

*Crusaders of civility*  
*The legal internationalism of the Baltic Barons*

[T]hose Masters or Lords, principally to the end they might, when they were Covered with Arms, be known by their followers; and partly for ornament, both painted their Armor, or their Scutchion, or Coat, with the picture of some Beast, or other thing [. . .] And this ornament both of their Armes, and Crest, descended by inheritance to their Children.

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. X

Around us nothing but ruins, and above our head there reigns uncompromising fate.<sup>1</sup>

Mikhail Taube, citing freely from Sophocles's *Antigone* in Baron M. de Taube, *La politique russe d'avant guerre et la fin de l'empire des Tsars* (Paris, 1928)

Sitting in his Paris apartment in December 1941, Mikhail Aleksandrovich Taube, or Baron M. de Taube, as he was known in France, was growing impatient. A Berlin-based history journal, specializing in eastern Europe, had promised him a transit permit to Königsberg, but there was still no word from them. This was an archival trip of utmost importance, as he expected that his research would give him conclusive evidence that Catherine the Great of Russia was in fact the illegitimate daughter of Frederick II of Prussia. He had located a talisman ring that explained the 'Russian-Prussian alliance after the Seven-Years'-War' with this circumstance of the two powers having been related more closely than previously assumed. Taube did not understand why it took the *Zeitschrift für Osteuropa* so long, despite good connections in the highest offices of the Nazi administration. From his point of view, the situation was as 'bright as the day': He was a 'scholar of German race from the Tsarist period who is

<sup>1</sup> Michael Freiherr von Taube, *Der großen Katastrophe entgegen. Die russische Politik der Vorkriegszeit und das Ende des Zarenreiches* (Leipzig: Koehler, 1937), 376.

honorary professor at Münster-Westphalia, who with his 72 years still wants to conduct research in German libraries and archives!<sup>2</sup>

In late 1941, travels to East Prussia on private business had become difficult, if not impossible, for more than merely legal reasons. In June, Germany had breached the treaty with the Soviet Union, which Molotov and Ribbentrop had signed in 1939, and opened the eastern front of the German war effort for a second time in the twentieth century. What made things more complicated for his case was that Taube, who was born in 1869 in the imperial Russian residential city of Pavlovsk, had been stateless since the October Revolution. As a holder of a Nansen passport, his intended transit called for negotiations between the Foreign Office in Berlin, the German Consulate in Paris and the Police Prefecture of a city under German occupation.

Taube's confusion was not just a bureaucratic problem of identification to external authorities. His understanding of his very self, his place in the world and his role in the past, had become uncertain. As a perpetual expatriate, Taube was one of thousands of refugees from eastern and central Europe who had come to France in the hopes of finding security. In Taube's case, the threat came more from the Soviet than from Nazi terror. In fact, his connections to Germany remained largely intact during Germany's occupation of France. But many other refugees, including people from his social circle, fled from the Nazi regime and had been active in French anti-fascist circles, at least before 1940. In the 1920s, Paris and Berlin rivalled each other as capitals of Europe's emigration, particularly from eastern Europe. By the 1930s, Paris had taken a clear lead, with streams of refugees now also coming from Europe's fascist south and centre. It was here that a number of critically minded refugees gathered for such grandiose occasions as the Anti-fascist Writers' Congresses of 1933 and 1935.<sup>3</sup> But paradoxically, here also, Europe's most destructive regimes, the Nazi and Soviet empires, were granted legitimacy on such occasions as the Universal Exposition of 1937.

Within this mixed demographic of refugees, Taube's case sheds light on a now forgotten elite community of imperial internationalists from the

<sup>2</sup> Mikhail Taube to Frau Dr. E. Fleischhaker-Ueberberger, 1 December 1941. MT, box 2, Folder Correspondence Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, Columbia University Special Collections, New York.

<sup>3</sup> On the significance of Paris in the anti-fascist movement, see Eric J. Hobsbawm, 'Gli intellettuali e l'antifascismo', in *Storia del marxismo*, 3:2 (Turin: Einaudi, 1981), 441–490; for a transcript of the Paris anti-fascist congress, involving the Baltic philosopher Hermann Keyserling, see *Paris 1935. Erster Internationaler Schriftstellerkongress zur Verteidigung der Kultur. Reden und Dokumente*, ed. Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1982).

Baltic lands. By contrast to the role that French and Belgian scholars of the Belle Époque played in European internationalism of the interwar period, the role of scholars from the German and Russian empires has moved out of focus.<sup>4</sup>

Much of this forgetting had to do with a similar kind of confusion regarding the group biography of Baltic German and other exiled elites of the Russian Empire, whose mentality has been usually reduced to the role of nostalgic or reactionary ‘white émigrés’. As the case of Taube will show, the dividing line between monarchism and liberalism, however, as well as between patriotism and imperialism, was never reducible to a schematic contrast between progress and reaction, or indeed, a geographical boundary between Russia, Germany, and France. Their transnational networks connected them to contemporaries in multiple European empires, and these networks vanished neither with the October Revolution, nor with the Nazi rise to power. Instead, their commitment to the idea of pedigree made the Baltic Barons broker a strange position between compliance and dissidence under Nazi ideology as it manifested itself in Germany as well as in Paris under German occupation.

### Joking relationships between class war and ethnic cleansing

What gave intellectuals from the Baltic, and some scholars of the Baltic, a deeper understanding of the relationship between municipal and state, public and private, government and international law was the fact that the region consisted of a highly complex interrelationship of porous jurisdictions.<sup>5</sup> Their allegiances were expressed in terms of vernacular cultures versus the culture of the overwhelmingly German literati. The Baltic region had become a sort of inter-imperial buffer zone. Part of the Hanseatic network of trade, it also attracted a wide range of mythologies from its inhabitants and visitors alike.

Intellectuals from eastern Europe living in the West, such as Bronislaw Malinowski or, later, Eugen Weber, contributed to the image of the wild East themselves. Some of them were more interested in Polynesian natives or French peasants than in the ‘natives’ of their own regions. Others, like Czesław Miłosz, flirted with the idea that ‘while kingdoms rose and fell

<sup>4</sup> For more details on Belgian internationalism, see the work of Daniel Laqua, *The Age of Internationalism and Belgium, 1880–1930: Peace, Progress and Prestige* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> For the difficulty in naming these ethnic groups, see Andrejs Plakans, *The Latvians: A Short History* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1995), 1–13.

along the shores of the Mediterranean', their native land was a 'virgin forest' and that the 'streets of Chicago and Los Angeles' were therefore as strange to them as the 'Incas and the Aztecs'.<sup>6</sup> The entire area 'from the Urals to East Prussia' was 'unpopulated' and 'filled with demons and gloomy gods'.<sup>7</sup> This region-transcending imperial imaginary, which projected populations in space, was characteristic of an elite perspective of this regional history.

The Baltic Barons were located in a sociocultural landscape that defied the monolingual systems of analysis that Ferdinand de Saussure in Paris and Geneva so carefully tried to establish. In fact, however, national and class identities were entangled in a complicated way in this region.<sup>8</sup>

Many among the Baltic Barons saw themselves as the pacifiers and civilizers in the Russian Empire. There was no unified private law, and generally, Russian legal history was highly fragmented, with many and sporadic foreign influences. A fully formed legal tradition only existed in the three Baltic provinces – Livland, Estland, and Courland – but here, too, it was deeply uneven, a kind of 'jurisdictional jockeying' that Lauren Benton has observed with regard to the peripheries of other imperial states.<sup>9</sup>

By contrast, the national movements, which had sprung up in the Baltic during the revolution of 1905, viewed the Baltic Barons as sources of alien oppression. One caricature from 1906 shows the mental universe of 'Count Tiesenhausen', a Baltic German: 'In Paradise, people don't live better than my workers. They walk around like Barons and drive in carriages like Lords, eat and drink well, live in magnificent houses. My life is like hell. I am working like a dog here' [Fig. 21].

Another caricature identified the Barons by their reactionary student fraternities and their joint actions against the new national revolutions [Fig. 22]. These caricatures from 1906 obtained a new meaning when, reproduced in Soviet Estonia in 1955, they were redefined as documents of

<sup>6</sup> Czesław Miłosz, *Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 7, 263.

<sup>7</sup> Fritz Reck-Malleczewen, *Diary of a Man in Despair! Tagebuch eines Verzweifelten* (New York: Macmillan, 1947, 2000), 21.

<sup>8</sup> On region-specific jokes, see also Wendy Bracewell (ed.), *Orientations. An Anthology of East European Travel Writing, ca. 1550–2000* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009); on visual jokes, see also Simon J. Bronner, 'Pictorial Jokes: A Traditional Combination of Verbal and Graphic Processes', in *Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin*, 44 (1978), 189–196.

<sup>9</sup> Lauren Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 13, 153.



Figure 21 K. Merilaid (Schnell), caricature on the Tallinn case concerning the plundering of baronial estates. From *Reinuvarder* (1906), in I.P. Solomykova, *Eestonskaia demokratcheskaia grafika perioda revolutsii 1905–1907 godov* (Tallin: Estonskoe gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1955), 145

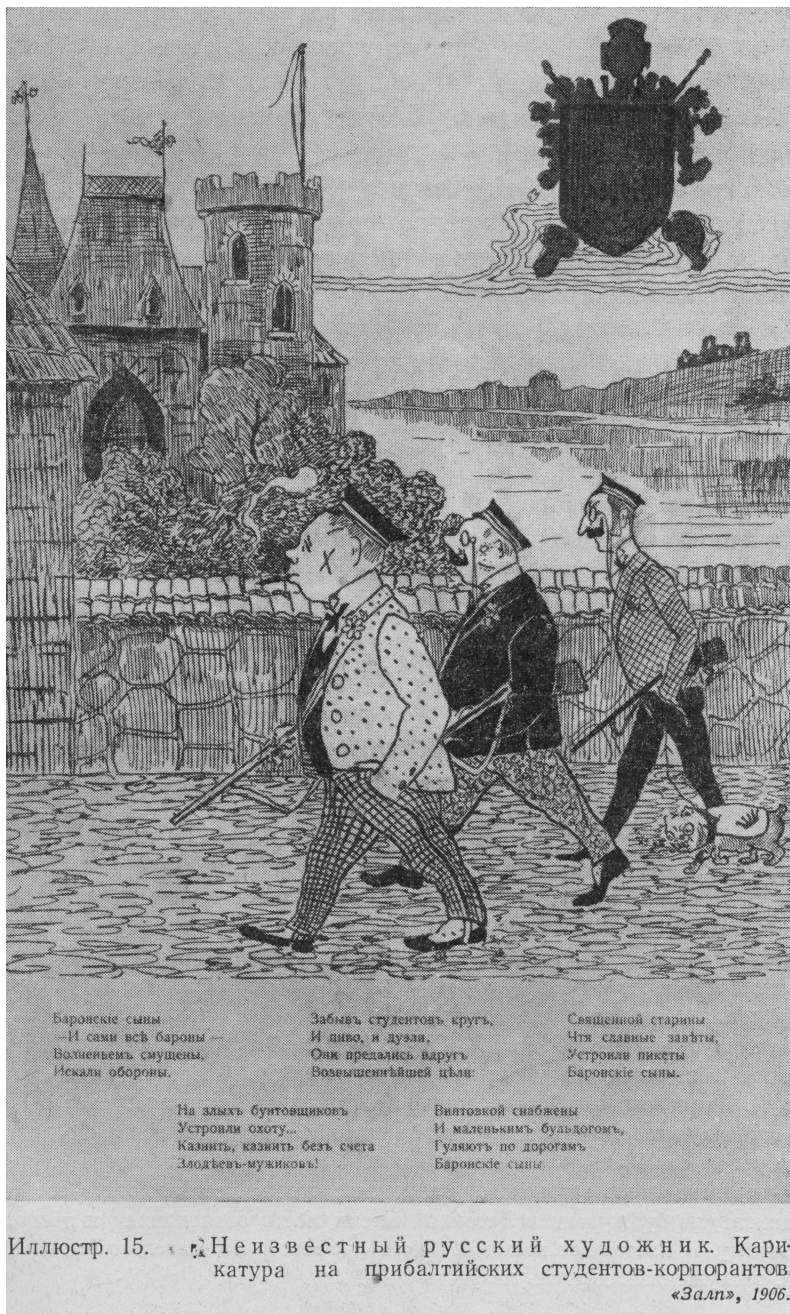


Figure 22 Unknown Russian artist, caricature in the Petersburg-based Estonian revolutionary magazine *Zalp* (1906), ed. Yukhan Lilienbach, in Solomykova, *Estoniskaia demokraticheskaia grafika*, 115

a socialist uprising against German feudalism and not a national revolution against Russian imperialism.<sup>10</sup>

From the point of view of the Baltic Barons, the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 destabilized what was an essentially natural ecosystem of animosities. One of the most regrettable aspects of the late Russian Empire, in Taube's view, was the government's own propaganda against the empire's German and Jewish population, which started still under imperial rule.<sup>11</sup> He recalled an incident in St. Petersburg, when he received a letter from an anonymous Russian demanding to free the Russian people from the 'Germans', by which he meant both Baltic Germans like Taube himself, and the Romanoff dynasty, a family with roots in Schleswig-Holstein. The paradox was that 'our [Russia's] highest military offices, which had been so inventive in devising means of oppression against the Baltic Barons and the Polish Jews' suddenly saw itself almost incapacitated by this new nationalist force.<sup>12</sup>

Taube began to feel unwelcome in Russia soon after the outbreak of the First World War and even complained about it in a personal conversation with Tsar Nicholas on 29 December 1914. 'On the various military fronts', Taube argued, there are some 'twenty members of the Taube family – pure Russian, Baltic, Finnish, Polish' – fighting for the Russian cause, and yet the Russian press was full of derogatory remarks on the German menace coming from the Baltic Barons. 'I know how faithfully the representatives of families with such ancient names have served me', Tsar Nicholas replied to him, and was particularly surprised by some of Taube's fellow aristocrats trying to Russianize their German-sounding names.<sup>13</sup> Nicholas's own ancestors, the Holstein-Gottorps, were of German descent, albeit of much more recent nobility than most of the Baltic Barons, who could trace their genealogy to the Crusades. They were worried for good reason: in 1917, Taube's brother Boris was briefly imprisoned at Kronstadt, to be liberated thanks only to British intervention, and Tsar Nicholas would suffer a worse fate still in the following year.

Extending the metaphor of the family to an entire region, one could say that the Baltic Barons had formed what structural anthropologists call

<sup>10</sup> Cf. I.P. Solomykova, *Estoniskaia demokraticeskaja grafika perioda revoliutsii 1905–1907 godov* (Tallin: Estonskoe gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1955). I am grateful to Gert von Pistohlkors for directing me to this volume, which, as he said, he had obtained in a second-hand bookstore in Estonia in the 1990s. I had ordered my copy online from a Latvian store. For his interpretation of the caricatures, see Gert von Pistohlkors, *Baltische Länder*, in the series *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas* (Berlin: Siedler, 1994), 421–422.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Freiherr von Taube, *Der großen Katastrophe entgegen. Die russische Politik der Vorkriegszeit und das Ende des Zarenreiches (1904–1917)* (Berlin and Leipzig: Georg Neuner, 1929), 355ff.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 356. <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

'joking relationships' with other peoples. Structural anthropologists have focused on certain types of relationships, which they call 'joking', based on the type of conversations that typically occur between these parties. As Radcliffe-Brown puts it, they are 'relationships between persons related through marriage or by kinship'. Secondly, they 'occur as social institutions in structural situations of a certain general kind in which there are two groups, the separateness of which is emphasized'. A typical example is a son-in-law and a mother-in-law. The relationship expresses and emphasizes 'both detachment (as belonging to separated groups) and attachment (through the indirect personal relation)' as well as the jokes about relationships.<sup>14</sup>

The term does not describe a relationship that is not serious. Rather it means the existence of a relationship in which mutual misrecognition is a sign of acknowledging within certain limits the existence of another's inalienable authority in one's own sphere of existence. This means that the Baltic Barons were, in a sense, the Russian Empire's 'mother-in-law'.

For the Baltic Barons and other old aristocratic communities, their exclusive status was not available to groups outside their own genealogical network. It was dependent on the simultaneous coexistence of other, albeit, socially inferior cultural communities. Such communities included the Jews of the Russian Pale of Settlement, a geopolitical sphere of collective inferiority that Catherine the Great had created and which persisted until the revolutions of 1918. It also included the vernacular peoples whose unwritten languages the Baltic Barons rarely cared to learn, but which they liked melodically: Estonian, Lithuanian, and Latvian. They also included, interestingly, the Russians themselves, even though the Baltic Barons also saw themselves as Russian: but their sense of being Russian, an imperial sense, was different from the vernacular sense of the Russian as a peasant.

The deconstruction of the identity of the Baltic Barons makes them archaic in an age of extreme and radical modernity and calls for an anthropologist's attention to oral practices.<sup>15</sup> The cultural production of this space became what Henri Lefebvre has called a 'third' space between

<sup>14</sup> Andrew Radcliffe-Brown, 'On Joking Relationships', in *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 13: 3 (July 1940), 195–210; Andrew Radcliffe-Brown, 'A Further Note on Joking Relationships', in *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 19:2 (April 1949), 133–140, 136. I am grateful to Philip Wood for suggesting to look for literature in structural anthropology to get out of a theoretical impasse in this chapter.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Burke, 'Context in Context', in *Common Knowledge*, 8:1 (Winter 2002), 152–177.



Europe's civilized centres and its imperial peripheries.<sup>16</sup> What Walter Scott had written of the Scottish borders applies very much to the Baltic lands:

The Borderers had, in fact, little reason to regard the inland Scots as their fellow-subjects, or to respect the power of the Crown. [...] They were in truth, during the time of peace, a kind of outcasts, against whom the united powers of England and Scotland were often employed. [...] This strange, precarious, and adventurous mode of life, led by the Borderers, was not without its pleasures, and it seems, in all probability, hardly so disagreeable to us, as the monotony of regulated society must have been to those who had been long accustomed to a state of rapine.<sup>17</sup>

The Baltic also appeared in the minds of aristocratic gentlemen as a global borderland. The Scottish gentleman Leitch Ritchie, who had passed through Russia in 1835 as part of a Grand Tour, called the area of sand and morass, the politically 'neutral ground' between Prussia and Russia, a 'waste land'.<sup>18</sup> Another aspect that Leitch had noticed was the region's peculiar cosmopolitanism. A chance meeting with an Englishman revealed to him that here in the East, this English traveller had become a peculiar 'citizen of the world', who spoke 'all languages with equal fluency, and all equally badly; now snuffling French, now expectorating German, and now lubricating his mouth with Italian as one greases a coach-wheel'.<sup>19</sup> Up to the late eighteenth century, accounts of travellers, who typically passed through the region between the rivers Memel, or Nieman, in the west and Narva in the east – mostly merchants, ambassadors, and, towards the end of the eighteenth century, gentlemen on Grand Tours – had three things to say about it: it was covered in forests, where most of its indigenous population lived; its towns were German and Swedish, the population was divided into 'German' and 'Ungerman' (Unteutsche), and the non-German population was treated very harshly, like slaves. Accounts also say that although they were Christian, they retained many pagan rituals. Eighteenth-century maps of Livonia still looked rather similar to eighteenth-century maps of the African cape,

<sup>16</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace* (Paris: Anthropos/Economica, 1999). See also depiction of Livonia in Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographie oder Beschreibung aller Länder, Herrschafftenn und fürnemesten Stetten des gantzen Erdbodens* (Basel, 1588; Munich: Kölbl, 1977).

<sup>17</sup> Sir Walter Scott, 'Introduction to the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, Consisting of Historical and Romantic Ballads Collected in the Southern Counties of Scotland, with a Few of Modern Date, Founded upon Local Tradition', in *The Complete Works of Sir Walter Scott*, 7 vols., vol. 1 (New York: Conner & Cooke, 1833), 28.

<sup>18</sup> Leitch Ritchie, *A Journey to St. Petersburg and Moscow Through Courland and Livonia* (London: Longman, 1836).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

with the lands of the Hottentots demarcated from the territory of European civilization.

Their special family history, publicly displayed as heraldic symbols, constituted their power as much as their enormous landed wealth. To understand the nature of this symbolic power, we could turn to a number of works of anthropology and social theory from the twentieth century, most recently, that of Pierre Bourdieu and before him, the semioticians of the Tartu school such as Yuri Lotman. Yet the clearest analysis, and the most succinct, in my view, can be found in the work of Thomas Hobbes, the political philosopher who is best known for his theory of the state. Drawing on the Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus, he remarked that historically, this practice was typical for old families of Germanic origin, who would wear coats of arms principally so that 'they might, when they were Covered with Arms, be known by their followers'. The symbolism on these Coats of Arms typically contained the 'picture of some Beast, or other thing' as well as ornaments. Together, it was then 'descended by inheritance to their Children'.<sup>20</sup> Catalogues of appropriate animals and other attributes to be used on coats of arms were available thanks to book printing in editions such as Andrea Alciati's book of emblems.<sup>21</sup> According to Hobbes, the 'Value, or Worth of a man, is of all other things, his Price; that is to say, so much as would be given for the use of his Power: and therefore is not absolute; but a thing dependant on the need and judgment of another'.<sup>22</sup> The idea is that symbols of universally recognizable virtues thus became connected to the name of a particular family, thus combining two kinds of recognition: one, in the sense of knowing who is being spoken about; the other, in the sense of acknowledging their particular virtues as being outstanding. By the nineteenth and

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), ch. X, 68.

<sup>21</sup> Andrea Alciato, *Emblemata* (Venice: Gulielmus Rouillius, 1548). See also collection of photographs of early modern nobles and clergy with coats of arms, e.g. 'Männliches Bildnis mit Wappen der Bocholtz (Bischof von Paderborn), Deutschland, um 1560', Berlin, private Sammlung, Foto Marburg, Aufnahme-Nr. 65.340 (1937); 'Scheibe mit Bildnis des Herzogs Maximilian I., umgeben von den Wappen der 28 bayrischen Städte, Bayern, 1602, München, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Foto Marburg, Aufnahme-Nr. 110.167; Stehender Krieger mit Fahne und Wappen, Deutschland, 1501/1600, Köln, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum – Fondation Corboud, Graphische Sammlung, Inv.-Nr. Z, Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln, Aufnahme-Nr. RBA 068 806; Bildindex der Kunst und Architektur, Bildarchiv Foto Marburg, [www.bildindex.de/?+pgesamt:%27Adel%27#|1](http://www.bildindex.de/?+pgesamt:%27Adel%27#|1), accessed 5 November 2013. See also entries for Secular Iconography, Warburg Institute Iconographic Database, [http://warburg.sas.ac.uk/vp/VPC\\_search/subcats.php?cat\\_1=16&cat\\_2=260](http://warburg.sas.ac.uk/vp/VPC_search/subcats.php?cat_1=16&cat_2=260), accessed 4 April 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 62–63.

twentieth centuries, the art of heraldry had still been best preserved among German nobles, but particularly so among these descendants of Teutonic knights. Perhaps this is the reason why the Baltic region also produced one of the most influential schools of modern semiotics.<sup>23</sup>

Their coats of arms, which, as anthropologists assert, encode their identity in the form of symbols, told the story both of origin and of displacement. For example, the Keyserlings had a palm tree on their coat of arms. With a handful of other German-speaking families, the Keyserlings dominated the political and cultural life of this region for centuries, while constituting a linguistic and ethnic minority in the Baltic region. Their familial memory of this history was embodied in their familial crest, which included the image of a palm tree. Even though in the modern era, this crest was displayed in the Lutheran Cathedral of Tallinn, its symbols reflected the family's ancient service to the Popes in an attempt to conquer Jerusalem.

For centuries, this position as Europe's inner frontier provided a resource for great careers for the region's elites serving the Russian Empire.<sup>24</sup> They had family names with a publicly known and often distinguished family history, such as Nolde, von Maydell, von Manteuffel, von Kessenbroich, von Stackelberg, and von Dellingshausen, and were often called Alexander, Otto, or Bernhard. Even when they produced works of fiction, many of them would choose protagonists with their own family names for their heroes. By contrast, their peasants would be called Jaan, Elvine, Mats, and in many cases would not even have surnames, if they were members of the household of a German noble family. Estonian and Latvian peasants would sing vernacular folk songs at home, Protestant hymns in church, and would be free subjects of the tsar and de facto subjects of their local, German, lord of the manor. Therefore in these areas, progressive movements towards greater social equality were couched in national terms and in the terms of a national emancipation as well as social equality. Apparently, non-national or professional associations of beekeepers or study groups of vernacular cultures became points of association for political unrest, and they were monitored as such by the Russian imperial police, the Okhrana.<sup>25</sup>

It was traditional for noble families in the Baltic area to employ English-speaking governesses, as well as French teachers, for their children, while

<sup>23</sup> Alexei Losev, *Problema simvola i realisticheskoe iskusstvo*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1995).

<sup>24</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (London: Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>25</sup> Arnolds Spekke, *History of Latvia. An Outline* (Stockholm: M. Goppers, 1951), 316.

the servants of lower order spoke vernacular languages, such as Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian. Growing up in this context was not a multicultural experience in the pluralistic sense in which it is understood today, however; on the contrary, because languages such as Estonian, Russian, German, French, and English stood in a hierarchical relationship to each other, it was the unity of this hierarchy and not the plurality of its components that stood out. French and German were languages of high culture, English was a language in which children would be educated, Russian was one of the official languages of the empire, and Estonian was for unwritten purposes. From the 1860s onwards, students seeking careers in civil administration, while still leading via German universities in Dorpat and Riga, now had to be taught Russian. Attending Russian Orthodox Church services became compulsory even for German noble lords who had their own, Lutheran, parishes to control. In other words, if Kant had lived into the reign of Alexander III, the categorical imperative would have been taught in Russian. The thought of this drove many German nobles to study in western Europe.

The generation of Baltic Barons born in the post-Napoleonic era had enough of the ruins of former civilizations that surrounded them; they wanted to manifest their links with the classical foundations of European civilization in the newest fashion. The Greek revival style, which had become fashionable throughout northern Europe and America in this period, had been brought to the Baltic area by a generation of travellers who had been inspired by the real models of ancient Greece and Rome. This style, which most people today associate with British and American public buildings such as the National Gallery in London and the Washington or Madison Capitol, was prominent in the semi-private residential architecture of landed nobility in the Baltic littoral, and in fact the Baltic nobles were among the first Europeans to develop it. One of the first archaeologists whose publications inspired the trend in Europe, Baron Otto Magnus von Stackelberg, originated from this region, and he had brought the style to his home area following excavations in Messenia, Greece. These aristocrats had reinserted themselves on the map of European high nobility architecturally as well as intellectually. They could host in style. And the way they hosted was to glorify the Eastern wilderness, the beautiful landscapes, the hunting parties, and the snow. By the beginning of the twentieth century, most Baltic Barons were Russian imperial patriots of sorts: many had converted to the Russian Orthodox Church and had acquired estates close to the summer residence of the Russian imperial family.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, and especially since the 1905 revolution, most German nobles from the Baltic responded to the Russian imperial policies of Russification by becoming more conscious of their own Germanness: consolidating ties to Baltic Germans of non-noble background, as well as the German public in the German Empire. Conversely, the population of these universities was increasingly less willing to accept the overwhelmingly German presence in its universities. Baltic scientists with their characteristic knowledge of many languages were employed in imperial expeditions of the Romanoff, Habsburg, and Hohenzollern court. In Germany they were called *Baltendeutsche*, and in Russia they were called *ostzeiskie nemtsy*, the Ostsee Germans. In the events leading up to the 1905 revolution, a group of Baltic German nobles commissioned a historian, Astaf von Transehe-Roseneck, to write a history of the Lithuanian revolution; the book, published anonymously in 1906, criticized the national revolutionaries by insisting on the civilizing force which the German nobility had been for the region.<sup>26</sup>

All these national interpretations of the political thought emanating from the Baltic region, however, lose sight of the basic sense of identity that most Baltic Barons had, which was not reducible to any one national narrative. As Hermann Keyserling put it, ‘in the course of history, the Baltic knights formed pacts now with this, now with that regional lord and placed themselves under his suzerainty’. What allowed for that situation to serve as the foundation for a distinctive identity of the ‘Balt’ was their continuous base in the Baltic littoral. The loss of this basis meant a loss of identity, of the ‘Balt as a type’.<sup>27</sup> In terms of international legal theory, they were mixed subjects or *sujets mixtes*: represented in the Prussian Herrenhaus as well as at the court of the tsar and, for those who stayed in Russia, in the Duma after 1905.<sup>28</sup> ‘When I analyse my own self, what do I find there?’ Keyserling asked himself in a book devoted to the social psychology of all European nations. ‘First myself, second, myself as an aristocrat, third, as a Keyserling, fourth, as an Occidental, fifth as a European, sixth, as a Balt, seventh, as a German, eighth, as a Russian, ninth, as a Frenchman.’<sup>29</sup> All aristocrats, in his view, but especially the

<sup>26</sup> Anon., *Die lettische Revolution*, Introduction Theodor Schiemann, vol. 1 (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1906), vol. 2 (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1907).

<sup>27</sup> Hermann Keyserling, *Reise durch die Zeit*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Vaduz: Liechtenstein Verlag, 1948), 33, 64.

<sup>28</sup> August Wilhelm Heffter, *Das europäische Völkerrecht der Gegenwart, auf den bisherigen Grundlagen* (Berlin: Schroeder, 1844), cited after 5th ed., 1867.

<sup>29</sup> Count Hermann Keyserling, *Europe*, transl. Maurice Samuel (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1928), 450–451.

Baltic Barons like himself, embodied in themselves the identities of all leading European cultures and were yet conscious of their detachment from them.

### *Perpetual Peace or Perpetual War? A Tolstoyan exile's view of the League of Nations*

Among Mikhail Taube's first publications in exile from Russia was a little brochure, in Russian, called *Perpetual Peace or Perpetual War? Thoughts on the League of Nations*. Taube's *Perpetual Peace* was published by Detinets, one of the renowned Russian expatriate in Berlin. Its founder, the writer Ivan Nazhivin, gave it the name 'detinets' to allude to an older Russian political tradition. The word denotes a medieval Russian fortress, a historical predecessor of the Kremlin, known from cities such as Novgorod, which had a republican tradition. Taube's work could be considered his political manifesto. A magisterial overview of international historical alliances for peace from ancient Egypt to his present day, the book was based on the lectures Taube had given, originally in Swedish, at Uppsala University. It was given further weight by a facsimile reproduction of a letter the author had received from Leo Tolstoy in support of his project. He had previously published a much shorter version (to pass imperial censorship) in Tolstoy's publishing house Posrednik.<sup>30</sup>

In addition, Taube worked privately as a lawyer for the émigré nobility, including one of the surviving members of the Romanoff family, and the union of former Russian municipal governments in exile, Zemgor. He also acted as a legal advisor to the artist, mystic, and internationalist Nikolai Roerich, who was committed to fostering a language of international culture beyond the state. Roerich's 'Banner of Peace', to protect cultural monuments in times of conflict by international agreement, dated back to an idea he had during the Russian–Japanese war. 'If the Red Cross takes care of the physically wounded and sick, our Pact shields the values of the human genius, protecting spiritual health', said Roerich and his followers. Between all these activities, Taube still found the time to contribute to the small parish circular of his church, the Holy Trinity Diocese, a branch of the Russian Catholic Church in exile since the revolution.

Taube spent most of his life as a historian and theorist of international law and not as practitioner. Yet he had his moment, as a young lawyer and

<sup>30</sup> Mikhail von Taube, *Khristianstvo i mezhdunarodnyi mir*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Posrednik, 1905).

student of the renowned Russian international legal scholar Fedor Martens, when he got sent to Paris to negotiate the crisis over the so-called Dogger Bank incident, or ‘outrage’, as it was better known in English. In 1904, a Russian cruiser had accidentally fired on a set of fishermen near Hull, thinking that they were Japanese military ships. In the end, some of the fishermen died, British property was damaged, and another Russian cruise ship, the *Aurora* – which would later acquire fame in the public narratives of the Russian Revolution for allegedly firing the first shot in the storm of the Winter Palace – was damaged. All participating parties were aware that this could lead to a major escalation. Thanks to benevolent mediators from France and skilled negotiation by both the Russian and British sides, however, confrontation was not only avoided, but Russia managed to broker a closer relationship with Britain than it ever had – against French interests. This incident was the closest Taube got to world historical events in his capacity of a second-order agent.

Ten years later, this success of brinkmanship that extended the peace between Europe’s empires would be forever overshadowed by the unprecedented international conflict that came to be known as the Great War. It was to the understanding of this Great Catastrophe, which Taube perceived as a personal, an imperial, and a generational disaster, that his remaining life work was devoted.

Theatrical metaphors, like his image of himself in a second-tier armchair of a first-order theatre box, never left Taube’s thinking about politics. In the conclusion to his book of memoirs, *Towards the Great Catastrophe*, he turned to the world of ancient Greek drama to make sense of the present. He evoked the ruined city of Thebes, which he suggested to see through the eyes of the heroine in Sophocles’s drama *Antigone*, a work that experienced a particular revival in mid-twentieth-century Europe, particularly among exiles in Paris.<sup>31</sup> Antigone, daughter from Oedipus’s incestuous union with his mother, and in love with her deceased brother, confronts Creon, the king of Thebes, who personifies the power of the state, with the wish to be loyal to her brother, who had been disloyal to the king. In the end Antigone is buried alive, but Thebes and everyone else is ruined, too.

It is perhaps peculiar to see a former member of imperial rule, albeit not an emperor but a senator, identify with Antigone and not with Creon or at

<sup>31</sup> Cf. George Steiner, *Antigones: How the Antigone Legend Has Endured in Western Literature, Art, and Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984). For mid-twentieth-century performances, see Jean Anouilh’s performance in 1944, during the Nazi occupation, and Brecht’s performance in 1949.

least with the choir in this tragedy. Such a perspective is more commonly associated with theorists of revolution. Perhaps the best-known reading of *Antigone* as the plot of a revolution was that of another Paris-based exile from the Baltic, Aleksandr Kozhevnikov, who in the 1930s lectured at the Sorbonne on Hegel's philosophy of history under the name of Alexandre Kojève.<sup>32</sup> Kojève combined a selective interpretation of Marx's interpretation of Hegel with ideas from Russian Orthodox thought to advance a philosophy of history of his own. Marx had concentrated on one segment of Hegel's metaphysical construction in the history of mind, the 'materialist' narrative of human history. Hegel had labelled this section in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* as 'Lord and Serf' (Herr und Knecht, usually translated as 'Lord and Bondsman'). Class struggle, he said, was a 'real historical "discussion"' that was 'different from a philosophic dialogue or discussion'. Its central agents were not 'verbal arguments', but 'clubs and swords or cannons on the one hand' and 'sickles and hammers or machines' on the other. Unlike the orthodox Marxists, Kojève believed that the agents holding these instruments were individuals and not classes. History was a process of 'bloody fights' and of 'physical work'. For Kojève, the central force of history was thus not the autonomy of mind, as in Hegel, and not a class struggle for resources, as for Marx. Instead, he argued that the motor of history was desire itself – the desire people have to be recognized by others as subjects of their own destinies. The subsequent career of Kojève's influential conceptualization of the term 'recognition' in French and American thought then shifted even further from the idea of a social struggle to that of an intersubjective function of desire for identity.<sup>33</sup> However, Kojève himself developed his thoughts on revolution in an unusual direction, eventually advocating the creating of a new Latin Empire based in France after the Second World War.

What Taube had in common with other exiles in Paris, then, was an intensive preoccupation with the past, with imperial decline, and with the psychological experience of revolution. In this period of turmoil and destruction that began in 1904 and crashed in 1914–18, intellectuals like Mikhail von Taube and his circle of correspondents turned to their own

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (based on Sorbonne lectures from 1934 to 1939, Engl. transl., New York: Basic Books, 1969).

<sup>33</sup> For a critical overview, see Robert Pippin, *Hegel on Self-Consciousness: Desire and Death in the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 11ff; Axel Honneth, *Kampf um Anerkennung. Zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 80–89, on Kojève's mistranslation of the term *Begierde*.



family history as a source of consolation and consolidation of their identity.<sup>34</sup>

Forced into emigration during the revolution, Taube and many of this class, including the distinguished minister Baron Nolde, reflected not only on Russia's history, but also on that of the Baltic elite. For Taube, doing genealogical research was one of the ways of recovering this world he had lost. He was interested in the history of international relations from the Byzantine period.<sup>35</sup> A loyal subject of the tsars, in the Russian Empire, Taube belonged to a circle of moderate imperial reformers: fiercely loyal to the ideology of the Russian Empire in the broad sense of its multicultural make-up officially represented by legislative and executive institutions that endorsed the Orthodox faith. He was a patriot of his empire and a liberal internationalist, the Russian equivalent of a Gladstonian. Alongside another Baltic Baron, Nolde, he was one of his generation's most distinguished scholars of international law.<sup>36</sup> He had taught at the University of Dorpat, now Tartu, in the province of Courland, and at the University of Kharkov in what is now Ukraine, and he believed that international relations had a history that began in the Byzantine Empire in the tenth century and would culminate in the continuation of the Holy Alliance. His greatest success as a lawyer, historian, and political advisor was the Russian initiative of the Hague agreements on maritime law, in 1907. It built on the model of universal peace brokered by the great powers that had first emerged in the post-Napoleonic era with the Holy Alliance. Both universities where Taube taught were key institutions which mediated between Western and Russian scholarship particularly in the fields of Law and Philosophy, in which Russian scholarship lagged far behind studies of international law practised in Germany, Switzerland, and increasingly, the United States. As such, they also reached an audience of students who, for personal or financial reasons, were unable to study at the more prestigious universities in Germany or France. In particular, Dorpat had been a centre for teaching of Roman law in the Russian Empire, which

<sup>34</sup> Mikhail Taube, 'K istorii gerba Romanoffykh (dogadka o proiskhozhdenii Romanoffskogo grifa)', Lecture given at the Russian Genealogical Society on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the Romanoffs, 26 February 1913, *Gerboved* (July 1913), 109–117, <http://gerboved.ru/t/july1913.html>, accessed 3 April 2014.

<sup>35</sup> Baron M. de Taube, 'Les origines de l'arbitrage international. Antiquité et Moyen Age', in *Collected Courses of The Hague Academy of International Law*, 42 (1932). See also Baron M. de Taube, *L'apport de Byzance au développement du droit international occidental*, 67 (1939).

<sup>36</sup> Lauri Mälksoo, 'The History of International Legal Theory in Russia: A Civilizational Dialogue with Europe', in *The European Journal of International Law*, 19:1 (2008), 211–232.

is where liberally minded intellectuals saw a possible future for the development of a Russian system of civil law.<sup>37</sup>

After the revolution, Taube taught for several years at the Russian Scientific Institute, a university in exile active in Berlin between 1922 and 1932.<sup>38</sup> He was a regular lecturer at the Hague Academy of International Law, where a magnificent building for the International Court of Justice had been completed, ironically, in 1913, just a year before the war. He had a chair at the University of Münster in German Westphalia.<sup>39</sup> There were also publication opportunities on matters of international law in German, Swedish, and émigré Russian journals.

The chief outlet of the legal internationalists was the Belgian journal *Révue de droit international et de droit comparé*, which was published since 1908. After the First World War, Belgium attracted the interest of international legal thought for other reasons. Belgium's particular suffering in the war, when the German army bayoneted innocent civilians, raised international alarm in 1915. By this point, English and not French began to dominate international legal thought.<sup>40</sup> In 1909, the Carnegie

<sup>37</sup> Zoran Pokrovac, *Juristenausbildung in Osteuropa bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg. Rechtskulturen des modernen Osteuropa. Traditionen und Transfers* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2007), esp. Anton D. Rudokvas and Aleksei Kartsov, 'Der Rechtsunterricht und die juristische Ausbildung im kaiserlichen Russland', 273–317; Aleksei Kartsov, 'Das Russische Seminar für Römisches Recht an der juristischen Fakultät der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin', 317–353; Marju Luts-Sootak, 'Der lange Beginn einer geordneten Juristenausbildung an der deutschen Universität zu Dorpat (1802–1893)', 357–391.

<sup>38</sup> 'Delegation in Germany', in Russisches Wissenschaftliches Institut: Various Correspondence, Financial Statements, Press Cuttings, etc., 1922–1932, C1255/151/170.1, UNOG Records and Archives Unit, Nansen Fonds, Refugees Mixed Archival Group, 1919–47.

<sup>39</sup> Lieselotte Steveling, *Juristen in Münster: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Rechts- und Staatswissenschaftlichen Fakultät der Westfälischen Wilhelms-Universität Münster/Westf.*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Soziologie, 10 (Münster: LIT-Verlag, 1999). See also O. Nippold, 'Les conférences de La Haye et la Société des Nations'. Le développement historique du droit international depuis le Congrès de Vienne, in *Collected Courses of the Hague Academy of International Law*, 2 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1924); M. de Taube, *Études sur le développement historique du droit international dans l'Europe orientale*, in *Collected Courses of the Hague Academy of International Law*, 11 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1926); M. de Taube, *L'inviolabilité des traités*, in *Collected Courses of the Hague Academy of International Law*, 32 (1930); M. de Taube, *Le statut juridique de la mer Baltique jusqu'au début du XIXe siècle*, in *Collected Courses of the Hague Academy of International Law*, 53 (1935); M. de Taube, *L'apport de Byzance au développement du droit international occidental*, 67 (1939); M. de Taube, *La Russie et l'Europe Occidentale à travers dix siècles, Etude d'histoire internationale et de psychologie ethnique* (Bruxelles: La Lecture au Foyer, Librairie Albert Dewit, 1926).

<sup>40</sup> For more on this subject, see Isabel Hull, *A Scrap of Paper: Breaking and Making International Law* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2014). Initially, the Carnegie Foundation's interest in international law was expressed in publications of the classics in their original languages. See its modern edition of Emil de Vattel's *Le droit des gens, ou Principes de la loi naturelle appliqués à la conduite et aux affaires des nations et des souverains*, Classics of International Law (Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1916).

Endowment for International Peace had already initiated a series of Classics of International Law, which began with publishing works by the forerunners of Grotius in their original languages. They began with Italian municipal law in the fourteenth century, followed by the scholarship of the Spanish Jesuits, with particular focus on the law of war in the context of early modern Italian city states on the one hand and natural law on the other.<sup>41</sup> The series published 352 volumes, culminating in the works of Grotius and Pufendorf.

The Hague academy attracted some of the leading international jurists of the time. Presided over by Charles Lyon-Caen, a scholar of Roman law at Paris's Science-Po and author of an influential book on international private law, it also included distinguished members from across the international legal community. One of them, Nicholas Politis, advocated making the individual, instead of the state, a legal subject of international law, personally responsible for crimes committed in political capacity.<sup>42</sup> Another leading member was the Italian lawyer Dionisio Anzilotti, Under-Secretary-General of the League of Nations in charge of legal affairs who was also present at the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty. A critic of the natural law tradition, he was a positivist who believed that international law had to be built up from a genealogy of European municipal law, among other sources.<sup>43</sup> For them, law was in existence when it was used and accepted by the communities to which it applied.<sup>44</sup>

A number of people from Taube's social circle were not very political men, and the subjects on which he corresponded with them largely touched upon questions such as family matters, or genealogy – a special interest for many members of Baltic nobility. Taube himself began his genealogical studies with his own family, but then also offered his services

<sup>41</sup> See, for instance, Giovanni da Legnano, *De Bello, De Represaliis et De Duello*, ed. James Brown Scott (Oxford and Washington: Oxford University Press for the Carnegie Institution, 1917).

<sup>42</sup> Fedor Martens, *Sovremennoe mezhdunarodnoe pravo civilisovannykh narodov* [Modern International Law of Civilized Peoples], 2 vols. (St. Petersburg: Benke, 1883). In this, Politis was in agreement with other notable lawyers such as the German Hans Kelsen and the Russian Fridrikh Martens. Politis was also instrumental in establishing the legal formulation for an 'act of aggression' in cooperation with the Soviet Union's ambassador Maxim Litvinov in 1933. On Lyon Caen, see obituary by H.C. Gutteridge in *The Cambridge Law Journal*, 6:1 (March 1936), 93–94; Nicholas Tsagourias, 'Nicholas Politis' Initiatives to Outlaw War and Define Aggression, and the Narrative of Progress in International Law', in *The European Journal of International Law*, 23:1 (2012), 255–66; see also the primary source of the documents, League of Nations treaties No. 3405 of 5 July 1933.

<sup>43</sup> Dionisio Anzilotti, *Teoria generale della responsabilità dello stato nel diritto internazionale* (Florence: F. Lumachi, 1902).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Georg Jellinek, *Allgemeine Staatslehre* (Berlin: Haering, 1914), 337; Georg Jellinek, *System der subjektiven öffentlichen Rechte* (Freiburg: Mohr, 1892).

to others.<sup>45</sup> He also had links to a circle of devotees of Leo Tolstoy, who chose to go into exile after the revolution because they did not agree with the Bolshevik version of socialism that had won the day. Others were more clearly radical. For instance, the frontispiece to his memoirs, designed by fellow Balt Nils Stenbock Fermor, was a faded Russian double eagle pattern, which was sliding away to the side of the book into oblivion. Fermor, originally of Swedish extraction, was of Baltic nobility himself, but politically further to the left than Taube; in the 1920s, he also designed sets for the experimental German theatre director Erwin Piscator. His brother, Alexander, was known as a Red Count; he wrote socialist realist works under the pseudonym of Peter Lorenz. Notwithstanding their political differences, the symbolic thinking about imperial decline as the fading away of imperial insignia nonetheless united these intellectuals of Baltic background.

In 1922, the year of publication of Taube's book, at The Hague, the Permanent Court of International Justice held its inaugural meeting. If it had not been for the ruined empires that had melted in the meantime, this would have been a momentous day for internationalists like Taube who had been involved in brokering peace through international legal treaties since the Hague agreements of 1899. The court remained in operation until 1940, but in 1946, the International Court of Justice was founded in its place. Its composition reflected the structure of the League of Nations, which appointed all judges in a council decision. Most judges of this court came from states whose governments had not collapsed as a result of the war. Of these, five were professors of international law from Switzerland, Italy, and the United States; others had been judges from the Netherlands, Britain, Norway, and China.<sup>46</sup> Typically for European internationalism, the Hague court replaced a rival project, founded by the renowned Swiss legal theorist Johann Caspar Bluntschli at Ghent in 1873.

The forgotten Russian-German and Baltic connection in European legal internationalism of the interwar period shows how imperial memory was preserved in exile.<sup>47</sup> It was multilingual, multi-discursive

<sup>45</sup> M. von Taube, *Archiv des uradeligen Geschlechts Taube, sonst Tuve genannt* (Yuryev: Mattiesen, 1911); M. de Taube, 'Beiträge zur baltischen Familiengeschichte', in *Jahrbuch für Genealogie, Heraldik und Sphragistik* (1899), 143–147; 1900, 85–89; 1903, 113–115; 1904, 115–120; 1905/06, 257–262; 1907/08, 65–73; 1909/10, 13; M. de Taube., *Die von Uskull; genealogische Geschichte des uradeligen Geschlechts der Herren, Freiherren und Grafen von Uexkull, 1229–1929* (Berlin: Julius Sittenfeld, 1930).

<sup>46</sup> See Ole Spierman, 'A Permanent Court of International Justice', in *Nordic Journal of International Law*, 72 (2003), 399–418.

<sup>47</sup> More on the imperial history of Russian legal internationalism, see Peter Holquist, 'Baron Boris Nolde. Dilemmas of a Progressive Administrator', in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 7:2 (Spring 2006), 241–273.

, and almost gestural in its exchange of emblematic knowledge. In this cryptic quality, it was soon forgotten and remains difficult to reconstruct. To understand these diasporic communities in exile, we need to turn to methods originally designed for spoken texts, as well as to semiotics, an approach originally conceptualized for interpreting images and emblems.

### Genealogy as counter-history: a Baltic correspondence network between the world wars

The notion of ‘double consciousness’ has come to be associated with the colonial dimension of modernity and the attributes of Europe’s oppressed ethnic ‘others’.<sup>48</sup> However, the case of the Baltic Barons demonstrates that ambivalent social and ethnic identities constituted by colonial relations were also characteristic of Europe’s oldest nobilities. In Russia itself, people still made do with a legal code that came into existence when serfdom still existed, commerce was restricted, and civil rights were only applicable to the landowning nobility.<sup>49</sup> A number of Russian lawyers from the Baltic region were familiar with the German school of Georg Jellinek. Thus Fedor Martens, Russia’s most eminent scholar of international law, had studied with Bluntschli and reproduced some of his ideas of civilization versus barbarism in his own work. Earlier in his life, when the empire was still intact, Taube had produced and published genealogical trees of the Romanoff dynasty. Now that it was no longer in power, he turned to write about his own life and the ancestors of his Baltic peers.<sup>50</sup>

In his lifetime, genealogical research in general had developed new facets. From a science of empowering the ruling dynasty, the Romanoffs, it became the source of identity among displaced Baltic aristocrats in the interwar period; as an abstract genealogy of European international law, it was a mode of reading historical texts which also connected to Taube’s teaching at the expatriate Russian Scientific Institute, which existed in

<sup>48</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: McClurg, 1904); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>49</sup> Anonymus, ‘Das römische Recht in Russland’, in *Stimmen des Auslands über die Zukunft der Rechtswissenschaft*, ed. Rudolf Leonhard, series Studien zur Erläuterung des bürgerlichen Rechts, vol. 17 (Breslau: M&H Marcus, 1906), 105–106.

<sup>50</sup> Taube, ‘K istorii gerba Romanoffykh’.

Berlin from 1923 to 1925 with three faculties: Economics, Law, and a faculty called Spiritual Culture (a variant of Divinity). By the late 1930s, genealogy had also become one of the crown sciences of the Nazi Reich, whose theory of Aryan race sent all German subjects, on a search for racial purity for fear of punishment and restrictions. But it also remained important among circles of Russian expatriates in central and western Europe.<sup>51</sup>

While in Paris, Taube was still maintaining his links with the descendants of the Romanoff dynasty; thus he was the family lawyer of Prince Romanovich (killed in 1918) who thought of himself as the legitimate surviving successor of the Romanoff family. In fact, one of the last letters that the tsar's wife, Alexandra, had drafted in exile in Siberia had been to Taube, who was, besides his service, a loyal friend of the family.<sup>52</sup> Taube's genealogical findings concerning the links between Frederick and Catherine would have changed the past in the way that he had intended to change the future as a lawyer. It was well known that the two eighteenth-century rulers of Prussia and the Russian Empire, respectively, had shared the ability to absorb, if not plagiarize, the ideas of the great Enlightenment *philosophes* on liberty and legality in such a way as to render them safe for their own rule. Frederick's *Anti-Machiavel* cast him as a lover of freedom, taking this trope from the pens of his critics. Catherine's *Nakaz* on a Constitution of Russia effectively laid out a version of Montesquieu's concept of liberty, but one that would leave her authority unchallenged. But for all their similarities in the public eye, their projects were also thought of as rival imperial endeavours, Catherine's being more suited to the wilder eastern Europe; they were two projects that produced two quite separate branches in the European genealogy of statecraft. Frederick's was the bureaucratic state that would ultimately be capable of democratization; Catherine's legacy was that of an oppressive system of internal colonization, with the infamous Pale of Settlement – a vast rural ghetto for Russia's Jews – as one of its most tangible twentieth-century legacies. If it was indeed the case that in addition to being rivals, they were also a father and daughter, this would make the case for a historically formed opposition between Germany and Russia, which was so crucially revived in 1941, much

<sup>51</sup> On the connections between the Russian expatriate universities and the old imperial elites, see the papers of Mikhail Nikolaevich de Giers, the last Russian ambassador in Rome during the First World War. Mikhail de Giers papers, Box 21, Folder 1, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, California. See also Robert Paul Browder and Alexander Kerensky (eds.), *The Russian Provisional Government 1917 Documents*, vol. 1 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961).

<sup>52</sup> Kozlov et al. (eds.), *The Last Diary of Tsarina Alexandra*, 29.

more complicated. Taube had also proved that the Baltic Ungern family had in fact, as the name suggests, originated from Hungary, a dynastic family of semi-sovereign powers, whose records demonstrate much closer ties between pre-Christian Lithuania and Russia. The sons of Prince Igor of the Russian epos belonged to this group.

Another one of Taube's clients for genealogical research was the philosopher Hermann Keyserling, who had settled in Germany in 1919, after the new Estonian government had expropriated his estate. Having arrived on a Nansen passport, he eventually chose to claim German citizenship. By the time the so-called 'Aryan paragraph' was brought into German legislation by the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, which demanded that all German citizens were required to be of Aryan race or risked losing citizenship, Keyserling, too, was required to prove his Aryan descent. As he wrote in a letter to a friend, the irony of the law was that it was particularly harsh on noble families who could prove their descent; German families with no official knowledge of Jewish ancestry, by contrast, could simply use a physiognomic test. Indeed, the Nazis introduced their own version of the Gotha and were engaged in transferring data, once it was proven, to the Edda book, a Nazi analogue to the Gotha. The new German laws required proof of racial purity until 1800. As Keyserling wrote to his relative, the demand to prove Aryan descent to 1800 may only be the first step, and to be absolutely sure Keyserling decided to prove his family back to the fifteenth century. In this process, he encountered the greatest difficulties trying to locate the relevant documents, since the main papers which satisfied the German authorities were marriage and baptism certificates, most of which were held either in Russia or in Estonia, which were now parts of the Soviet Union, where a number of churches and parishes were being looted or destroyed.

In fact, it is highly likely that Keyserling's maternal family had Jewish roots. The German ancestors of Hermann Keyserling's maternal line, the Cancrins (Latinized from Krebs), had migrated from Hesse to Nowgorod in the fifteenth century; one of his ancestors was a famed minister of finance in the Russian Empire who was Jewish. Despite the fact that in Russia at least, the Cancrins were thought to be Jewish, Keyserling managed to procure documents from a certain Nikolai Ikonnikov, a Russian nobleman who had fled from the October Revolution and lived in Paris.

Dear Nikolai Flegontowitsch,

Excuse me for writing in German and not in Russian, which I have perfect command of, but I can only dictate in German, and my handwriting is not very legible.

For the genealogical trees of my sons, I need some detailed information about my ancestors the Murawioffs, and Baron Michael Taube in Münster writes to me that I can obtain them from you. The mother of my paternal grandmother, the Countess Zenaide Keyserling born Countess Cancrin, daughter of the Russian minister of finance Count Georg Cancrin, was born a Murawioff. [...] Now we are lacking all data on the Murawioff family. We only know that it was an old family from Nowgorod and that the line of the Murawioffs to which I am related is the one of which it was said, she does not hang but she gets hanged. We still possess a necessaire which belonged to the Decembrist Artamon Murawioff, which he woodcut in his Siberian exile.<sup>53</sup>

Nikolai Ikonnikov, who was the regional head of a nobles' association in the Saratov province, had a brief stint as the administrator of sugar provision in Bolshevik Russia. He had used this position to help fugitive aristocrats escape to the west, a dangerous undertaking which he described in memoirs of his own, published in Paris in 1933.<sup>54</sup> Ikonnikov was running a business offering genealogical services, based on the rather substantial library and documentary collections of the Russian nobility, which he had managed to take with him on his flight to France. Against a fee, Ikonnikov provided Keyserling with a list of his 300 ancestors of the Muraviev and Cancrin family, and brief descriptions of anything known about them. The fact that none of the documents mentioned the word Jew appears to have sufficed for Keyserling's Aryan record to be approved.

Keyserling's search for his genealogical tree also took him to his native villages in Courland, where he had to find marriage registers. These investigations confirmed that his ancestors had many faiths – Protestant, Catholic, Russian Orthodox – but that none had been known to be Jewish. 'Dear Aunt Jenny', Keyserling wrote on 9 July 1935 to the Baroness Jenny Pilar von Pilchau, who was still living in Pärnu, in Estonia:

Some serious matter today. Yesterday a highly exacerbating Aryan restriction was legislated in Germany for the admission to study, which also affects Germans by descent outside of the Reich, that is also your grand children. Only those who can prove the absence of any Jewish blood until 1700 will be sure to be allowed to study. [...] The Bismarcks had difficulties with it for two years. It was argued that the Whiteheads had Jewish blood, which of course was not the case. But it was not so easy to find the necessary

<sup>53</sup> Keyserling to Nikolai Ikonnikov, 16 June 1937, in HKN A-4 Ahnenforschung. Ikonnikov replied on 19 June 1937 in Russian, attaching a list of about 300 Murawioffs and their relatives and apologizing for the incomplete information, since many documents were inaccessible to him.

<sup>54</sup> Nikolai Ikonnikov, 'Piatsot dnei: sekretnaia sluzhba v tylu bolshevikov, 1918–1919', in *Russkoe Proshloe*, 7 (1996), 43–105.



certificate, because it was in Gibraltar. [...] Now, of course we are all absolutely pure Aryans. But I do not know the Pilar genealogical tree in detail.<sup>55</sup>

Then Keyserling asked his aunt for documents, which could help him acquire an ‘Ahnenpass’, a certificate of immaculate descent. All in all, this process took him nearly four years. Keyserling and his wife then had to prove that her family, the Bismarcks, was also purely Aryan. It was suspected that a relative in England, a certain Whitehead, who lived in London in the eighteenth century, may have been a rabbi.<sup>56</sup>

But to call genealogical research a ‘private’ endeavour would belie the ideological context in which issues of pedigree were discussed in Europe in the 1930s. When the Nazis introduced new laws concerning citizenship in 1935, nobles who were German citizens faced a particular problem. Unlike middle-class Germans who could not be expected to show proof of descent from centuries back and were instead expected to be examined by craniologists who measured their skulls, nobles were required to provide proof of their heritage as well as proof of the absence of Jewish blood since at least as far back as 1750. In the mid-1930s, this posed particular problems for those nobles whose family papers were held in areas where the nobility was violently abolished during the revolutions, such as the Baltic region. In lieu of legal documents, some corporate and familial associations of nobles tried to publish their own historical genealogies, in which they fervently reconstructed their history up to the thirteenth century, highlighting its German character.<sup>57</sup> One such history was the *Book of the Keyserlings*, published by Fischer in Berlin in 1937. In his introduction to a book published in 1939, the *Genealogical Table of Famous Germans*, Baltic Baron Otto Magnus von Stackelberg wrote a piece entitled ‘The Ancestry of the Philosopher Count Hermann Keyserling,’ in which he argued that in Hermann Keyserling’s ancestry you can find most of the German and

<sup>55</sup> Keyserling to Baronin Jenny Pilar von Pilchau, Darmstadt, 9 July 1935, in HKN A-4, Ahnenforschung.

<sup>56</sup> Keyserling’s documents contain a copy of the certificate issued by the ‘Sachverständige für Rasseforschung beim Reichsministerium des Innern’ on 8 November 1933, that the alleged Jewish ancestor of Bismarck, so claimed by the *Semigothasches Genealogisches Taschenbuch*, 1914, 198, was in fact an English reverend. Berlin, 8 November 1933.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Eduard von Dellingshausen, *Die Entstehung, Entwicklung und Aufbauende Tätigkeit der Baltischen Ritterschaften* (Langensalza: H. Beyer, 1928); Otto Magnus von Stackelberg, *Genealogisches Handbuch Der Estländischen Ritterschaft* (Görlitz: Verl. für Sippenforschung und Wappenkunde Starke, 1930); Oskar Stavenhagen, *Genealogisches Handbuch der Kurländischen Ritterschaft* (Görlitz: Verl. für Sippenforschung und Wappenkunde Starke, 1939).

Nordic imperial and royal dynasties.<sup>58</sup> As well as proving Aryan descent, in the course of his research Keyserling even proved that he was related to the Scaliger and the Visconti families.<sup>59</sup> By this time, the Gotha book, the aristocratic union and even the Nazi follow-up of the Gotha ceased to be acknowledged by the authorities. An article published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* of 6 February 1935 emphasized that

the fact of entry in the *EDDA* does *not* give a guarantee for the proof of German blood in the sense of §13 REG [Reichserbhofgesetz]. The Reich and Prussian Minister for Food Supply and Agriculture has therefore ordered that applicants who are already listed in the Iron Book of German Nobility (*EDDA*) have to submit documentary evidence on their person reaching back to 1 January 1800 . . . just as *all other applicants*.<sup>60</sup>

Having found all the documents, the Keyserlings had to contact the department for foreign currency in order to be allowed to transfer payments for genealogical services abroad, writing letters all of which ended with 'Heil Hitler'.

When it comes to groups or individuals that lost or reconfigured their identities, such as diasporic ethnicities, political or economic refugees, we usually think of examples of inferior social status: the Jewish or African diaspora, for example; the economic or political emigration from Europe to the Americas in the nineteenth century, and such like. Few studies have focused on diasporic identities among elites, cultural or economics.<sup>61</sup> But diaspora is equally applicable to elites, as the case of the Barons shows.<sup>62</sup> Elites, too, can be seen as a 'segment of a people living

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, *Abnentaler berühmter Deutscher*, ed. Zentralstelle für Deutsche Personen- und Familiengeschichte, 1939. Introduction by Otto Magnus Stackelberg, typescript in HKN, A-4, Ahnenerbe.

<sup>59</sup> Kessler, 30 January 1935, in Kessler, *Diaries*, vol. 9.

<sup>60</sup> 'Abstammungsnachweis für Adlige beim Erbhof- Zulassungsverfahren', Beiblatt der Frankfurter Zeitung, 6 II 1935, in HKN A-4, 194.02.

<sup>61</sup> For a great example of elite group cosmopolitanism, see Maurizio Isabella, *Risorgimento in Exile. Italian Émigrés and the Liberal International in the Post-Napoleonic Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>62</sup> William Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return', in *A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 1:1 (Spring, 1991), 83–99, 83–84; Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982); Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*; Kim D. Butler, 'Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse', in *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 10:2 (Fall 2001), 189–219; Elliott P. Skinner, 'The Dialectic between Diasporas and Homelands', in *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, ed. Joseph E. Harris (Washington: Howard University Press, 1982), 17–45; Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (New York: Harper, 1971); Robin Cohen, 'New Roles for Diasporas in International Relations', in *Journal of Transnational Studies*, 14:1 (Spring 2005), 179–183; Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas, An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1997).

outside the homeland'.<sup>63</sup> In the case of the Baltic knights, their point of focus for their eventual home lay not so much in their historical places of origin, as in their mythical place of destination: the grave of Jesus at the Temple of the Holy Sepulchre, which these knights' ancestors had pledged to conquer in Jerusalem. In a sense, the Baltic Barons, then, were Zionists centuries before Theodor Herzl had made Zionism into a rallying cry for eastern Europe's suffering Jews.

### Post-imperial typewriters: modernity and the gender of memory

Among Taube's multilingual, multi-alphabet correspondence, one exchange with an old friend, Baron Uexküll von Gildenband, who was based in Switzerland and in Athens in the interwar period, is particularly noteworthy. Written on typewriters and by hand, in Paris, Switzerland, Germany, and Greece, Taube and Uexküll, these two friends in exile preferred to think of themselves back to Byzantine times: the dates of their letters dropped the 1 and wrote '930' instead of 1930, '932' instead of 1932, and so on. Within their letters, they exchanged jokes in Russian and typed in Latin transcription, in handwritten Russian, and in German and French. They would include Russian jokes in a German text and French jokes in a Russian text. They would wish each other Happy Easter in the Orthodox fashion ('Khristos voskrese'), even though at least one of them was Catholic. They would also parody German Nazis by writing 'Heil Hitler'. Some letters comprised sketches of genealogical trees and heraldry.

Other letters discussed the current financial crisis, the devaluation of currency, or the decline of good manners among the youth. Thus at one point, Ungern sought advice on how to address a countess. Taube recommends the title 'Reichsgräfin', even though in his day a more appropriate title would be comtesse. 'Tempora mutantur i teper kakie-to novye formuly' [Times are changing and there are some new formulas around].<sup>64</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Walker Connor, 'The Impact of Homelands Upon Diasporas', in *Modern Diasporas in International Politics*, ed. Gabriel Sheffer (New York: St. Martin's, 1986), 16–46; James Casteel, 'The Politics of Diaspora: Russian German Émigré Activists in Interwar Germany', in *German Diasporic Experiences: Identity, Migration, and Loss*, ed. Mathias Schulze et al. (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), 117–130; Pieter Judson, 'When Is a Diaspora Not a Diaspora?', in *Heimat Abroad*, ed. Krista O'Donnell, Renate Bridenthal, and Nany Reagin (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2005), 219–247.

<sup>64</sup> Keyserling to Uxküll von Gildenband, 31 May 1931, Mikhail von Taube papers, Special Collections, Columbia University, New York: 'что касається графини U.-G., то, мое скромное мнение: на конuerte napischite po nemezki – Ihrer Hoch- und Wohlgeboren, Reichsgräfin etc ... W priglasitelnykh na swadbu dočeri biletach Eux U.ßG napečatal « ... Ihrer Tochter, Reichsgräfin imiarek ». W мое время w Wene baryschen imenovali Komtessen, a ne

As they well knew, the real ending of this idiomatic expression is different though: 'Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis – times change and we change in them'. It was this conclusion that they sought to resist by means of resorting to the practice of genealogy as a way of constantly reaffirming their true self.

Polagau, cto wychod v svet wtorogo toma naschei istorii ne predwiditsia w 931 godu, no moe pismo raswiashet Wam ruki et Vous pourrez faire appel à la générosité aussitôt que tous les matériels pour l'édition wtorogo toma budu druckreif. [...] odnim slovom ia daiu Wam carte blanche w etom otnošenii.<sup>65</sup>

Mikhail Taube kept his friend updated about the progress of his genealogy, with its roots in Byzantine history, in Russian, French, and German simultaneously, with the main thread woven in Russian. 'I assume that the appearance of your second volume of our history is not to be anticipated in the year 931', he began in Latin transliteration of his Russian. Expressions of politeness were left in French, whereas technical terms relating to book production, in this case '*druckreif*' (ready to print), were left in German. In another letter, multilinguality appears to be simultaneously the expression of a tragic sentiment of decline and a critique of ideology. Says Baron Uexküll, writing from Athens, spelt in Latin script but Russian pronunciation: 'Mes tantes (89, 78 et 75 ans) évacuées à Danzig en 5 jours. Finis dominiiii baltici après 7 siècles. Les Dünafürsten remplacés par Molot i serp' [My aunts (89, 78 and 75) to be evacuated to Danzig in five hours. The end of the Baltic empire after seven centuries. The Princes of the Duna replaced by Hammer and sickle] [Fig. 23].

This hyperbolic use of semiotics to describe a rapid loss of power is illuminating because it shows to what extent the Baltic elite lamented the loss of their power over the region, the empire of the 'Princes of the Duna', more than they lamented the decline of the Russian Empire. The semiotic appropriation of aristocratic emblems by the new Soviet state was all the more bitter for these masters of genealogy as the Soviet leadership had recruited artists to design their new emblems, the Hammer and Sickle, without any in-depth understanding of the practice of heraldry. Thus the

Reichsgräfin. Tempora mutantur i teper kakia-to nowyia formuly. Po franz. Wy, konečno, obratilis by k grafine s « Madame ». Ia polagal by, cto obrascenie Hochgeehrte Gräfin Uxkull bylo by ssamoe prawilnoe.' See also Uëküll to Keyserling, 6 November 1939: 'Mes tantes (89, 78 et 75 ans) evacuees à Danzig en 5 jours. Finis dominie baltici après 7 siècles. Les Dünafürsten remplacés par Molot i serp. Hommages, amitiès. Votre devoué Uxkull'. G rue Patr. Joachim, 27 Afiny, Mikhail von Taube papers.

<sup>65</sup> Uexküll to Mikhail von Taube, 11 March 1931, Mikhail von Taube papers.



Figure 23 Baron Üxküll von Gildenband to Baron von Taube, 31 May 1931, in Mikhail von Taube papers, Bakhmeteff Archive, Columbia University Special Collections

hammer and sickle became a non-dialectical symbol, a brand showing the unity of workers and peasants; by contrast, the animals and other symbols typically shown on the emblems of old families are there because they are symbols of the powers that had been defeated by the power bearing the insignia.<sup>66</sup> The intertextual irony in the private correspondence of the Baltic Barons was a kind of ‘elite subalternism’ in response to the hegemonic use of chivalric symbolism by organizations such as the VchK, the Soviet security organization founded by another Balt, Feliks Dzerzhinsky, and the Hammer and Sickle emblem itself. The new emblems of honour

<sup>66</sup> On the design of the hammer and sickle, see the work of Viktor Narbut, as discussed after his death in the mid-1920s by Viktor Lukomskii and others. There was a commemorative album of his designs of heraldic symbols for the Soviet Union, published in Kiev in 1926. *Giorgi Narbut. Posmertna vystavka tvoriv* (Kiev, 1926), but I have not been able to locate it. For more references, see <http://sovet.geraldika.ru/print/6069>, accessed 1 June 2013. For a philosophy of the symbol within and beyond a Soviet context, see the rival views of Alexei Losev, *Znak, simvol, mif* (Moscow: Izd-tvo moskovskogo un-ta, 1982); and Yuri Lotman, *Semiotika kul'tury i poniatie teksta* (Tallinn: University Press, 1992).

for a proletarian class had become emblems of dishonour and uncivilization for the former elites.

The typed correspondence between these Baltic Barons was a response to two conditions with which the Barons had been confronted in the twentieth century. One was their status as stateless citizens, a dramatic fall from grace after having been close to ruling one of Europe's largest empires. The other was their status as a potential threat to the ideal of a new nobility that the Nazis were conjuring up with their theory of the Aryan race. For the Baltic Barons, this was like their worst nightmare come true. A paradigm derived from Herder and Saussure, the growing enthusiasm for vernacular cultures became a force for anti-imperial resistance. Paradoxically, in their home region, the myth of the Indo-Germanic race had thus served to undermine, rather than support the power of the oldest Germanic nobility in the region.

The social function of typewriters among this aristocratic elite suggests another sense in which culture remains a divisive feature in the age of modernity. It is also divisive in terms of gender. Keyserling's letters and works were typed by his wife Goedela and are therefore bearing an imprint of Prussian traditions: here, aristocratic ladies would increasingly take on the fashion of typing works dictated by their husbands. In fact, men would not typically learn how to type. In Britain, too, one of the first typists was Queen Victoria, for instance. Throughout his life, Keyserling depended on Goedela's skills as a typist because, as his correspondence partners frequently lamented, his handwriting was very bad. The moments when it becomes visible in the text that he did not type it himself are few and far between, but particularly noteworthy, as in the letter to Ikonnikov, which is preceded by the apology: 'Excuse me for writing in German and not in Russian, which I have perfect command of, but I can only dictate in German, and my handwriting is not very legible.'<sup>67</sup>

Contrary to what many theorists of modernity from Heidegger to Wieszicka have said, this technological aspect of modernity did not lead to a greater uniformity of cultural consciousness, of 'everyone looking the same'.<sup>68</sup> This can even be seen in widely known documents of post-imperial transition, like the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The text of the treaty, which was eventually signed by five parties, made more common features amidst this heterogeneity visible: the German and Hungarian signatories

<sup>67</sup> Keyserling to Nikolai Ikonnikov, 16 June 1937, HKN.

<sup>68</sup> Martin Heidegger, 'The Hand and the Typewriter' (1942–43), in *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, ed. Friedrich Kittler (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

had signed a typed text, the Ottoman section was written in classical calligraphy, and two more columns in Bulgarian and Russian were written in plain Cyrillic.<sup>69</sup> The dislocation of this revolutionary period affirmed differences in social position and inverted others. Thus paradoxically, in the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the typewriter became an instrument of the old regimes.

Likewise, the Baltic barons' typed reconstructions of genealogical heritage reveal a gradual process of identity deconstruction. Their old sense of self as Crusaders who had become colonizers of eastern Europe was being deflated. They became a modern diaspora, stigmatized in the Baltic land for being German, in Soviet official discourse, for being aristocratic, and in western Europe, for being Russian. To contemporaries, their attempt to express themselves easily made the impression of a kind of aphasia.<sup>70</sup> Here, archaic features coexist with ironic commentaries on present ideologies, as the 'Heil Hitler' appears along with the more heartfelt 'Happy Easter'.<sup>71</sup> It demonstrates also the feature which linguists note as 'instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occurs in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language'.<sup>72</sup>

The form of theorizing the international that the Baltic Barons had traditionally developed rested on the patriarchal order of Europe's imperial elites, which was in tension with dynastic power that could tolerate both male and female lines of succession. Not only were their estates passed down, whole, as patrimony of their eldest sons. Their family names, too, only encoded a male pedigree of history. In the female line, such passing on was more indirect. Daughters would lose their fathers' names and gain new names; wives would become the typists who would eventually carry the memory of the Baltic Barons to a wider market.

<sup>69</sup> Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, 3 March 1918. Facsimile at [www.1000dokumente.de/index.html?c=dokument\\_ru&dokument=0011\\_bre&cl=de](http://www.1000dokumente.de/index.html?c=dokument_ru&dokument=0011_bre&cl=de), accessed 5 July 2015.

<sup>70</sup> On heredity as a type of memory, the continuity between psychic and physical memory, and forgetting, Théodule Ribot, *Les Maladies de la mémoire* (Paris: Alcan, 1895), 49ff, 164–165; Sigmund Freud, *Zur Auffassung der Aphasien. Eine kritische Studie* (Leipzig and Vienna: Deuticke, 1891); and Roman Jakobson, *Kindersprache, Aphasie und allgemeine Lautgesetze* (1941) (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1969); on multilingualism and trauma, see Jacqueline Amati Mehler, Simona Argentieri, and Jorge Canestri (eds.), *The Babel of the Unconscious Mother Tongue and Foreign Languages in the Psychoanalytic Dimension* (Madison, Conn.: International Universities Press, 1993).

<sup>71</sup> Anna Wieszicka, *Semantics, Culture and Cognition: Universal Human Concepts in Culture-Specific Configurations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>72</sup> On code-switching and language loss, see Uriel Weinreich, *Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems* (The Hague: Mouton, 1953); Steven G. Kellmann, *The Translingual Imagination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

As a historical diaspora, the Baltic nobility, like many other noble families, had turned estrangement into a marker of distinction. Erving Goffman's theory of 'stigmatization' as a constructed entity has invited generations of social theorists to think of this kind of marking as an act of making the other inferior to oneself. But as Sofia Tchouikina and Longina Jakubowska have shown, markers of distinction follow the same logic.<sup>73</sup>

Reading the archive of this strange grouping of exiles is almost like listening in on a conversation among people who are speaking with an inflection and in a dialect that is no longer spoken today. In the end, Taube's hypothesis about the relationship between the two 'Greats', Catherine of Russia and Frederick II of Prussia, remained unconfirmed. Taube died in 1961 in Paris. In 2013 I was able to obtain a copy of his typescript on Catherine's genealogy via a major online second-hand bookseller from an antiquarian bookstore located in New Zealand.<sup>74</sup> I have been unable to verify the archival sources that Taube wanted to research; they were likely lost in the war, confiscated either by Alfred Rosenberg's department of historical research or by the Soviet Army in 1945. Another copy of the typescript can also be found at Columbia University's special collections in New York, where part of Taube's archive is now based, which Columbia had bought in the 1970s. Taube's pre-1917 archive remains in Russia.

Despite the inconclusive end to his career as a lawyer and a historian, the history of Taube's life in exile, as well as that of his archive, reflects more than just the fate of an unusual individual. What it shows is the social process by which a memory of empire was produced and shared in multiple languages, on typewriters and by hand, in private and public contexts, and in different cities such as Berlin, Uppsala, and especially Paris. Unlike most fugitives, these intellectuals projected themselves not just to their old home country, but into an entirely different epoch. The images they conjured up were images of multiple ruins of what they considered to be a lost European civilization. This is why, in this particular tragedy, like many in Paris, they felt closer to Antigone than to Creon. They traced their titles further back than the ruling dynasties or the new national governments of their day, back to the history of the Holy Roman Empire of the German

<sup>73</sup> Longina Jakubowska, *Patrons of History. Nobility, Capital and Political Transitions in Poland* (London: Ashgate, 2012); Sofia Tchouikina, *Dvorianskaia pamiat': 'byvshye' v sovetskom gorode* (Leningrad, 1920e–30e gody) (St. Petersburg: Izd-vo Evropeiskogo universiteta v StPb, 2006).

<sup>74</sup> Michael Taube, 'The Birth Secret of Catherine II and Its Political Significance', typescript marked uncorrected, my archive (acquired on abebooks.com from New Zealand bookseller), probably a translation by Nicholas Danilow.



Nation, effectively a Franco-Germanic conglomerate of states with a dominant German cultural tradition, which had ceased to exist by a whim of Napoleon's revolutionary fervour in 1806. By 1941, the Nazis were turning Germany into a Third Reich and stepping in Napoleon's footsteps on their Russian campaign. In this process, Paris itself had turned from the capital of Europe's refugees and the international struggle against fascism into a peripheral city of a republic under Nazi occupation. Against this backdrop, the Baltic Barons, descendants of the Crusaders, could do little else but idealize the internationalism of Europe's second Byzantine Empire by dropping the 'r' from the years '1939–45'.