

European Diasporas in Russia of the Late 18th and Early 19th Centuries: National and Regional Formation Features (As Illustrated in the Case of Jews, Germans and Poles)

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Abstract

The imperial policy of Russia in the 18th and early 19th centuries led to the formation of various diasporas, with the largest being of Polish, Jewish, German and Finnish origin. They were the focus of attention of the tsarist administration while their status was regulated by a variety of laws. Specific features that distinguished social, political and economic development of the Russian Empire were behind the fact that different regions became home to emerging ethnic communities. Jews, Germans, Poles, Finns, Latvians, and Estonians moved to the outskirts of the state both by forced and voluntarily. Laws of the Russian Empire specified places they could reside in and types of economic activities they could undertake. This article is aimed at defining the formation features pertaining European diasporas in Russia in the late 18th and early 19th century on the national and regional scale. To this end we need to determine the nature of the emergence of the ethnic communities in the Russian macro-regions (such as Siberia), reveal specificity of the Russian legislation regarding Jews, Germans and Poles in historic different periods of the Russian Empire and give a quantitative characterization of the communities. Accomplishing this will make it possible to describe the way the European diasporas formed and developed in Russia over the 18th and 19th centuries. Our approach to these objectives is based on the assumption that Russia throughout the 18th and early 20th century was a classical empire with the diasporas being actors in the national and regional policies rather than existing in isolation. This will help determine the stages and nature of the diasporas' formation and their place in the economic, social and cultural life of individual macro-regions and across Russia. The basis for the study have been published sources and materials from Russian archives.

Keywords: *Russian Empire, diaspora, Jewish community, Polish community, German community, migrations, secondary ethnic migration.*

1. Introduction

Interethnic contradictions which deteriorated in the late 20th and early 21st century have posed a challenge to researchers, to reveal their causes. Before turning to this problem, multinational states need to look at the diasporas' history showing how they formed and developed. This resulted in a large number of works on the history of national minorities in the states of the imperial type in the late Modern Period (Russia, Turkey, Austria, and China).

Ivan IV the Terrible (1533–1584) in the middle of the 16th century completed the formation of the centralized Russian state. Active foreign policies pursued by the Russian tsar in the 50s and early 80s of the 16th century was straightforwardly imperial. He included territories in the Russian state, which were not previously part of the Kievan Rus' (10th – early 12th century), and were inhabited by non-Russian peoples (Volga and Siberian Tatars, Nogais, Bashkirs and others). In this same period, a large number of Europeans started living in Moscow's German Quarter and influencing the economic and cultural development of the Russian state. The active foreign policy continued by Peter the Great and Catherine II in the 18th century led to the inclusion of the territories in the Russian Empire, which were inhabited by European peoples (Finns, Poles, Eastern European Jews, Lithuanians, Baltic Germans and others). By the early 20th century, the Russian Empire had been a multinational state which was home to more than 100 nations and ethnic groups.

Modern historiography pays much attention to how diasporas of ethnic minorities formed and developed in the Russian Empire. This is particularly evidenced by extensive historiography. The active study into them follows two general lines. On the one hand, authors draw on the principles of the regional approach to consider a specific ethnic group as part of an entire social, economic, cultural micro- or macroregion. One of the pioneers who proposed using this

approach was A. Kappeler (1992), a historian of Austrian-German descent, whose monograph won much popularity among specialists in Russian historical studies. The latter have devoted considerable effort so far to reconstruct various aspects of life of ethnic communities. The result was the appearance of a large number of publications on history of Germans, Poles, Jews, Finns, Tatars and others in a particular province of the Russian Empire (Kal'mina, 2003, Must, 2012, Shaidurov, 2014). This approach to the study of ethnic minorities significantly depletes the bottom line of research, because a territorial community is considered in this case apart from the remaining mass of its ethnicity, and its existence is viewed in isolation from other regional processes. This is quite clearly demonstrated in the works by American historians on the history of Eastern European Jewry in Russia (Nathans, 2002, Avrutin, 2010) or Russian Germans (Pohl, 2009). They mainly focus on the issues in the development of a specific diaspora.

The challenge of addressing this problem is taken on by a so-called new imperial history that considers the historical process as continuous interrelation between various actors in the political, administrative, economic, social and cultural environment. A description of Russia as an empire since the time of Ivan IV allows historians to apply its toolbox to different regions and periods. In recent times, this approach has been widely employed in the study of diasporas in Russia (Gorizontov, 1999, Remnev, 2004, Miller, 2006).

At the same time, authors build their research work on the basis of comparativism, which enables them to suggest a comparative history characterizing the formation and development of ethnic communities within local borders, as well as their place and role in the economy, social relations and culture of the region (Lohr, 2003, Karikh, 2004, Nam, 2009, Shaidurov, 2013).

2. Material and Methods

In this paper, we consider the impact of national policies on the formation of local German, Jewish, Poles communities.

Thus, on the one hand we will use some principles of the regional approach, addressed by Andreas Kappeler (1992) in his monograph using the Russian material. On the other hand, I will also apply some features of the situational approach that lately has been lately widely used by Russian and foreign historians to describe history as resulting from the interaction of various actors (A. Miller et. al.).

The work is mainly based on archival documents and published sources (legislative and recordkeeping materials). These resources will enable complete the tasks set above.

3. Discussion

The diasporization process began in Russia in the middle of the 16th century, when the state stated integrating ethnic groups that previously enjoyed statehood or retained its elements at the time of accession. For example, Volga Tatars can be considered as one of the first diasporas. In the second half of the 18th century, this process markedly intensified, after the territories of neighboring, previously independent states were included in the Empire.

German, Polish and Jewish ethnic groups share quite many common features. This became evident, for example, when they were joined Russia on a massive scale in the second half of the 18th and early 19th centuries, and territorial communities also began taking their shape at about the same time. However, there were features that reflected in a diverse manner in the communities under consideration. In particular, this manifested itself most clearly in the policies pursued by the state. While German settlers enjoyed the patronage of Catherine II, Paul I, and Alexander I at that time, this was not the case, for example, with Poles whose anti-Russian uprisings in the last quarter of the 18th century gave birth to views of them as "rebels." The government had an ambivalent attitude towards Jews at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. On the one hand, it made statements about maintaining a Jewish identity, while on the other, made attempted to coopt them into various social estates, primarily into the urban one (Klier, 1986).

To a large extent, the national policy was formed based on the position of the part of the national community – the elite, which, if necessary, could be relied on, and on the structure of the society that accepted the new members. For example, the German environment was dominated by conservative colonist farmers, who saw in Russian tsarism a source of their wealth in the Volga region or New Russia. Polish nobility, which was most actively involved in the political life of society, regarded it as the cause that lied in the destruction of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. For the Jewish community, which had no nobility and was dominated by the non-agricultural element, it represented the power that mechanically replaced the Polish government.

There is no denying that Germans had a tremendous impact on the development of various aspects of Russian society in the 18th century. It was apparent in the agricultural sector. Influenced by the ideas of the Physiocrats, Catherine II and her supporters stepped up the agricultural policy. To facilitate the economy in the country's outlying areas, they

invited colonists, primarily from German lands (Pisarevskiy, 1909). In the second half of the 18th century, the Volga region and South Russia became home to two enclaves of German colonies. This process had not only positive results, but also brought a lot of frustration to both sides. Despite the inconsistent colonization policy, German colonies enjoyed attentions from the authorities until the beginning of the 19th century, which was expressed both in the legislative sphere, and in the activities of individual government officials, including Emperor Paul I and Alexander I (Pisarevskiy, 1909).

A significant part of Ukrainian and Belarus lands were formerly owned by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and following its Partitions they were included in Russia. It should be clearly remembered that the Polish lands proper were transferred to Prussia and Austria. Attitude to Poles was ambiguous in the last years of Catherine II's reign. On the one hand, they were perceived as a fraternal Slavic people, on the other hand, certain social strata pointed to the centuries-old Russian-Polish controversies, which deteriorated after the uprising led by Tadeusz Kościuszko. In the reign of Alexander I, the Polish question turned into a debate about the 1815 Polish constitution and the inclusion of the Kingdom of Poland in the Russian Empire. However, measures taken by the central government could not reverse the negative attitude that a significant part of Polish society, primarily the nobility, had to the Russian domination. Its existence is suggested through the mass character of the Polish uprising in 1830. This prompted St. Petersburg to introduce repressive policies in Poland in various spheres of public life (Kuczynski, 1993).

The Jewish diaspora is an unparalleled phenomenon in Russian history. Up until the 1770s, there was a legal prohibition on the resettlement of "Yids" in the territory of the Empire. The reign of Elizabeth I brought about their expulsions. However, the last third of the 18th century witnessed the very attitude of the authorities to the ethnic group changing. This, in particular, manifested itself in the new terminology – the derogatory "Yids" was replaced with "Jews." This was largely due to the fact that a large number of Jews moved to Belarus and Polish-Lithuanian provinces, which became part of Russia after the 1770–90s Partitions of Poland. Historians estimate that this turned almost 500 thousand Jews into Russian subjects [Nathans, 2002]. Retaining their old rights and privileges, the authorities tried to coopt Jews in urban estates, but the specificity of the diaspora made it impossible to fully implement the plan. At the same time, another obstacle was that there was no existing practice of carrying out a dialog with the ethnic and religious group. As a result, the central authorities fell under the influence of the Polish-Lithuanian traditions. This marked the beginning of a new line in the national policy, which became most evident at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. Inspection visits by Gavriila Derzhavin to Belarusian provinces, the work of a special commission, the 1804 charter and other activities of that time are the links of one chain. As the authorities were unable to dissolve Jews in the general Russian body, they endeavored to isolate them by putting the segregation policy into force (Klier, 1986).

Between the last third of the 18th and the first quarter of the 19th century, the Russian Empire is characterized by an extremely erratic development, which was reflected in growing contradictions between the economic model and the political system. However, for Germans, Poles and Jews, the integration in Russian life had a positive outlook since the level of its development was higher than in the German lands and the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Reign of Nicholas I was permeated with the spirit of nationalism. On the one hand, this was seen in the idea of "official nationalism", which was put into practice at different levels of social life. On the other hand, we can say that the domestic policy regarding various ethnic groups contained inconsistencies. In this period, society became increasingly conservative amid the supremacy conservative ideas. But the events that took place in the 1820–30s have a significant influence on the future of diasporas under consideration. That moment marked the beginning of their active part in the colonization of the border regions along with Russians (Siberia, the Far East, the Caucasus, and Central Asia) [Shaidurov, 2013].

The Polish uprising of 1830–31 caused a fundamental change in the attitude of tsarism towards Poles. On the one hand, this resulted in a significant reduction of the Polish autonomy determined by the 1815 Constitution. In particular, Poles who lived in the territory of the Kingdom of Poland were not subjected to exile from the area in the 1815–30s. But the 1832 law altered this regulation (Kachinskaya, 2002). On the other hand, activists, who take part in anti-government protests, were persecuted: some were exiled to Siberia, others sentenced to penal settlement, and the ones who perpetrated offences of minor gravity assigned to serve in Siberian border battalions. In 1834, Siberia became the place of exile for those who attempted to provoke a new uprising in 1833, and then it received exiles involved in the conspiracy of Szymon Konarski in 1839. Here found themselves members of the Circle "Commonwealth of the Polish people." It was at the time of Nicholas I when "the Polish Siberia" started to form (Kuczynski, 1993).

A parallel process was the development of the Jewish community in Siberia. This region was not included in the Pale, specified by the 1804 Charter, and on this basis it was legally closed to the Jewish population. The existing legal prohibition was repeatedly resumed in the 1820s. For example, "by the highest decree dated December 19, 1824, Jews are forbidden to reside and settle in the Altai mining district" (Shaidurov, 2013). In the 1831–32s, decisions were made to prevent Jews and Gypsies from moving to Siberian cities and towns. Until the mid-1830s, the Asian part of Russia, in

particular Siberia was only open to those Jews who were exiled here for criminal offenses. The status of Jews in the region was regulated by all-Russian legislation, but had its own distinctive features.

However, the first third of the 19th century is characterized by changes in the authorities' attitude to the Jewish population. In particular, at the beginning of the reign of Alexander I, they drafted resettlement of Jews in the agricultural colonies in the New Russia. Some changes affected Siberia as well. For example, it was not until 1834 that the exiled Jews and their families were allowed to be classed in rural and urban societies. In the 1835–36s, Siberia was chosen as a place of settlement.

In November 1836, the authorities published a manifesto that allowed Jews to move to Siberia. This step was preceded by intense preparatory activities. In 1835, by order of the Interior Minister, the Tobolsk and Omsk provinces allocated more than 15 thousand dessiatines of land for 1377 Jewish families to install themselves. However, this was largely the end of the Jewish colonization of Siberia. Already in January 1837, a new manifesto was issued, which forbade Jews to move beyond the Urals. As for those Jewish families who were already on the way, they were ordered to return to their former place of residence. Nevertheless, a small number of Jews managed to settle down on the Siberian land (Shaidurov, 2013).

Siberia was opened to German colonization in 1763 by a manifesto of Catherine II. However, it remained terra incognita for most Germans until the middle of the 19th century. Their knowledge of it amounted to the fact that it was a place where exiled criminals were sent. This region was primarily interesting to those who were descending from families of officials and master miners, who entered the Russian service. This situation is accounted for the rapid development of the mining and metallurgical industry. In addition, career advancement was much faster far from the capital. As a result, ethnic Germans and their descendants played a prominent role in Siberian cities in the second half of the 18th and early 19th centuries, as they worked in the administrative apparatus and became specialists at mining factories (Skubnevskiy, 2010). The reason for the lack of interest among German colonists, who accounted for than 80% of the diaspora, is in the fact that there were significant reserves of free land available in the areas of compact location of the colonies – in the Volga region and New Russia. It was not until the mid-19th century that German colonists made first attempts to move beyond the Urals. For example, in the 1850s, Mennonites of the Taurida province appealed to Governor General of Eastern Siberia N.N. Muraviev to allow them to settle on the Amur River. But potential migrants and metropolitan officials did not see eye to eye on the colonization process and therefore the situation received no further development.

Hence, by the middle of the 19th century, Siberia had become an area where Polish, Jewish and German communities started to take shape. Ways and conditions of their formation varied and largely depended on the position of the ruling regime. At this time, the communities were small, but the distinctive features began to show up. For example, the German community soon began to lose its national character by gradually assimilating into the Russian environment. The process was fastest in the domestic sphere. Already the second generation of migrants associated themselves to a larger extent with Russians than with Germans. In the third generation, the distinctions that survived were leveled completely as its members were converted to Russian Orthodoxy, entered into marriage with Russians, etc. The explanation to this situation lies in the absence of the critical mass of community members, which would have allowed it to create social and economic institutions required for self-preservation. A totally different situation developed in the Polish and Jewish communities. Poles viewed the new place of residence as temporary, and therefore made no efforts to create the basis required for a community.

The second half of the 19th century brought about changes in the development of the European communities in Siberia. The Polish community still continued to grow through exiles from western provinces. After the 1863 Polish uprising was suppressed, the government exiled approx. 17 thousand Poles, although, according to contemporary Polish historians, this figure is somewhat understated (Kachinskaya, 2002). The community actively increased in number, as participants in the revolutionary movement of 1880 – 90s were exiled to Siberia. By the end of the 19th century, the Tobolsk province alone had approx. 3 thousand penal laborers, exiles and penal settlers, or 3.5% of all Poles, or 4.9% of all convicts.

The range of potential migrants grew considerably at this time. It started to include family members of the exiles, who were allowed to follow them to Siberia. In addition to the exiles and their families, the area beyond the Urals began to receive peasants who came here as part of the resettlement campaign. They mostly settled down in southern districts of the Yenisei and Tomsk provinces.

Besides, the region became rather attractive for Polish manufacturers and merchants. It was connected with the beginning of rapid economic development of Siberia, caused by the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway. The inflow of population in urban and rural areas significantly expanded the market for finished products. The Siberian periodical press published feuilletons that often had competition between Moscow and Lodz textile manufacturers as the subject of ridicule. Poles started to play a noticeable role in growing manufacturing industries. For example, they built

flour mills in rural areas. The second half of the 19th century saw another group becoming prominent, which contributed to the growth of the Polish community, namely descendants of exiles and penal settlers of an earlier period (Skubnevskiy, 2009).

Thus, in the second half of the 19th century the Polish community formed through a variety of sources. The balance between the forced and voluntary factors was not in favor of the former at this time. A more important role was performed by the peasant resettlement, which reached its peak in the early 20th century. By 1877, according to Polish historians, the number of the Polish community in Siberia amounted to approx. 10 thousand people (Masyarzh, 2002). By the end of the 19th century, there were over 18.5 thousand Poles living in the three Siberian provinces (Tobolsk, Tomsk, and Yenisey). A distinction of the Polish community was its dispersed nature. Poles settled down mainly in rural areas (about 75%) and did not found monoethnic settlements. They preferred to set up homes in Russian villages. Another feature of the community was its rural character. Unlike other communities, the Polish one did not seek to establish social and economic institutions in Siberia, as it continued to be regarded as a place of temporary residence over the period.

The Jewish community in Siberia continued to face serious difficulties in its development in the post-reform period. They were caused by the still effective ban on the voluntary resettlement in areas beyond the Urals. Therefore, the main source that provided new members to the community in the Siberian provinces remained exile to penal servitude or settlement as part of criminal or administrative proceedings. This led to the fact that basic regulations which governed the rights and obligations of Jews in Siberia were the Statutes on Passports, On the Exiles and On the Prevention and Suppression of Crime.

At the end of the 19th century, Siberia was in a unique position. This can be seen on the one hand, in the region's continuing non-inclusion in the Pale, and on the other hand, in the creation of a personal pale for every Jew. For example, one of the statutes wrote that "within the limits of Siberia, Jews enjoyed no right of free residence and may reside only by virtue of registration in one of the local societies, which is their permanent place of residence" (Shaidurov, 2013).

The Altai mining district continued to enforce a prohibition on the settlement of Jews both from voluntary migrants and exiles. However, in 1872, the Interior Ministry tried to agree with Ministry of the Imperial Court, which was directly in charge of the district, "on admission of Jews to residence in the Altai district." This prohibition surfaced once again in the issue of reckoning Jews to petty-bourgeois society of the town of Kolyvan – its existence and the town's location in the district made it impossible to include them in the town population.

Hence, the legal status of Jews in Siberia was not clearly defined: the duality of their position persisted, which enabled the authorities to deal with the "Jewish question" in the region to their own advantage (Ostrovskiy, 1911).

This situation caused outrage among liberal-minded members of the Siberian public. This is most clearly seen in publications by regionalists. For example, already in the early 20th century, "Sibirskiy voprosy" ("Siberian issues") and other editions published articles and short commentaries, which described the plight of Siberian Jews and harsh treatment meted out to them by the local authorities (Tikhonov, 1905). In particular, it was pointed out that the "Jewish question" in Siberia was as factitious as the "land question."

As the state pursued restrictive policies, it found itself in an ambiguous situation. On the one hand, it prohibited the Jewish migration to Asian Russia, citing the protection of the Russian Orthodox population from "Yid unwanted influence" as the reason for the ban. At the same time, it sent Jews to the region as a punishment for criminal offenses and the fact that Jews, nevertheless, lived there and their contacts with the local population by no means bothered the authorities. However, despite all the restrictions, the Jewish community continued to grow. Along with exiles, the community was formed by descendants of the exiled, children of soldiers in Tsar Nicholas's army, and other groups.

One of the largest communities emerged in Tomsk by the end of the 19th century (in 1897, approx. 3 thousand people). It was the first time when the local community managed to create a variety of institutions of socialization, such as a synagogue, a vocational school. Despite the existing organizational and other disadvantages, it was the Tomsk Jewish Vocational School that was the only ethnic educational institution for a long time. Availability of these institutions shows that the number of Jews there achieved a critical mass of "insiders", which required providing a favorable environment for self-preservation. Sufficiently large communities emerged in Kainsk (currently Kuybyshev) and Mariinsk.

Even the conservative policies in the Altai mining district were unable to deter Jews from founding here a small community. By 1897, only the Barnaul district was place of residence for over 200 Jews. At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, Barnaul, which was the center of the mining district, was home to 56 people of the Judaic denomination. Meanwhile, the chief of police wrote in his annual reports that there had been no persons of the Jewish faith.

By the end of the 19th century, the total number of communities in Western Siberian provinces had amounted to approx. 15 thousand people, of whom about 50% had resided in the Tomsk province. At this point, one of the distinctive features of the Jewish community ultimately took shape – the fact that this group of the population was highly urbanized (approx. 65.5%) (Patkanov, 1911).

In the second half of the 19th century, the community of Siberian Germans continued to exist. By 1897, it had included approx. 3.4 thousand people. The community growth owed much to natural increase. However, as the ethnic group was much diffused in the Russian environment, this figure was quite insignificant (Patkanov, 1911).

The key source, which added to the community, continued to remain voluntary migration. At that time, no legal restrictions on resettlement of Germans beyond the Urals were effective. Nevertheless, the absence of elaborate migration legislation which could have granted benefits and support from the state was the basic obstacle that hampered the flow of those willing to resettle. Another restricting factor was the permanence of communal orders up until 1871. Only reforms of colonies in 1871 made it possible for people to withdraw from colonist communities.

In the 1880s, German colonists began to view Siberia as one of the most prospective areas to settle in. Their search for new lands was much encouraged by various social, economic and political factors. However, the scale of resettlement was very limited. Nevertheless, it was this period that determined main areas of the compact and dispersed settlement, which would be actively developed during Stolypin's resettlement (western and south-western parts of the Tomsk province, a district near Omsk).

The fact that groups of migrants were dominated by those originating from rural areas contributed much to the identity of Siberian Germans. On average, more than 70% of the community lived outside cities. This enabled creating the most favorable conditions for accumulating a critical mass of "theirs" and providing a social and economic basis for the community's self-preservation and its resistance to dilution in the surrounding majority (Skubnevskiy, 20010).

Over the 19th century, the ethnic communities were incorporated into the economic, social and cultural activities of macro-regions (Volga region, New Russia, North Caucasus, and Siberia). In the process of adaptation, they managed to find their own economic niches independently or by means of compulsion [Kappeler, 1992]. For example, the vast majority of Russian Germans in the Volga region, Baltic States, and New Russia was engaged in agriculture. Ashkenazi Jews also shaped traditional occupations such petty trade, crafts which were associated with the processing of agricultural produce (distilling, flour milling), transportation, and usury. The economic activity of Poles outside the Kingdom of Poland directly relied on their legal status. Exiles were used until the late 19th century in penal labor in mining and conscripted into convict companies as part of the Russian army. Owing to their high educational level, the Poles, who independently moved to the outskirts of the Russian Empire, found their place in the civil administration, army, and industrial production. One can agree with the view represented by Russian historians of the 20th century, that a large number of non-Russian population of European origin on the outskirts of the Russian Empire produced a beneficial effect on the socio-economic development of the macro-regions which passed to the stage of capitalist relations.

4. Conclusion

Thus, in the second half of the 18th and in the 19th centuries, the ethnic composition of the Russian Empire underwent significant changes resulted from active foreign policies pursued by the Russian government. Like it or not, its territory became home to a multitude of ethnic groups, with Jews, Germans and Poles founding the largest communities. These diasporas turned out to be integrated in a more advanced economy than the ones in their home countries.

The 19th century brought about the continuous formation of regional communities which were directly affected by the national policy carried out by the authorities. Poles, Jews and Germans began to play a prominent role in the migration processes inside Russia. Their numerous communities took shape in different macro-regions of the Russian Empire (Volga region, New Russia, North Caucasus and Siberia). At the turn of the 19th – 20th centuries, the strongest growth was seen in the European ethnic communities residing in Siberia. For example, the Jewish community numbered over 30 thousand people in Western Siberia alone in the early 20th century, the Polish community over 50 thousand people, the German one about 100 thousand people. When they resettled in the outskirts of the Russian Empire, they, like Russian migrants, were involved in their colonization. Now there was a process of secondary national migration from economically developed regions to backward areas. The result was the formation of territorial communities which had a major part in agriculture, processing of mineral and agricultural raw materials, trade and transport.

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