attract foreign talent to help in the 'civilizing mission.' In addition, Leibniz wanted Peter to provide him with knowledge of Russia's geography and the different languages spoken in

²⁷⁷ Woldemar Guerrier, *Leibniz in Seinen Beziehungen zu Russland und Peter dem Grossen* (St. Petersburg/Leipzig: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1873; reprinted 1975, Hildesheim: Gerstenberg); Quoted in Gale, 11.

²⁷⁸ Gale, 12.

²⁷⁹ Gale, 19.

²⁸⁰ Gale, 21.

²⁸¹ Gale, 16.

the empire. Following their 1712 meeting in Karlsbad, Peter officially employed Leibniz as an adviser and began to pay him an annual salary of 1000 thalers.

The final meeting between Peter and Leibniz occurred in 1716 in Bad Pyrmont. During their one week stay at the spa town southwest of Hanover, Leibniz presented the tsar with his “Memorandum on the Improvement of Arts and Sciences in Russia.” This memorandum included three main suggestions for modernizing the country:

1. Procurement of necessary equipment
2. Training of men in sciences already established.
3. Discovery of new knowledge.²⁸²

Four months after presenting his final proposal to Peter at Bad Pyrmont, Leibniz died.

What was the legacy of Leibniz’s project to modernize Russia? Leibniz’s ultimate goal of completely restructuring Russia into a modern society based on Enlightenment ideals was of course never achieved. His plans failed in part because Leibniz was largely ignorant of Russia; it was certainly not a Tabula Rasa as he believed. However, Peter and his successors did carry out some of Leibniz’s plans. The most significant was the founding of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg in 1724, but Leibniz also inspired scientific expeditions to explore Siberia, including that of Vitus Bering.²⁸³

Leibniz's grand scheme for Russia is one of the best examples of the philosopher's optimism and his attempt at applying Enlightenment ideas to real world problems. It also represents his ignorance of and disregard for Russia’s institutions. Without fully understanding Russian culture or history, and having never visited the country, he set out

²⁸² Gottfried Leibniz, *On the Improvement of Arts and Sciences in Russia*, in Denis Gainty and Walter D. Ward, *Sources of World Societies. Since 1450* (Boston: Bedford Books, 2012), 63.

²⁸³ The Russian Academy of Sciences is discussed in further detail below.

to change it rather than understand it. In Peter the Great, Leibniz found an eager and willing participant in his 'civilizing mission.'

Leibniz and Peter set into motion a revision of Russia's perception. Another German who witnessed the transition of Russia was Friedrich Christian Weber. Weber was a Hanoverian who served as a secretary to the English embassy in Russia from 1714 to 1719.²⁸⁴ After returning to London, Weber published his account of Russia, *Das Veränderte Russland* (The Changed Russia) in 1721. Weber then translated his work into English as "The Present State of Russia." In his book, Weber writes of how Peter founded educational institutions and industry in Russia. Weber was given a tour of one of the new colleges in Moscow where around three hundred "Polanders, Ukrainians, and Russians" studied literature.²⁸⁵ Weber praised the tsar for his support of industry, detailing how Peter founded a linen factory, paper mills, sawmills, powder mills, foundries, and brick kilns in St. Petersburg so that Russia would be less reliant on imports.²⁸⁶ Weber approved of Peter's attempt to modernize Russia, but he was not entirely positive in his assessment of Russia.

Weber wrote that the Lord Chief-Justice in Moscow "punished the Criminals without Controul, and there was no appealing from his Sentences. His severe and rigorous Executions had rendered him the Terrour of the Country; he knew nothing of Mercy, his Speech and Looks were enough to make People tremble."²⁸⁷ In addition to the unfairness of the justice system, Weber wrote that the Russian tax system was inefficient

²⁸⁴ George Vernadsky and S. G. Pushkarev, *A Source Book for Russian History from Early times to 1917* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 352.

²⁸⁵ Friedrich Christian Weber, *The Present State of Russia* (London: W. Taylor, 1723), 128.

²⁸⁶ Weber, 181-182.

²⁸⁷ Weber, 152.

and corrupt. Of 100 rubles that are collected, Weber wrote that “not thirty ever came into the Czar’s coffers.”²⁸⁸ Weber believed that while Russia was clearly getting better under Peter the Great, there was still much room for improvement.

Another diplomat to observe Peter’s Russia was Johann Gotthilf Vockerodt. Vockerodt was the secretary of the Prussian embassy in St. Petersburg from 1717 to 1733, and wrote a memorandum on Russia under Peter the Great at the request of Crown Prince Frederick (the future Frederick the Great).²⁸⁹ Vockerodt asserted that Russians were an intelligent and capable people, citing their recovery from the Time of Troubles as evidence. Perhaps anticipating that other observers would attribute Russia’s success to the presence of foreigners (as there were many foreigners in Peter’s employ), Vockerodt wrote that Russia was able to take back all the territories lost during the Time of Troubles “through their intelligent actions and with their own forces, without receiving any aid from abroad, without even consulting any foreign general or minister.”²⁹⁰ Unlike Leibniz, Vockerodt believed that Russians were capable of fixing their own problems. Vockerodt went on to write highly of Russian commoners:

The Russian is usually endowed with very sound intelligence and clear judgement, he also has an unusual capacity to comprehend things and is very quick to invent the right expedients to reach his aim and to turn to his advantage any opportunity that presents itself; most Russians have considerable natural eloquence... they possess all these qualities to a much greater degree than one usually meets among the common people in Germany or elsewhere.²⁹¹

Vockerodt believed that not only were Russian commoners smart and competent, they were more intelligent and capable than Germans and other Europeans. Vockerodt writes

²⁸⁸ Vernadsky, 352.

²⁸⁹ Vernadsky, 324.

²⁹⁰ Vernadsky, 325.

²⁹¹ Vernadsky, 325.

that he was only able to come to this conclusion by ridding himself of “all his prejudices” and by choosing to “not take the customs and usages of his own country as his yardstick.”²⁹² This early expression of cultural relativism was the key to understanding and appreciating Russia rather than seeing it as a barbaric land.

Whether they saw themselves as participating in a ‘civilizing mission’ or had less condescending reasons for doing so, Germans (and other western Europeans) not only observed the changes taking place in Russia during the eighteenth century, many chose to move to Russia to participate in the modernization project. Although western Europeans had served Russian rulers as mercenaries and artisans as far back as the reign of Ivan III, Peter the Great and his successors oversaw a massive influx of foreigners. Through the transfer of human capital, Peter, Anna and Catherine II sought to transform Russia into a modern state along Enlightenment principles. This included military leaders and specialists to reform and modernize the army; architects, engineers and artisans to design and build the new city of St. Petersburg; and scientists, historians, and philosophers to teach at Russia’s new universities and the Academy of Sciences.

Inspired by two Germans in particular, Leibniz and Christian Wolff, Peter decided to found the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg in 1724. The scholars initially recruited to staff the new Academy were all foreign, and most were German.²⁹³ One of the founding members of the Academy was the historian Gerhard Friedrich Müller. Müller was born in the Westphalian town of Herford in 1705 and studied at the

²⁹² Vernadsky, 325.

²⁹³ R. W. Home, “Science as a Career in Eighteenth-Century Russia: The Case of F. U. T. Aepinus,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 51 (1973): 75.

University of Leipzig. Müller moved to St. Petersburg at the age of 20, where he served for some time as the secretary of the Academy. Müller spent the last half century of his life in Russia, during which he developed the Normanist theory.²⁹⁴ The Normanist theory stated that Scandinavians traveled from the Baltic Sea down Russia's rivers and had a major impact on the founding of Russia. Although later historians confirmed much of Müller's theory, it angered the eminent Russian scientist Mikhail Lomonosov, also a member of the Academy, who accused Müller of belittling Russian culture and history. This was not the last time that anti-German sentiments would flare up during the course of Russia's quest for modernization.

Like Müller, Franz Aepinus also provoked the ire of Lomonosov. Aepinus, a German scientist known for his work in electricity and magnetism, was born in Rostock and studied at the University of Jena before his appointment as a professor of physics at the St. Petersburg Academy in 1757.²⁹⁵ While working at the Academy, Aepinus wrote four scientific articles for the previously mentioned journal of Gerhard Friedrich Müller. Müller's journal was intended for a Russian popular audience to increase scientific knowledge in the country.²⁹⁶ Aepinus's straightforward writing style in his articles for the popular journal earned him the ire of Lomonosov, who believed Aepinus was talking down to Russians. In Aepinus's article on the transit of Venus, Lomonosov took issue with the use of common phrases instead of technical terms like 'ecliptic' or 'horizon.'²⁹⁷

²⁹⁴ Helmut Grasshoff, "German Awareness of Russian Literature in the Eighteenth Century," in *Russia and the West in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. A. G. Cross (Newtonville, MA: Oriental Research Partners, 1983), 22.

²⁹⁵ Home, 77.

²⁹⁶ Home, 80.

²⁹⁷ Home, 81.

The relations between Lomonosov and Aepinus, as well as other Germans at the Academy, remained strained until the Russian scientist passed away in 1765.

When Peter the Great passed away in 1725, he was succeeded briefly by his wife Catherine and then his grandson Peter. Peter II died in 1730, and the throne passed to Peter I's niece Anna. Anna's ten-year reign as Empress of Russia was dominated by German statesmen and the period came to be known as the *Bironovschina* after her trusted adviser Ernst Johann von Biron. Anna was following in the footsteps of Peter I, who had several Germans as advisers, namely the diplomat and tutor of his son, von Huysen, the bureaucrats Fick and von Lüben, and the ambassadors Osterman and von Urbich.²⁹⁸ Empress Anna retained Osterman as one of her closest advisers, and also included Biron and Burkhard Christoph von Münnich in her cabinet.

The prominence of Germans in Anna's court provoked nativist resentment, and her death in 1740 led to a backlash against Germans.²⁹⁹ Empress Elizabeth took power through a coup in 1741 and had Münnich and Osterman exiled. The outburst of anti-German sentiment that accompanied Elizabeth's coup drove away Swiss German mathematician Leonhard Euler, who was probably the most prestigious member of the Academy. Euler accepted an invitation from Frederick II of Prussia to move to Berlin, and many other Germans fled Russia as well.³⁰⁰ The scholars who replaced those who left Russia at the Academy were largely inferior, and the Academy began to decline.

Euler did not return to St. Petersburg until 1765, a few years after the ascension of

²⁹⁸ Michael G. Müller, "Absolutism and Reform in Central and Eastern Europe," in *Germans and the East*, ed. Charles W. Ingrao and Franz A. J. Szabo (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2008), 70.

²⁹⁹ John P. LeDonne, *Absolutism and Ruling Class: The Formation of the Russian Political Order, 1700-1825* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 86.

³⁰⁰ Home, 76.

Catherine the Great. With Euler back at the helm, the St. Petersburg Academy quickly recovered its lost reputation.³⁰¹

During the reign of Catherine the Great, German influence in Russia entered a new phase. Catherine the Great was German herself. She was the daughter of the Prince of Anhalt-Zerbst, a Prussian general, and went to Russia to marry the future Tsar Peter III, who was himself the son of a Holsteinian prince. Catherine was certainly influenced by German philosophers, German models of ‘good government,’ and German cameralists, as well as French *philosophes* and Physiocrats. Many Germans employed by Catherine took an interest in the culture, history, geography and nature of Russia. Instead of seeking to change Russia, many Germans wanted to understand it. One such German was the historian August Ludwig von Schlözer. Schlözer, who lived in St. Petersburg from 1761-1767, is considered the founder of scientific historiography in Russia.³⁰² During his time there, Schlözer learned the Russian language quickly, and published *Newly Transformed Russia, or The Life of Catherine the Great of Russia* in 1767.³⁰³ Schlözer had a clear and sustained interest in Russia and Russian history, and saw the changes that were taking place there. Even well after he left St. Petersburg for a professorship at the University of Göttingen in 1767, Schlözer continued to publish on Russian history. In 1771, he published a history of northern Europe including Russia, titled *Allgemeine Nordische Geschichte*.³⁰⁴ Schlözer’s greatest accomplishment may have

³⁰¹ Johan C.-E. Stén, *A Comet of the Enlightenment: Anders Johan Lexell’s Life and Discoveries* (New York: Birkhäuser, 2014), 33.

³⁰² Justin Stagl, *A History of Curiosity: The Theory of Travel, 1550-1800* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1995), 244.

³⁰³ Randolph, 48.

³⁰⁴ Stén, 35.

been his translation of the Primary Chronicle, an important source on early Slavic history.³⁰⁵ Rather than trying to nudge Russia toward the West, Schlözer studied the country's autochthonous institutions and sought to understand the history of Russia and other Slavic groups.

As a disciple of the Enlightenment, Catherine invited Diderot and Baron von Grimm to come to St. Petersburg and she corresponded with Voltaire, among others. She also employed many academically-trained western Europeans, but when they arrived in Catherine's Russia, they found "fully developed institutional structures in the administration, the army, or academia of the Russian Empire, and they had to perform in cooperation, and at times in marked competition, with equally skilled Russian coprofessionals."³⁰⁶

Peter's modernization project had succeeded in creating educated Russians capable of running the country's bureaucracy and educational institutions in line with western European nations. By the second half of the eighteenth century, Peter, Anna and Catherine had succeeded in bringing Russia into the European fold, and German observers of the country began to recognize this.

³⁰⁵ Justin Stagl, "Rationalism and Irrationalism in Early German Ethnology. The Controversy between Schlözer and Herder, 1772/73," *Anthropos* 93 (1998): 526.

³⁰⁶ Müller, 71.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

Before ideologies such as ethnic nationalism and biologically-based racism became widespread in the nineteenth century, Europeans based their perceptions of the self and the other on existing narratives in the absence of empirical evidence. While negative opinions of Poland and Russia were by no means abnormal among Germans in the Early Modern period, these views represented only part of a complex set of assumptions and beliefs about the East. Unlike the polypphony of European voices inherent in Said's *Orientalism* and Wolff's *Inventing Eastern Europe*, German views of Poland and Russia in the Early Modern period exhibited a cacophony of different viewpoints.

German perceptions of the people, places and institutions of Poland and Russia shifted along with changing rulers, events that unfolded in those countries, and the situation in German lands. During the Renaissance, Poland and Russia were unfamiliar to many Germans and, over the next few centuries, the two countries were largely out of mind with the exception of certain processes and events (such as Peter the Great's modernization of Russia and the Partitions of Poland). German views of Poland and Russia ranged from admiration and romanticization to deprecation and demonization. The Early Modern German discourse on Poland shared some stereotypes with the discourse on Russia (such as evaluating varying degrees of civilization), though some tropes were exclusive to one nation (such as the perceived anarchy of the Polish state).

Western European travel to both Poland and Russia in the Early Modern period was rare. Other than diplomats, merchants and adventurers, few Germans journeyed to

Poland or Russia, which were not popular destinations. Russia's distance from German lands, particularly before the founding of St. Petersburg in the early eighteenth century, contributed to its reputation as an exotic, far away land. Because Russia was such an unknown to Germans, much of the writing on it in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries took the form of ethnographic works. The ethnographic writings of Germans such as Sigismund von Herberstein and Adam Olearius included information on the culture, history, government, religion and geography of Russia. While early ethnographers like Herberstein and Olearius expanded knowledge of Russia, they also established the narrative of Russia as more 'Asiatic' than European. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, while some Germans were portraying Russians as closer to Tatars and Turks than to Europeans, Poland was often portrayed as a bulwark against these barbarians from the East.

Two major reasons for this difference of opinion on whether Russia was Asiatic or European were the country's culture and religion. Many of Russia's cultural and political traditions stemmed from the period when the various Russian states were under the 'Tatar yoke,' from the Mongol invasion in the 1220s until Ivan III shook off Tatar rule in 1480. German observers of Russia often found its Orthodox Church, rooted in Byzantine Greek traditions, to be mysterious and superstitious. The Orthodox Church was so alien to some Germans that it was not uncommon for foreign observers to question or deny that Russians were Christians at all. In comparison, German Protestants were at least familiar with Catholicism, the religion of a majority of Poles. To some

Germans, including Frederick the Great, Catholicism was a primary reason for Poland's ignorance and superstition.

One issue that many, but not all, Germans agreed on was that both Poland and Russia were somehow less civilized than Western Europe. In comparison to France or the German states, Poland and Russia were economically backward in the Early Modern period. The economies of Poland and Russia relied heavily on feudalistic agriculture, and much of the land was undeveloped forest, steppe or swamp. Poland and Russia were both largely rural, with no great urban centers of commerce akin to Amsterdam or London. Technologically, Poland and Russia lagged behind Western Europe and there was little industry (until Peter the Great began to modernize Russia).

Some Germans saw Poles and Russians as barbaric and filthy, such as Herberstein, who complained that Russians forced him to drink excessively, or Georg Forster, who wrote that Polish Countesses "comb their lice out of the window."³⁰⁷ In addition to their uncivilized cultures and hygiene, Germans often found the people and institutions of Poland and Russia to be unenlightened, but for different reasons. Thus, some Germans Orientalized Poland and Russia by placing them on a scale of civilization and comparing them to Western Europe.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, writers such as Herberstein and Olearius created and perpetuated the stereotype of Russia's rulers as despotic. Just as modern media often portrays Eastern European leaders as autocratic (perhaps rightly so in the cases of Viktor Orbán in Hungary and Vladimir Putin in Russia), Early Modern

³⁰⁷ Forster, "Forster to Therese Heyne, January 22, 1785," 267-269. Quoted in Struck, "*Terra Incognita*," 163-164.

German observers of Russia often found its rulers to be tyrannical. In the eighteenth century, Germans often viewed the government of Poland in the opposite light. Instead of heavy-handed rule, some Germans saw the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as anarchic and lawless. While Herberstein and Staden, among others, wrote that Russians were slaves to the tsar, German observers of Poland often believed that its nobles had too many privileges and their freedoms led to anarchy.

There are contradictions inherent to German writers' criticism of Poland and Russia at a time when they praised similar institutions in Western Europe. At roughly the same time that Thomas Hobbes was writing *Leviathan* and Louis XIV provided the model for absolutism, Adam Olearius was criticizing Russian tsars for their despotic power. While many Germans condemned Poland's government in the eighteenth century for its policies of republicanism and the separation of powers, those same ideas were praised by some during the American and French revolutions.

In the early eighteenth century, Germans began to think more highly of Russia, but it took until the 1790s for many to praise Poland's government. Peter the Great changed the perception of Russia more than any other ruler did. To contemporary Germans and other western Europeans, Peter embodied the nation's transformation from barbaric to civilized, Asiatic to European. Peter ruled as a model absolutist monarch and attempted to modernize the country following Enlightenment ideas of good governance. In Poland, King Stanisław August Poniatowski began his attempts to reform the nation in the 1760s, but the greatest piece of his reformist agenda was the Constitution of 1791. Contemporaneous with the American Constitution and the Declaration of the Rights of

Man, the Polish Constitution followed Montesquieu's ideas on the separation of powers and Rousseau's social contract. For these reasons, some Germans praised Poland and many saw the dismemberment of Poland in the second and third partitions as a tragedy.

Throughout the Early Modern period, there were Germans who admired aspects of Poland or Russia. These included the poet Paul Fleming who described Moscow as the "fairest of the fair" and composer Georg Philipp Telemann who wrote a panegyric in praise of Polish folk music.³⁰⁸ In the early eighteenth century, Prussian diplomat Johann Gotthilf Vockerodt wrote that Russian commoners were more intelligent than Germans or other Europeans.³⁰⁹ Many Germans, including Lorenz Christoph Mizler, chose to emigrate to Poland or Russia for economic or educational opportunities. Had they been chauvinistic, these immigrants would have been content to socialize exclusively with other Germans in Krakow or St. Petersburg. However, many chose to learn the native languages and Mizler became a leader of the Polish Enlightenment.

To Germans, Poland and Russia were dreamlands, and their motivations for writing about these nations ranged from benign to malevolent. Some Germans, such as Mizler or Telemann, saw Poland and Russia as a land of beauty with various opportunities. With Peter the Great's Russia, Leibniz thought he had found a *tabula rasa* and believed he could create the perfect society using Enlightenment ideas. In some ways, however, Germans like Frederick the Great foreshadowed what was to come and believed that the East was a place to dominate and exploit.

³⁰⁸ Schoolfield, 96-97.

³⁰⁹ Vernadsky, 325.

Historians should always be wary of reading German history backward from 1945. A narrative of continuity from Charlemagne to Frederick the Great to Hitler ignores all the voices that admired or sympathized with Poland and Russia. Looking at how Germans viewed the East before the rise of German nationalism and other forms of ethnic nationalism allows us to see a discourse that does not fit into discussions of *Ostsiedlung* or *Drang nach Osten*. In addition to nationalism, German views of the East in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were influenced by ideologies such as imperialism, social Darwinism and biologically-based racism, as can be seen in Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben* or Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. It cannot be denied that many Early Modern Germans and other western Europeans harbored negative stereotypes of Poland and Russia, but to dwell on this aspect of the discourse exclusively is to miss the larger, more complex, picture. Although the writings of Frederick the Great, Georg Forster and Sigismund von Herberstein, among others, consisted of negative stereotypes meant to belittle or dominate Poland or Russia, there are many examples of Germans who praised or tried to appreciate the East.

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