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World War I and Identity Crisis of Russian Germans

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Abstract: The authors consider the position of Russian Germans in the empire, who during World War I became victims of the foreign policy circumstance. There is analyzed the process of the transformation of the state-ethnic identity of the Germans through the identification of factors that had a psychological impact on them and contributed to the formation of a “negative” identity in their environment. The sources for the study are the letters of military doctor F.O. Krause and Russian Germans who served on the Caucasian front, as well as German colonists from various provinces of the Russian Empire; decrees and orders of the military and civil administration, periodical materials; office correspondence between ministries and other materials stored in the central and regional archives of the Russian Federation. The study shows that the rise in nationalist sentiments in Russian society and the implementation of anti-German policy in the country exerted significant psychological pressure on Russian Germans. Due to this, during World War I they found themselves in a “new reality.” The authors come to the conclusions that influenced by numerous factors, Russian Germans had to choose various ways to preserve their identity: changing the name, emigrating, completely immersing themselves in their professional activities.

Keywords: ethnophobia, friend or foe, anti-German campaign, German question, Russian empire

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Первая мировая война и кризис идентичности российских немцев

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Аннотация: Рассматривается положение российских немцев в империи, которые в годы Первой мировой войны оказались заложниками внешнеполитической ситуации. Анализируется процесс трансформации государственно-этнической идентичности немцев через выявление факторов, которые оказали на них психологическое воздействие и способствовали формированию «негативной» идентичности в их среде. Источниковой основой исследования послужили письма военного врача Ф.О. Краузе и российских немцев, служивших на Кавказском фронте, а также



немецких колонистов разных губерний Российской империи; постановления и распоряжения военной и гражданской администрации, материалы периодической печати; делопроизводственная переписка между министерствами и другие материалы, хранящиеся в центральных и региональных архивах Российской Федерации. Показано, что рост националистических настроений в российском обществе и проведение антинемецкой политики в стране оказали на российских немцев значительное психологическое давление. Из-за этого в годы Первой мировой войны они оказались в условиях «новой реальности». Авторы пришли к выводу, что под влиянием различных факторов российским немцам пришлось выбирать разнообразные способы сохранения своей идентичности: смена фамилии, эмиграция, полное погружение в свою профессиональную деятельность.

Ключевые слова: этнофобия, свой – чужой, антигерманская кампания, немецкий вопрос, Российская империя

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Introduction

Relevance. Military conflicts can not only destroy socio-economic, political and cultural ties, but also distort social relations. Under the pressure of military events and information propaganda, there begins to occur a transformation of an individual's personality and how they think about their civic, social and ethnic identity. Due to the destruction of the integrity of their ego-identity, an individual tries to find their place and purpose in society, often going through a complex of internal experiences and deformations.

Elaboration of the problem. It was American psychologist E.H. Erikson that was the first to introduce the concept of identity into scientific use; he distinguished two aspects – “I-identity” and social identity¹. Later the problems of identity were developed by many domestic and foreign researchers in the field of not only psychology, but also philosophy, sociology, political science, history and anthropology. Within the framework of the ethnosociological approach to the problem of ethnic identity, L.M. Drobizheva identifies the following components: awareness of belonging to one's people, awareness of the interests of one's people, and an idea of culture, language and territory². T.G. Stefanenko proposes to consider ethnic identity not only as an individual's awareness of his belonging to a particular ethnic group, but also as the experience of his identity with one ethnic community and its separation from others³.

Among the different variations, it is possible to single out the concept of “negative” identity, by which, in accordance with the concept of L.D. Gudkov⁴ and E.H. Erikson, which is meant the overcoming of one's inferiority, insecurity, and uncertainty. Also, according to E.H. Erikson, negative identity may include behavior and relationships for which a person was punished or had to feel guilty⁵.

In relation to Russian Germans, negative identity is a situational phenomenon that is associated with the influence on it, firstly, of historical events, secondly, of political actions of the authorities, and thirdly, of public sentiments and opinion. E.H. Erikson saw a connection between crises of identity and crises of social development, because the col-

¹ E.H. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle. Selected papers* (New York: [N.s.], 1959).

² A.N. Tatarko, and N.M. Lebedeva, *Metody etnicheskoi i kross-kul'turnoi psikhologii* [Methods of ethnic and cross-cultural psychology] (Moscow: Vysshiaia shkola ekonomiki – natsional'nyi issledovatel'skii universitet Publ., 2011).

³ T.G. Stefanenko, *Etnopsikhologiya* [Ethnopsychology] (Moscow: Institut psikhologii RAN, Akademicheskii proekt Publ., 1999).

⁴ L. Gudkov, *Negativnaia identichnost'. Stat'i 1997–2002 godov* [Negative identity. Articles from 1997–2002] (Moscow: VTSIOM-A Publ., 2004).

⁵ E. Erikson, *Identichnost': iunost' i krizis* [Identity: Youth and Crisis] (Moscow: Progress Publ., 2006).

lapse of the ideals and values that underlay the previously dominant political culture forces people to seek new spiritual guidelines to understand their place in a changing society, connections with the state and an enveloping society⁶. D. Borchmeyer also writes about the problem of Germans searching for their identity⁷.

This process is most acutely manifested during pre-war periods, when, against the backdrop of the development of ethnophobia, there arises the problem of self-determination and search for one's new place in society in new realities. It is from this position that the manifestation of negative identity is considered by D.V. Eiduk, S.V. Obolenskaya, O.V. Erokhina, E. Lor⁸. These authors showed that politicization of the German issue had reached unprecedented proportions. The anti-German campaign quickly grew into a campaign against the Germans in general. At the same time, the concept of "internal German" often became associated with the "enemy from within." There was introduced into the public consciousness the idea of the need to completely cleanse Russia of any manifestation of "Germanism."

In this regard, *the purpose of the study* is to find out how psychological pressure on Germans from the Russian authorities and society influenced their identity crisis during the First World War.

Source base. To reveal the goal, there were used the regulations and instructions of the command of military districts and civil administrations, materials from periodicals, office correspondence between ministries. The bulk of the material was discovered in archival repositories. In particular, there were used the documents from the fund of the Police Department of the Ministry of the Interior (F. 102) stored in the State Archive of the Russian Federation; the documents from the fund of the Department of Religious Affairs of Foreign Confessions of the Ministry of the Interior (F. 821) stored in the Russian State Historical Archive; the documents from the fund of the Military-Political and Civil Administration under the Supreme Commander-in-Chief (F. 2005), the Headquarters of the Kazan Military District (F. 1720) and the Kiev Military District (F. 1759) stored in the Russian State Military Historical Archive; the documents of the Office of the Petrograd Governor (F. 253), Petrograd Provincial Office (F. 258), Petrograd Provincial Office for Zemstvo Affairs and City Affairs (F. 259) stored in the Central State Historical Archive of St. Petersburg; the documents of the Ataman Office (F. 46) and the Military Office for Peasant Affairs (F. 213) stored in the State Archive of the Rostov Region.

Civic identity crisis

In the early XX century the socio-economic contradictions were intensified by military conflicts and increasingly aggravated the internal political crisis in Russia. Various political groups took advantage of this during the First World War; in search of those re-

⁶ V.A. Achkasov, "Etnicheskaia identichnost' v situatsiiakh obshchestvennogo vybora [Ethnic identity in situations of public choice]," *Zhurnal sociologii i social'noj antropologii* 2, no. 1 (1999): 48–58.

⁷ D. Borchmeyer, *Was ist Deutsch? Die Suche einer Nation nach sich selbst* (Hamburg, Rowohlt, 2017).

⁸ S.V. Obolenskaya, *Germaniia i nemtsy glazami russkikh (XIX vek)* [Germany and the Germans through the eyes of Russians (XIX century)] (Moscow: Institut vseobshchei istorii RAN, 2000); D.V. Ejduk, "The image of the enemy' and the prospects of war in the Russian periodical press in 1914–1915: based on the materials of the newspaper 'Morning of Russia'," PhD thesis, St. Petersburg State University, 2008; I.G. Sobolev, *Bor'ba s 'nemtskim zasil'em' v Rossii v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny* [The struggle against 'German dominance' in Russia during World War I] (St. Petersburg: Rossiiskaia National'naia biblioteka Publ., 2004); O.V. Erokhina, "Svoi-chuzhoi': k voprosu o transformatsii obraza nemtsa nakanune i v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny ['Friend or foe': on the question of the transformation of the image of the German on the eve and during the First World War], in *Voina i voennye konflikt'y v istorii Rossii: k 70-letiyu Velikou Pobedy*, 139–146 (Moscow: RUDN Publ., 2015); E. Lor, *Russkii natsionalizm i Rossiiskaia imperiia: Kampaniia protiv 'vrazheskikh poddannykh' v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny* [Russian Nationalism and the Russian Empire: The Campaign against 'Enemy subjects' during the World War I] (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie Publ., 2012).

sponsible, they focused on the German issue. Moreover, they noted the national characteristics of the Germans: “...enormous selfishness, arrogance, alienation from the people.”⁹

Being under constant psychological pressure, Germans were forced to think about their own unique civic and ethnic identity. It should be emphasized that the majority of urban Germans had a dual identity considering both Germans and Russians “their men.”

A striking example of such identity is F.O. Krause who was raised in a German family and educated at Moscow University. From 1911 he worked at the Morozov hospital. There he met his future wife A.I. Dobrokhotova; he wrote letters to her in 1914–1917. This type of source is the reflection of the public sentiments of the war period, and at the same time it gives an idea of the identity crisis of one of the authors and his attempts at self-identification.

At the beginning of the First World War, F.O. Krause was mobilized. Unlike most Germans sent to serve in the Caucasus, he participated in the military battles in Galicia, Volynia and Romania. In response to the emerging anti-German hysteria, he, like most Germans, asked the question: “Where is the justice? Why are the most loyal Russian subjects persecuted?”¹⁰

It was the periodical press that played a prominent role in aggravating the situation and increasing psychological pressure on Russian society; there were published articles that incited anti-German sentiments¹¹. Since each media outlet sought to speak on behalf of the public, and there were “almost as many such opinions as there were printing presses.”¹²

The periodicals in their native language were part of the daily life of Germans, as they not only published Russian news, but also tried to protect the national culture, traditions and language from the attacks of official propaganda and the anti-German press. In those years in St. Petersburg alone, there were published seven newspapers, apart from specialized media outlets¹³. However, by 1915 the Russian authorities banned them.

F. Krause was an avid reader. He gave particular preference to the “*Ruskiye Vedomosti*” (the “Russian Gazette”) newspaper, noting that “this newspaper gives the most objective information.” At the same time, in his opinion, the “*Russkoye Slovo*” (“Russian Word”) newspaper was a “nasty and disgusting” newspaper¹⁴.

Having analyzed the publications of the “*Russkoye Slovo*” (“Russian Word”) newspaper, University of California professor A. Cohen concluded that even seven years be-

⁹ S.V. Baah, “‘Nemeckoe zasil'e’: ideia bor'by s ‘vnutrennim’ nemtsem v deiatel'nosti obshchestvennykh i gosudarstvennykh uchrezhdenii Rossiiskoi imperii [‘German dominance’: the idea of fighting the ‘inner’ German in the activities of public and state institutions of the Russian Empire],” in *Rossiiskie nemtsy v inonatsional'nom okruzenii: problemy adaptatsii, vzaimovlianiia, tolerantnosti. Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii: Saratov 14–19 sentiabria 2004*, 230–235 (Moscow: MSNK-press Publ., 2005).

¹⁰ F. Krauze, *Pis'ma s Pervoi mirovoi (1914–1917)* [Letters from the First World War (1914–1917)] (St. Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriya Publ., 2017).

¹¹ A. Gubarev, *Nemetskii vopros v Rossii* [The German Question in Russia], *Golos Rusi*, September 1, 1914; “Bor’ba za ‘Russlandiiu’ [The fight for ‘Russlandiiu’],” *Utro Rossii*, November 8, 1914; “Nemetskoe zasilie i bor’ba s nim [German dominance and the fight against it],” *Russkoe slovo*, Desember 8, 1916.

¹² S.I. Bobyleva, “‘Nemetskii vopros’ v otsenke rossiiskogo obshchestvennogo mneniia vtoroi poloviny XIX v. [The ‘German question’ in the assessment of Russian public opinion in the second half of the XIX century],” in *Kliuchevye problemy istorii rossiiskikh nemtsev: Materialy X mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii Mezhdunarodnoi assotsiatsii issledovatelei istorii i kul'tury rossiiskikh nemtsev. Moskva, 18–21 noiabria 2003*. Moscow, November 18–21, 2003], 47–57 (Moscow: ZAO-press Publ., 2004).

¹³ A.D. Syshchikov, and N.S. Trofimova, “Gazeta ‘St.-Petersburgische Zeitung’ v pervye gody eie sushchestvovaniia: k istorii izdaniia [The newspaper ‘St.-Petersburgische Zeitung’ in the first years of its existence: to the history of the publication],” *St. Petersburg Library School*, no. 3 (2015): 49–56; T. Ilarionova, “Nemetskie izdateli v Rossii v kontse XIX – nachale XX vekov [German publishers in Russia in the late XIX – early XX centuries],” in *Nemtsy Rossii: sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe i dukhovnoe razvitie (1871–1941 gg.)*, 288–302 (Moscow: ZAO-press Publ., 2002).

¹⁴ F. Krauze, *Pis'ma s Pervoi mirovoi*.

fore the outbreak of the First World War, in Russia there began to be formed an “enemy image” of ethnic Germans¹⁵. However, Russian researchers consider that the first anti-German publications in the periodicals appeared back in the 1890s.

Role of language in preserving national identity

One of the elements of national identity is language. However, good command of the state language could not protect Germans from attacks on their loyalty to the Russian state during the war. In the colonies, the majority of residents still spoke German, as evidenced by the periodicals they subscribed to in their native language, although representatives of the rural intelligentsia and young people read Russian-language media outlets “for further mastering the Russian language.”¹⁶

Among urban Germans that were educated in ministerial schools, it was customary to use two languages in everyday life. Literary works and periodicals were for them a mediator between German and Russian culture. German writer E. Arndt believed that ties with the homeland helped preserve the language that expressed a person’s belonging to his culture¹⁷. Therefore, even during the war years, Germans tried to preserve their language. F. Krauze wanted to speak his native language with his fiancée and therefore in a letter he asked her: “How is your progress in learning German?”¹⁸ However, the increasing anti-German campaign in Russia led to the fact that from September 1914 the use of the German language in correspondence and in public places began to be prohibited. With regard to the Petrograd province, such a resolution was adopted on June 6, 1915. For its violation, punishment was provided in accordance with the Rules of Military Localities: arrest or 3-month imprisonment or a fine of up to 3 thousand rubles¹⁹. Despite this, Germans continued to use the German language in everyday life so as not to forget their national identity.

Attitude of Russian society towards “internal Germans”

Under the influence of public views radicalization in Russian society during the war years, the previous system of relationships was transformed. People gradually began to perceive Russian Germans not as Russian, but German citizens, thereby removing them from Russian society, and within they underwent the process of adaptation and socialization.

At the beginning of 1915, in a circular to Petrograd governor A.V. Adlerberg Minister of the Interior N.A. Maklakov pointed out that it was important “to constantly supervise” the German colonists²⁰. But even in the vicinity of the capital, the provincial authorities did not always blindly do the will of ministerial officials. Dismissal of N.A. Maklakov from office in the summer of 1915 somewhat lowered the degree of anti-German hysteria. In July 1916, in response to the request from the zemstvo department of the Ministry of

¹⁵ A.J. Cohen, “Bild und Spiegelbild: Deutschland in der russischen Tageszeitung ‘Russkoe slovo’ (1907–1917),” in *Deutsche und Deutschland aus russischer Sicht. 19/20. Jahrhundert: Von den Reformen Alexanders II bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg* (München: Brill, 2006), 279.

¹⁶ I.V. Cherkaz'yanova, “Shkol'noe obrazovanie kak faktor obshchego kul'turnogo pod'ema rossiiskikh nemtsev v kontse XIX – nachale XX v. [School education as a factor of the social cultural rise of Russian Germans in the late XIX – early XX century],” *Tomsk State University Journal of History*, no. 310 (2008): 97–99.

¹⁷ A.A. Sergeeva, and E.P. Firago, “K voprosu o natsional'noi samoidentichnosti peterburgskikh nemtsev [On the question of the national identity of St. Petersburg Germans],” *Problems of science*, no. 1 (2017): 101–104.

¹⁸ F. Krauze, *Pis'ma s Pervoi mirovoi (1914–1917)* [Letters from the First World War (1914–1917)] (St. Petersburg: Nestor-Istoriia Publ., 2017).

¹⁹ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv [Russian State Historical Archive] (henceforth – RGIA), f. 821, op. 133, d. 1062, l. 20, 94–97; Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voennyi istoricheskii arkhiv [Russian State Military Historical Archive] (henceforth – RGVIA), f. 2005, op. 1, d. 28, l. 3.

²⁰ Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv Sankt-Peterburga [Central State Historical Archive of St. Petersburg] (henceforth – TsGIA of St. Peterburg), f. 258, op. 23, d. 149, l. 1.

the Interior, it was reported that in the Novo-Saratov and Sredne-Rogatsk volosts of the Petrograd uezd of the Petrograd province, all elected officials (the head of the volost, his assistant and 4 volost judges) were Germans²¹.

While at the front, F. Krause did not feel oppressed, but he was very worried about the fact that the attitude towards A.I. Dobrokhotova in the Morozov hospital worsened because of him. In addition, he could not believe that his colleagues' behavior towards chief doctor of the therapeutic department of the hospital N.N. William, who was of German origin, would change. In this regard, he wrote:

...the thought that my acquaintances and friends might now treat me worse just because I'm German – I didn't have that thought...²²

F. Krause tried to explain this phenomenon by the fact that the war leads to savagery of thoughts and feelings. Therefore, even “cultured people begin to say things they have never said before.” He drew attention to the fact that “going through emotional drama Germans” should not follow the lead of anti-German policy supporters. In his opinion, Germans should find the way out of this identity crisis in preserving the old covenants:

If our states are at war, if we, as conscious citizens, fulfill our difficult duty, then we will not despise and trample the values that we previously recognized!²³

The anti-German campaign divided the public into two camps. While some argued in favor of the positive factor, others went so far as to accuse Germans of espionage and “raw national egoism.” This led to the fact that under psychological pressure, some Russian Germans sought to hide their national identity, which in psychology is characterized as “escape from freedom.”²⁴ This phenomenon manifests itself in extreme situations when a person abandons his identity wishing to blend into the crowd.

Military leaders and officials of various ranks, who increasingly began to be called “internal Germans,” found themselves in such a situation. When it became unbearable, they were forced to ask permission to change their first names and last names²⁵. For example, member of the State Council A.B. Neidgardt was allowed to take the last name of his wife – Talyzin²⁶, and military governor of the Semirechensk region M.A. Folbaum took the last name Sokolov-Sokolinsky²⁷.

Germans born in Russia and married to Russian women could be persecuted just because they had German last names. For example, Andrei Bauer, a resident of the Goly Karamysh colony in the Saratov province was accused of Germanophilia, which was manifested by regular communication in German and obtaining a diploma as a mechanical engineer in Germany, for which he was imprisoned for three months. However, he understood that it was due to his ethnic origin²⁸.

In Petrograd and the Petrograd province there began “cleansing” of military-industrial plants from persons with German last names. Thus, in the first half of 1915, such a campaign

²¹ TsGIA of St. Petersburg, f. 258, op. 25, d. 404, l. 5.

²² F. Krauze, *Pis'ma s Pervoi mirovoi*.

²³ *Ibid.*, 79.

²⁴ E. Fromm, *Begstvo ot svobody* [Escape from freedom] (Moscow: Progress Publ., 1990).

²⁵ Yu.N. Danilov, *Na puti k krusheniiu: Ocherki poslednego perioda Rossiiskoi monarkhii* [On the way to Ruin: Essays of the last period of the Russian Monarchy] (Moscow: Soglasie XXI veka Publ., 2000).

²⁶ N.V. Morozova, “The German Question and the Central Periodical Press of Russia (July 1914 – February 1917),” PhD thesis, Volgograd State University, 2010.

²⁷ A.A. German, “Podvig efreitora Erentrauta. Rossiiskie nemtsy v gody Pervoi mirovoi [The feat of Corporal Ehrentraut. Russian Germans during the First World War],” *Rodina*, no. 8 (2014): 118–120.

²⁸ V. Denninghaus, *Revoliutsiia, reforma i voina: nemtsy Povolzh'ia v period zakata Rossiiskoi imperii* [Revolution, Reform and War: Volga Germans during the Decline of the Russian Empire] (Saratov: Nauka Publ., 2008).

was carried out at the Shlisselburg gunpowder factory. People with German last names were initially put under supervision, and later they were prohibited from living in the Shlisselburg uezd. This applied to both factory employees and their family members²⁹.

According to E.V. Lebedeva, during the war, there became increasingly noticeable the transition from imperial patriotism, when subjects of the state showed loyalty to the ruling dynasty, to Russian national identity, which implied “loyalty to the state or national co-citizenship.”³⁰ Therefore, Germans treated the forced change of last name with understanding³¹.

It was the campaign to eliminate German toponymy that played an important role in the psychological impact on Germans. It began with the renaming of St. Petersburg to Petrograd on August 18, 1914, and the province was renamed accordingly. Based on the circulars of the Ministry of the Interior of October 12 and 15, 1914 (No. 52, 55), all German villages received Russian names³². In some uyezds (Gdovsk, Luga, Shlisselburg) it was completed by the end of 1914³³. In other uyezds this campaign lasted longer. Thus, in the Peterhof uezd it was completed almost at the end of 1916³⁴. On the ground, despite the fact that the circulars were executed, the authorities believed that significant funds would be spent on changing the names, but in the colonies there would still live as Germans³⁵.

The Russian public reacted differently to this event: some with understanding and sympathy, others with bewilderment and aversion. But all this definitely shook the identity of Russian Germans. For example, a German colonist wrote to his acquaintance in the Karamyshevka colony, Kamyshin uezd, Saratov province:

I don't know exactly to whom I belong: formally I am considered Russian, but if the Tsar changed Petersburg into Petrograd, then my understanding of considering myself Russian has already received a defeat from which it is unlikely to recover³⁶.

Despite the conflicting opinions in society on the implementation of this policy, the Russian authorities continued the fight against “Germanness” and ordered to paint over German signs on buildings. Those signs that were written in other languages were left untouched; there were renamed the city institutions and organizations that had German names³⁷. Such actions by the authorities raised the question of Germans' identity with the Russian people: “Where is justice?”³⁸

²⁹ TsGIA of St. Peterburg, f. 253, op. 10, d. 591.

³⁰ E.V. Lebedeva, “Ot imperskogo patriotizma k grazhdanskoi identichnosti. Nemtsy Rossii i problema formirovaniia obshcherossiiskogo samosoznaniia v XVIII – nachale XX v. [From imperial patriotism to civic identity. The Germans of Russia and the problem of the formation of the All-Russian identity in the XVIII – early XX century],” in *Grazhdanskaia identichnost' i vnutrennii mir rossiiskikh nemtsev v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny i istoricheskoi pamyati potomkov: Materialy XIII mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii. Moskva, 21–23 oktyabria 2010 g.* [Civil identity and the inner world of Russian Germans during the Great Patriotic War and the historical memory of their descendants: Materials of the XIII International Scientific Conference. Moscow, October 21–23, 2010], 412–432 (Moscow: MSNK-Press Publ., 2011).

³¹ Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii [State Archive of the Russian Federation] (henceforth – GARF), f. 102. DP OO, op. 265, d. 1000, l. 1906.

³² Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rostovskoi oblasti [State Archive of the Rostov Region] (henceforth – GARO), f. 46, op. 1, d. 3698, l. 59–61.

³³ TsGIA of St. Peterburg, f. 258, op. 22, d. 1079; d. 1080; d. 1084.

³⁴ Ibid., d. 1082.

³⁵ GARO, f. 213, op. 1, d. 4741a, l. 214–215.

³⁶ A. Voronezhstev, “Nemetskie kolonisty v Povolzh'e v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny (na materialakh Saratovskoi i Samarskoi gubernii) [German colonists in the Volga region during the First World War (based on the materials of the Saratov and Samara provinces)],” in *Nemtsy Rossii: sotsial'no-ekonomicheskoe i dukhovnoe razvitie (1871–1941 gg.)* [Germans of Russia: socio-economic and spiritual development (1871–1941)], 71–94 (Moscow: ZAO-press Publ., 2002).

³⁷ TsGIA of St. Peterburg, f. 259, op. 1, d. 2797.

³⁸ F. Krauze, *Pis'ma s Pervoi mirovoi.*

German soldiers' identity crisis

Germans experienced a dual identity crisis not only in the rear, but also in the field army. On October 22, 1914, an instruction was issued by the mobilization department of the Main Directorate of the General Staff, according to which German military personnel from among the German colonists should be sent to the reserve battalions of the Caucasus³⁹, which was for them “a slap in the face and a surprise.”⁴⁰

It should be noted that Germans became “aliens” in the army which they often joined not only by conscription, but also voluntarily. It was completely incomprehensible to them why, despite the fact that they proved their belonging to the “state nation” by actions and deeds, they were still under constant psychological pressure. For example, one of the German servicemen wrote home with resentment: “It turns out that despite our efforts, we are still classified as Germans and haters of our homeland.”⁴¹

They were forced to endure accusations of disloyalty and betrayal not only from the command staff, but also from other soldiers. As a result, there arose an opposition between two identities – state (civic) and ethnic (national). Thus, a German soldier's letter reads as follows:

Our Russian comrades name us infidel “Germans” <...> Is it our fault that we are Germans, or that Germany opposes Russia? We have been Russian subjects for more than 100 years, so the idea that we are traitors is unacceptable⁴².

The way out of the crisis of civic-ethnic identity for them was direct participation in military battles, where they were able to prove themselves, as evidenced by the awards they received. For example, A. Schmidt and T. Werner received a silver medal on the Stanislav ribbon; junior non-commissioned officers K. Weber, R. Keller, G. Bormann, K. Krenz and others were awarded the Saint George's Cross, 4th Class⁴³.

The pogrom in St. Petersburg in 1914 played an important role in aggravating the identity crisis. The bookstore “A. Isler,” cafe “Reuter,” as well as the publishing house of the newspaper “St.-Petersburg Zeitung” were damaged by the protesters⁴⁴. In May 1915, Moscow was swept by another wave of “anti-German pogroms.” Over the days of the unrest, 732 premises were destroyed (the damage, as estimated by the victims, amounted to more than 50 million rubles)⁴⁵. It shocked Germans and contributed to the aggravation of the evolving civic identity crisis.

Seeking to understand what was happening, Germans experienced emotional trauma, trying to resolve the question: who were “their people” – Russians or Germans? Not the least role in the crisis of civic-ethnic identity of Germans living in Russia was played by numerous publications by philosophers, writers, publicists and newspaper correspondents which were devoted to German cultural influence. F. Krause had to state:

³⁹ RGVA, f. 1720, op. 3, d. 225, l. 1–2.

⁴⁰ A. Voronezhstsev, “Nemetskie kolonisty v Povolzh'e.”

⁴¹ K.V. Frolova, “Nemetskii vopros v Samarskoi gubernii v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny [The German question in the Samara province during the First World War],” *20th century and Russia: society, reforms, revolutions*, no. 2 (2014): 266–275.

⁴² GARF, f. 102. ДП ОО, op. 265, d. 999, l. 1864.

⁴³ A.A. German, “Podvig efreitora Erentrauta”; RGVA, f. 1759, op. 4, d. 619, l.70 ob.

⁴⁴ “Otnoshenie k nemtsam [Attitude towards the Germans],” *Novoe vremia*, August 5, 1914; “Ulichnye eksessy [Street excesses],” *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, August 6, 1914.

⁴⁵ V. Denninghaus, *Nemtsy v obshchestvennoi zhizni Moskvy: simbioz i konflikt (1494–1941)* [Germans in the Public Life of Moscow: Symbiosis and Conflict (1494–1941)] (Moscow: ROSSPEN Publ., 2004); N.V. Morozova, “The German Question and the Central Periodical Press of Russia (July 1914 – February 1917),” PhD thesis, Volgograd State University, 2010.

Thus, on the one hand, there are wonderful words: culture, progress, humanity. On the other hand, all bad, vile things to the obviously absurd ones are attributed to Germans <...> I am beginning to believe that we, Russian subjects of German nationality, will soon be persecuted⁴⁶.

However hard Germans tried to resist the anti-German campaign proving that the attacks on German culture were groundless, it was difficult to fight Russian society radicalization. Many Germans were disheartened by the events that were taking place; they worried about the future of Russia and did not feel as aliens. For example, F. Krause was depressed by Russian people's changing perception of Germans. He wrote: "...it is impossible to find out the truth in this terrible war. Only history is likely to reveal it."⁴⁷

Conclusion

The outbreak of the First World War led to the launch of an anti-German campaign in the Russian Empire. There was passed "liquidation" legislation towards them, which prohibited the use of the German language in public places; there was limited or eliminated the use of land by German settlers; their enterprises were confiscated by the state. German soldiers were transferred from the Western Front to the Caucasus without the opportunity to take part in military battles. It was despite Germans' patriotic enthusiasm and loyalty to the authorities, which was manifested by various donations for the front, voluntary service in the army or sanitary battalions, and the opening of hospitals. Moreover, Germans who owned large plots of land or profitable industrial enterprises often fell into the category of "hostile subjects". Due to such actions by the authorities, the formed civic-ethnic identity of Germans living in Russia gradually transformed into a "negative" one. They differently saw a way out of the situation in order to preserve their identity: changing their last names, concealing their nationality, emigration.

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⁴⁶ F. Krause, *Pis'ma s Pervoi mirovoi*.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

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