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## **THE IMAGE OF GERMANY IN *A WRITER'S DIARY* BY FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY<sup>1</sup>**

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*The paper explores the image of Germany, represented in A Writer's Diary by F.M. Dostoevsky during Balkan crisis 1876 and Russo-Turkish war 1877-1878. The purpose of this paper is to summarize Dostoevsky's views, thoughts, reflections and ideas on the Germans as a people, on Germany as a military-political unity, its ideology, mysticism, cultural-religious stance and political significance for Russian Empire. Particular attention is paid to the geopolitical significance of Europe in the imaginary geography of Dostoevsky.*

*Keywords: Dostoevsky, Orientalism, A Writer's Diary, Germany, Lichtenberger.*

It is well known that Dostoevsky spent a considerable amount of his life in Germany, in Ems, Dresden and among other places, and even knew some German, although he did not speak it very well (he wrote: "I speak bad German, nevertheless I do understand it" [1. P. 373]). He also had a particular interest in German philosophy: he read Kant, Hegel, Schelling, Fichte, Feuerbach and others, although he often opposed to their philosophical views on the Russian history and culture. He also was an admirer of the romantic writers Goethe and Schiller. It is interesting that after his release from Omsk prison in the first large and very emotional letter to his brother dated by January, 30 – February 22, 1854, Dostoevsky asks him to send as soon as possible several books, the list of which is surprising: "Send me the Koran, and Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason", and if you have the chance of sending anything not officially, then be sure to send Hegel but particularly Hegel's "History of Philosophy." Upon that depends my whole future." [2. P. 63–64].

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It seems that the mention of the Muslim holy book in the context of German philosophy was, of course, determined not by the similarity of these books, but by some unifying position of Dostoevsky in relation to these sources. German philosophers and the Qur'an were located in the plane of high discourse on the spirit and providentiality of human history and a separate human life. According to Robert C. Williams, "German romanticism enabled the Russians to think of themselves as an individual nation with a historic purpose which was ultimately to triumph over that very Germany and Europe from which such an idea had initially sprung. European intellectuals critical of bourgeois society, in turn, found the Russian attack on the West a confirmation of their own malaise, and readjusted their social criticism with the help of anti-European sentiments expressed in Russian literature." [3. P. 573]

A disgraced writer, a former prisoner, a current soldier, languishing in the Asian frontier of the Russian Empire, Dostoevsky passionately thinks about his fate, tries to see his future and the future of his country through the thickness of the time in the discourse of Orientalism, which has a great influence on his work after 1854 [4]. In order to feel like a European and rise above his plight, Dostoevsky turns to the heights of German thought and (consciously or unconsciously) with the help of a Muslim source builds the West-Eastern opposition of self-identity. Associating with the heights of the human spirit, Germany received a positive exposition in the imaginary geography of Dostoevsky. And despite the fact that in the 1870s, when Dostoevsky actively expands his geopolitical discourse, the image of Germany was complex, filled with negative meanings too, the initial positive basis will remain the same – a good example of this is the image of a German spiritualist in the unreplicated story about Karl Ivanovich, dated the second half of 1876.

The image of Germany in the 1870s became ambivalent in eschatological discourse. A premonition of a future war, revanchism, an exaggeration of the significance of the Russian Empire in the affairs of Europe, a patronizing tone for the Slavic peoples of the Balkan Peninsula – all this was true in the arguments for the nationalist circles of Russian society. Experiencing the strong influence of the Slavophile doctrines of M.N. Katkov, Dostoevsky, like a general of a non-existent army, painstakingly drew an imaginary map of Europe before a general battle. He marked some parts of the map (such as France, the Vatican, England) with signs of the enemy, others with signs of possible allies, experiencing problems with their self-

identification on the axis of good and evil. Germany certainly took this part of his imaginary map. At the same time, as a profound philosophizing writer, a meticulous psychologist, and a moralizer, Dostoevsky constructs geopolitical images in several planes at once: in common images of countries and their leaders, and in private images of the common people.

Regularly suffering from health problems, Dostoevsky visited the health resort of Ems in Germany on multiple occasions. On one of his journeys to the resort, in the summer of 1876, he has an encounter with some Germans on a train to Berlin, which he describes in the passage "On the Pugnacity of the Germans." Dostoevsky engages in a discussion about the military strength of Russia. He deems it his "patriotic duty" to correct the Germans by telling them that the numbers they raised were exaggerated "in a negative way." Doing so, he notes that they react in a very polite and understanding way, somewhat even to his surprise, although he also remarks that they probably did not believe what he was saying. This encounter, however, contrasts some of his earlier experiences with Germans. In 1871, residing in Dresden, Dostoevsky witnessed the return of German troops after the Franco-Prussian war. They came back victorious, but Dostoevsky did not like the behavior of the braggy German, both of the soldiers and the civilians, at all: "Add to this the usual German boastfulness – their nation-wide boundless self-conceit in case of some success, their petty bragging bordering on childishness and invariably attaining in Germans the level of arrogance, which is a rather unbecoming and almost surprising characteristic in this people." [1. P. 375]

He notes that some Germans in Dresden at the time even behaved hostile to anything Russian. Ecstatic and full of confidence after having defeated France, they would now be ready to come for the Russians. This observance, however, did not surprise Dostoevsky, because he "knew all his life that the German always and everywhere, ever since the time of the German Village in Moscow, has disliked the Russian". Nevertheless, Dostoevsky does not hide his admiration for the disciplined and resolute German soldiers, who "do not need a rod to be driven forward." [Ibid. P. 375]

In addition to German discipline, he also admires the work ethics, wit, and quickness of apprehension of the Germans. In the chapter "The Germans and Work. Incomprehensible Tricks. On Wit" Dostoevsky describes how the ladies working at the fountains in Ems are extraordinarily good and precise in their jobs. They remember exactly what wishes and preferences each of the hundreds of patients has. Although he is not sure whether this

observation is particularly a German phenomenon or just an acquired thing, learned and skilled over time, he praises it and at the same time is taken aback. Another observation takes place in the hotel he stayed in. The sole maidservant there worked really long and hard hours, but did all of this with great dedication and professionalism, despite earning a very modest wage. She was nineteen years old and had to take care of almost every household chore, grocery shopping, taking care of the children of the hostess and serving every client in the hotel. Nevertheless, the maid did all of this without complaining. In particular, he writes: "Please note that there was nothing contrite or oppressed in the appearance of that maidservant: she was cheerful, bold, healthy with a perfectly contented air and an unperturbed calmness" [1. P. 392].

A third example of German commitment to work and customer friendliness is the post office functionary. The clerks in Dostoevsky's eyes are by no means as rude, angry, irritable, presumptuous or haughty as the Russian functionaries. On the contrary, he recalls a rather pleasant encounter with a post office functionary, who has been very thoughtful in delivering a personal letter. To the Russian, Dostoevsky notes, the Germans are perceived as dull and tight, but at the same time, he notes that the Russian admires the German for his learnedness. Dostoevsky nevertheless perceives the German to be rather haughty and obstinate, which he says might lead to wrong conclusions when meeting a German for the first time [Ibid. P. 394].

Dostoevsky's image of common Germans is quite ambivalent. They are quite haughty, brag about themselves, especially after having won the war against the French, and have little or no respect for the Russians. At the same time, neither the French nor the English on the pages of the *Diary* received such positive assessments. Dostoevsky admires and acknowledges their discipline, wit, apprehension skills and professionalism. Traits that are rarely found in Russia, he says repeatedly [Ibid. P. 387]. Stressing the positive features of the German nation, he hopes to establish the points of convergence of the Russian and German worlds, which are on the front line of the struggle against the Catholic threat of Rome and the nihilistic contagion of France.

Dostoevsky believes that Russia and Germany are much alike, experiencing the pressure of European self-righteous empires. And in the context of this pressure, both Russia and Germany realized that the main value is not the Enlightenment and human rights, not scientific progress and parliaments,

but political unity. Europe has the right to be proud of herself over science and industry, Dostoevsky argues. In Russia however, science is in no way as advanced and essential as in most European countries. Dostoevsky writes that geographic, ethnographic and political factors account for this. These conditions did not apply to Russia, who, situated in the East of Europe, has not enjoyed the benefits of intellectual and social revolutions, classical philosophy and law. Liberty as such does not exist in Russia [5. P. 385–414]. Applied to Dostoevsky, this situation is in line with his deterministic views on history and human behavior. No one is to blame for this or that, for the course of events as they happened. Russia has taken another path, perhaps a better one: “A certain tree grows up in so many years, while another one in twice as long a time. <...>No one with common sense would start blaming and shaming a boy of thirteen because he is not twenty-five years old” [1. P. 282].

Thus, according to Dostoevsky, instead of developing science, the Russians have been deliberately working on another asset, a political unity, namely, a Tsardom. Russia has colonized extraordinarily large parts of the world and it has had to defend this Tsardom from enemies over the past thousand years. And if it were not for the presence of “passive Russia”, he notices rather cynically, “these cruel enemies would have thrown themselves upon Europe” [Ibid. P. 282]. So, in short, his point is that Western European states have developed science, under certain geographical and political conditions, but Russia has developed a political unity, “unprecedented in world history.” Irritated, he notices that Europe fails to acknowledge this fact: “Europe – they claim – is more active and wittier than the passive Russians; that’s why she – and not they – has developed science” [Ibid. P. 282]. Dostoevsky does argue that the Russians eventually will acquire science. Contrarily, he wonders if Europe herself will acquire political unity and if that would not even be preferable over scientific fame: “Perhaps only fifteen years ago, the Germans would gladly have agreed to change half of their scientific fame for that political unity which we possessed long ago” [Ibid. P. 283].

Thus, the overall question should not be about science or industry, but about culture, referring to himself as a Russian who has been to Europe and therefore “acquired culture”. Subsequently, the “cultured Russians” are able to spread culture into Russia, being morally and substantially superior and polished. Another example brought by Dostoevsky to illustrate this cultural superiority is that in Russia many great writers such as Shakespeare, Byron,

Walter Scott, Dickens are more appreciated than in Germany, although, in absolute numbers, more copies are sold in Germany than in Russia [1. P. 343]. Dostoevsky sympathizes with Germany, but wonders “why is their press sounding an alarm?” And he gave an answer: “Because Russia stands behind their backs and ties their hands: because it was due to her that they missed the opportune moment once for all to obliterate France from the face of the earth so as never in the future to have to bother about her. “Russia hinders; Russia must be pushed back into her boundaries. But how is one to squeeze her in if, at the other end, France still stands intact?” Yes, Russia is guilty because of the fact itself that she is Russia, and that Russians are Russians – that is, Slavs. Hateful is the Slavic race to Europe – les esclaves, so to speak, slaves” [Ibid. P. 378].

People in Europe, in general, are afraid that Russia tries to annex certain Slavic parts of Europe, Dostoevsky continues. But this is not the case, he argues. He tries to convince the reader that Russia has no intentions whatsoever of annexing anything and that Europe should know this. However, Russia is very potent and it will grow stronger than any other nation in Europe, for its *demos* is content and the European powers will dissolve as a result of democratic tendencies and dissatisfaction of their ordinary people. Europe is actually twice as strong as Russia, who is only strong when it would be defending her homeland, not if it would be attacking another country, he writes. It would be four times weaker in that case. The Slavic people are determined in the war and will be victorious if no European country will intervene, which is not unlikely, as the European countries themselves appear to be very undetermined, but they do not believe in Russian disinterestedness in the region.

The period of the Russo-Turkish War was important in Dostoevsky’s perception mostly in connection with the moral attitudes. Contrary to the writer’s credo, he proclaims the principle of “naked thought”: “it would seem to us that at present all people should be expressing themselves as candidly and directly as possible, without being ashamed of the naive nakedness of some thought” [Ibid. P. 562]. And all this happens because “apparently the time has come for something sempiternal, millenarian, for that which has been moulding itself in the world ever since the beginning of its civilization” [Ibid. P. 562]. In this eschatological context, in January 1877, Dostoevsky formulated the theory of “Three ideas”, which really reveals all the political and religious messianic themes of *A Writer’s Diary*.

These three ideas are connected with the geopolitical images of the three religious worlds: France as the embodiment of the Catholic idea, Germany as the embodiment of the protest against Catholicism and Russia as the embodiment of Orthodoxy and the Slavic idea. These are three big cultural-religious ideas that are important for the world, that are possible solutions for European and human destiny. Why is Catholicism most of all associated with France? In spite of the fact that France has since the Revolution been laicised, de facto Catholicism lives on in the spirit of the slogan *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, he argues ("the Jesuits and the atheists there are one and the same" [1. P. 563]). Not surprisingly, he deems the Slavic idea most important and most just of all. Dostoevsky is confident that the Eastern Question will be settled in Russia's advance and that therefore the other powers will have to admit that the Slavic idea is superior. What is the Slavic idea exactly? The Slavic idea is not merely slavophilic, nor it is political or historical. It is a "sacrifice that has thrust itself into the very heart of Russian society" [Ibid. P. 424]. It is the conviction of Russia that it has to help its weaker Slavic brethren in the south. Russia has to be dedicated to doing this, for then the "great all-Slavic communion in the name of Christ's truth will be established" [Ibid. P. 562, 424].

So where does Protestantism, the third idea, stand in respect to these ideas? Protestantism is the idea that is equated with Germany. Dostoevsky writes that Germany, through Protestantism, professes a denying, protesting faith. As with Slavism and Catholicism, it is also not solely a faith, it is the continuous protesting movement of the German people against another power, idea, faith or movement. From the early start, this competitor was the Roman Empire. Dostoevsky often refers to this time by mentioning Arminius, the Germanic leader who successfully headed battles against the Romans. In the time of Luther it was the most religious movement against Catholicism, thus the reformation and the process of obtaining free inquiry. At the end of the 19th century, Germany's protesting spirit manifests itself in a rivalry with the French Republic, which is seen as the successor of the Roman Empire and the main representative of Catholicism in Europe. So Protestantism's only *raison d'être* is the existence of a cultural-ideological counterpart. According to Dostoevsky, the German haughtily believes in this idea of his own, now that its people have been unified, but the problem is that in these nineteen centuries of protest the Germans never really expressed any ideas of themselves. Protestantism has always been a negative idea, a denying movement and has never uttered anything in a positive

way, i.e. expressed any ideas whatsoever that were not a reaction to something else. This, to Dostoevsky, is the proof that Protestantism will be of no more important role as soon as it has nothing to protest against anymore. It risks its own extinction when it has defeated its political, military and ideological rival, i.e. France, for a counterpart like France has been and will always be its sole reason for existence.

However, Dostoevsky does seem to see a value in the German cause. The value lies herein, that the Germans have fought the French, and that France and Germany are still rivals to one another. Bismarck is working for a good cause, since he fights the papacy, which Dostoevsky considers one of the biggest dangers in Europe: "All public authorities in Europe despise it [Catholicism], since now it seems so destitute and crushed; still they do not picture it to themselves in so comic an appearance and state as it is being naively conceived by our political publicists. However, Bismarck, for example, would not have persecuted Catholicism so strongly if he had not sensed in it a dreadful, proximate enemy in no distant future. Prince Bismarck is too proud a man to waste in vain so much energy on a comically impotent foe. Yet the Pope is stronger than he. I repeat: in our day papacy is, perhaps, the most dreadful among all "segregations" threatening universal peace. And the world is threatened by many a thing: at no time in the past has Europe been loaded with such elements of ill-will as at present. It seems that everything is undermined and loaded with powder, and is just waiting for the first spark..." [1. P. 258].

Bismarck, to whom Dostoevsky repeatedly refers in *A Writer's Diary*, is widely praised for the fight he conducted against France. In him, Dostoevsky sees a great statesman, who managed to unify the German people and defended Germany against the "outermost Western world." Bismarck incited nationalism among the Germans and hates the papacy and socialism. For these reasons, Dostoevsky expressed his admiration for Bismarck and support for the German cause, because it was he, who foresaw the alleged threat France, and, to a larger extent, the pope and the "Roman idea" pose to Germany. Dostoevsky sees a companion in Germany, in as far as the Germans, with Bismarck as their leader, hate France and fight against it. He calls Germany a "middle country", not only because it is geographically situated between France and Russia, but also because ideologically it is surrounded by the Catholic countries, Poland and France. Germany has an important task to fulfill, according to Dostoevsky.

This task consists in unifying the Germans and becoming a solid European power, able to compete with the traditional powers, i.e. France and England. This task has partly been accomplished after the unification and the subsequent defeat of France in the war. However, Dostoevsky says, the ideological battle with Catholicism and the pope is yet to begin. For Dostoevsky, the French-German rivalry is symbolical for the Russian cause, as Catholicism and the pope constitute the same enemy for both Germany and Russia. He even goes as far as proposing a Russo-German alliance. In fact, he believes that it is Germany's destiny to form an alliance with Russia, although the problem is that as Germany despises Catholic France, it also despises the Slavic idea.

However, until recently, Germany did not really believe Russia could pose a threat, with the haughtiness described earlier, whereas they always acknowledged France as a powerful adversary: "The German despises the Slavic idea just as much as the Catholic idea with that difference only that the latter he always evaluated as a strong and powerful enemy, whereas the Slavic idea not only did he deem worth nothing but, up to the very last moment, he even did not admit it at all. However, of late, he begins to look askance upon the Slavs with great suspicion. Even though up to now it seems ridiculous to him to suppose that they may possess any aims and ideas whatsoever, any hope "of uttering anything to the world," nevertheless ever since France's debacle his uneasy suspicions have been increasing, while last year's events and current events, of course, could not have alleviated his mistrust" [1. P. 564].

Dostoevsky linked the future greatness of the Slavic idea with the victory in the Russian-Turkish war and the inevitable capture of Constantinople by Russian troops (still not knowing how insignificant the politico-military results of this campaign will be after the Berlin Congress of 1878), the transformation of this most important mythogenic space into a real (and not only symbolic) center of the Slavic Orthodox world. And for us it is extremely interesting that Dostoevsky cites *The Book of Predictions* of John (Johannes) Lichtenberger, the medieval German mystic and the court astrologer of Frederick III, to confirm this concept.

Why did Dostoevsky draw attention to the book of Lichtenberger, in which the great future of Germany but not Russia was predicted? In the second half of the 19th century, many books related to medieval prophecy appeared in Russia. In the personal library of N.N. Strakhov, there was a copy of the book of predictions of Nostradamus, and he could inform

Dostoevsky about this. However, Dostoevsky could not give arguments from the book of the French mystic for understandable reasons: France fought against Russia in the Crimean War sacred for Dostoevsky and was firmly associated with the “Catholic conspiracy”. Germany is quite another matter. Therefore, Dostoevsky made every effort to find the desired Cologne edition, stored in the library of the British Museum, and to publish the Latin quotations as accurately as possible. For example, in a letter to the typist he wrote: “On the first pages, the Latin text will be typed. Print not with a petite, but with an ordinary font, and certainly through the Latin line with the Russian, exactly as you will see in the original. There is a corresponding Russian word under each Latin word. It is necessary to type this way” [6. Vol. 25. P. 412].

Working with the text of Lichtenberger, Dostoevsky showed himself not as a researcher, but as a propagandist, not taking into account the historical and cultural context of the source, and, as K. Sahni found out, arbitrarily compiling quotes from different parts of the German book [7. P. 36]. Dostoevsky describes this document as an ancient and vague allegorical prediction about the events of the Russian-Turkish war. He also considers it important to mention that he had, in his hands, perhaps the only surviving specimen in the world. Apparently, it was painful to arouse the readers’ awe before a medieval German source. Of all the “foggy” predictions, Dostoevsky chooses those that seem most relevant to him for the religious-mystical justification of the possession of Constantinople and, in general, the universal elevation of the Russian Empire, which has got the historical chance to be the teacher, but not a learner of Europe. That is, he cites quotes from Lichtenberger’s book for greater persuasiveness not only in Russian translation but also in the Latin language of the original. It was a good journalistic technique aimed against the conception of Russia’s European inferiority declared by Westerners.

After indicating that Lichtenberger’s predictions of the Great French Revolution and Napoleon I were fully confirmed, Dostoevsky, in the tone of a connoisseur of ancient Latin manuscripts, leads the prophecy he liked. As a kind of reproach to modern German arrogance and unbelief in the Slavic idea, the words of the German mystic sound in Dostoevsky’s mind: “After that a new eagle shall come who shall kindle fire in the bosom of Christ’s bride, and there shall be three natural issues and one legitimate issue, and he shall devour the others. A great eagle shall arise in the East, and the Western Islanders shall start wailing. He shall capture three kingdoms.

This is the great eagle who sleepeth many a year; though wounded he shall arise and shall compel the Western sea-bound inhabitants of the land of the Virgin and the other proud summits to tremble, and he shall fly southward to retrieve that which had been lost. And Go shall kindle the Eastern eagle with love of mercy so that he may fly on his two wings to accomplish that which is difficult, flashing upon the peaks of Christianity” [1. P. 694].

Anticipating the accusations of the liberal critics in the insane (on the topic of madness in *A Writer's Diary* for more details see: [8. P. 107–110]) and the uncritical adherence to mystical medieval sources, Dostoevsky ends his chapter with lengthy arguments that Lichtenberger's book is “a mystical allegory though somewhat resembling the truth” [1. P. 697]. This ostentatious disregard for the source just analyzed with such attention is accompanied by an indication of the connection of these prophecies with the Protestant Reformation: “<...> all this has been written and printed in 1528, and this is curious. In those days there must have often appeared works of this kind, and although that time preceded the wars of the great Protestant Reformation, there had been already many Protestants, reformers, and prophets. It is also known that later, especially in Protestant armies, there have always been many “ecstatic” prophets among the warriors – prognosticators and Convulsionaries” [Ibid. P. 697].

However, the context and attentive analysis of Lichtenberger's text leave no doubt that this source, in the context of mass enthusiasm for spiritualism in the Russian society of the 1870s, was used as a powerful propaganda argument in disputes with Westerners that the Russian-Turkish war is not only a matter of the “sacred” and the “popular” but also directly predicted.

Thus, the images of the German world in the consciousness of Dostoevsky during the period of Russo-Turkish war and the preceding Balkan crisis were a large and very important part of his geopolitical ideas. The idea of “Trinity”, which occupies a large place in the Orthodox mythology and philosophy, found a literal political embodiment in three parts of the imaginary map of Europe (unfortunately, Dostoevsky, while discussing the fate of the world, forgets that besides Catholicism, Protestantism and Orthodoxy, there are other worlds and other ideas – Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, etc.). A typologically similar concept of universal trinity will later be reflected in his latest novel *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), where Dmitri Karamazov, protesting against the old father, was quite consistent with the image of Germany from the nationalistic conception of “Three ideas”.

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### THE IMAGE OF GERMANY IN *A WRITER'S DIARY* BY FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY

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### ОБРАЗ ГЕРМАНИИ В «ДНЕВНИКЕ ПИСАТЕЛЯ» Ф. ДОСТОЕВСКОГО Алексеев П.В., Биллиет Э.

Статья посвящена исследованию образов немцев и Германии в «Дневнике писателя» периода русско-турецкой войны 1877–1878 гг. и предшествовавшего ей балканского кризиса 1876 г. В этот период Достоевский начал издавать «Дневник писателя» в виде отдельного подписного издания, которое имело большой успех в самых различных общественных кругах. Образы немцев и Германии имеют непосредственное отношение к философским, мифологическим и геополитическим представлениям писателя, которые были развиты им в провиденциальной концепции «трех идей» – католической (французской), протестантской (немецкая) и православной (русской).

Согласно представлениям Достоевского, русской идее противостоит французская в силу европейского католического заговора, а немецкая идея все еще не может определиться: немцы ненавидят французов, но презирают славян. Поэтому Достоевский формирует амбивалентный образ Германии: с одной стороны, он критикует заносчивость немцев, с другой стороны? восхищается их патриотизмом, дисциплиной, работоспособностью, философией и, что особенно интересно, готов привлекать мистический текст немецкого астролога Лихтенбергера (XVI в.) для доказательства грядущего торжества русского мира.

Материалы «Дневника писателя» позволяют реконструировать религиозно-националистический пафос писателя, который позднее будет встроен в идейно-тематический комплекс последнего романа «Братья Карамазовы».