

The Personality and Political Activity of Otto von Bismarck in the Russian Conservative, Liberal and Democratic Press of the 19th - beginning of the 20th Century

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The famous German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck without any doubt was one of the most outstanding politicians of the 19th century. One of the indications of this fact is the existence of the large number of publications concerning Bismarck and the attention of the Russian press of the different political directions devoted to the analysis of his personality and political activity.

The attention towards the figure of Bismarck, known as the "Iron Chancellor" was connected with the fact that when he was at the highest positions of the government the relations between the Russian Empire and Germany were developing along very dramatic lines. Bismarck was one of the few state officials who respected Russia and considered the country as one of the most important participants in the European political game.

According to his understanding, the views of the Russian political elite were very important to the governments of every European country. Taking into consideration these circumstances, it is important to trace the different aspects of the public opinion of the Russian political and intellectual elite which were expressed in the publications of the Russian press of the different political directions of the second part of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th centuries.

The opinions expressed in the Russian press had a strong influence on the decision making of the Russian political elite in the sphere of foreign policy, and especially in the diplomatic relations with the German Empire.

The figure of Bismarck and the analysis of his activity are very important and attractive not only for professional researchers, but also for publicists and the authors of fiction literature. In this article we will analyze the views and opinions expressed in the Russian press of conservative, liberal and democratic directions concerning the German Chancellor.

1.1 The Characterization of Otto von Bismarck in the Conservative Press of the Russian Empire

According to B.P. Baluev² and B.I. Esin, M.N. Katkov's newspaper *Russkiy vestnik* (Russian Herald), published from 1856 to 1906, at first had a liberal alignment, but eventually took on more conservative views. Soviet researcher V.A. Tvardovskaya gives a fairly high valuation of this publisher's role in the political life of the country in the 1860-1880s: "Publicist Mikhail Nikiforovich Katkov (1818-1887), who was outside the government, had a significant influence on the policy of the autocracy for almost a quarter century, not only expressing, but also strengthening, and often creating opinions and sentiments 'at the top', forming a certain point of view there, ideologically paving the way for certain government measures."³

It is known that for a long time the editor of *Russkiy vestnik* was sympathetic to Otto von Bismarck, believing that in an era of weakening governmental power and a fascination with doctrines, the German chancellor was the only one able to avoid the maladies of modern times and lead his country to success and prosperity.

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² Baluev B. P. Politicheskaya reaktsiya 80-kh gg. XIX v. i russkaya zhurnalistika. M.: izdatel'stvo Moscovskogo universiteta, 1971, 316.

³ Tvardovskaya V. A. Ideologiya poreformennogo samoderzhaviya: (M. N. Katkov i ego izdaniya). M.: Nauka, 1978, 3.

Bismarck's remarkable single-mindedness, which allowed him to achieve all of his predetermined goals, was recognized as an integral feature of the German chancellor's personality. Thus, in the 7th 1888 issue of *Russkiy Vestnik*, we read: "... we must not forget that Prince Bismarck is more than anyone unaccustomed to failures and has always been able to achieve brilliant revenge for all, even the most insignificant defeats that he has managed to endure."⁴ However, while M.N. Katkov and his followers recognized the "Iron Chancellor" for his flexibility and diplomatic resourcefulness, the members of the editorial board of the journal *Istoricheskiy Vestnik* (Historical Herald) (1880-1917) held a different point of view. For many years, it was published under the leadership of historian and journalist S.N. Shubinsky. The journal published famous scholars N.I. Kostomarov, K.N. Bestuzhev-Ryumin, A.G. Brückner, I. Zabelin and others; an important role was played by the theater critic and playwright A. Suvorin.

The journalists of *Istoricheskiy vestnik* insisted that the unifier of Germany never pondered the best way to overcome possible difficulties in solving a particular problem, but preferred to forge on ahead, destroying everything in his path. Perhaps this is most clearly manifested in the epithet that one of the correspondents, V. Timiryazev, who always signed his name briefly as "V.T." applied to Bismarck's personality. In the series of articles "Bismarck in his and others' memoirs", the journalist applied the epithet "man of iron and fire" to the chancellor more than ten times, thereby indicating the prevalence of the use of force in his politics. According to the author of the articles, Bismarck is "second only to Napoleon in the 19th century in applying the theory of 'might is right'."⁵

V. Timiryazev also dubs Bismarck "the great hypocrite", proving that often the word of the German chancellor was at variance with his actions, without any scruples or feelings of remorse on the part of the "ingenious Junker" (another appellation provided by V. Timiryazev). Other authors agree with this: "The manipulation and rearrangement of facts, their presentation in a distorted or even completely fantastic form—all this is perfectly acceptable and appropriate for the chancellor's platform..."⁶

The authors of all the conservative publications agreed that the German chancellor, despite the unscrupulousness of his methods, was a brilliant diplomat. Among Bismarck's positive qualities, the journalists noted charm, amiability, knowledge of several foreign languages, coupled with perseverance and the ability to convince his interlocutors of the correctness of his point of view. Discussing the "Iron Chancellor's" knowledge of the Russian language, his teacher, university student V. Alekseev wrote: "With each lesson, Bismarck's knowledge of the Russian language noticeably increased, and this quick success he owed to the vast capacity of his memory."⁷

Many conservative publicists noted the ambiguity of the famous German chancellor's level of knowledge: on the one hand, he was perceived by them as an eternal C-student, not interested in studying the subjects taught in his specialty at the universities of Göttingen and Berlin, quite rarely attending classes and not being capable of perseverance; on the other hand, they were struck by Otto von Bismarck's wide and deep knowledge of languages, history and diplomacy, as well as his practical agrarian reforms, which could not have been successful without a solid theoretical background.

Some journalists believed Bismarck's lack of compassion could be explained by his pride, arrogance, and heightened sense of self-worth, noting at the same time that he was ready to give up his personal interests in order to strengthen his beloved brainchild, the German Empire. The journalists of *Moskovskie vedomosti* (Moscow News) argue this point convincingly, describing the popularity of the chancellor among wide ranges of society: "Germany honored a man who had never sought popularity, never expected any other praise than approval from the lips of his king and emperor, whom he had faithfully served his whole life in word and deed, a man who steadily walked the direct path of duty and created through the strength of his mind and the energy of his will that mighty German national unity that thousands of other people had tried in vain to create in other ways."⁸ The newspaper *Moskovskie vedomosti* (1756-1917) had long been published under the editorship of M.N. Katkov. As of 1863, it began to have a reputation as a politically right-wing publication, which was further strengthened under Vladimir Gringmut.

⁴ "Politicheskoe obozrenie." *Russkiy vestnik*. 1888. No. 7, 349.

⁵ V. T. "Bismark v svoikh i chuzhikh vospominaniyakh." *Istoricheskiy vestnik*. 1899. No. 4, 282.

⁶ "Politicheskoe obozrenie." *Russkiy vestnik*. 1888 No. 2, 340.

⁷ Alekseev V. "Vospominaniya byvshego uchitelya russkogo yazyka knyazya Bismarka." *Istoricheskiy vestnik*. 1894. No. 11, 451.

⁸ *Moskovskie vedomosti*. 1885. No. 84, 5.

According to B.P. Baluev, *Russkij vestnik* and *Moskovskie vedomosti* in the '80s kept their readers in a state of constant alarm and alertness. B.I. Esin added that the direction of the newspaper could not be otherwise, since its editor, Katkov, "was one of the ideological inspirers of government reaction."⁹

Bismarck's Russian language teacher V. Alekseev describes him as follows: "Despite his relatively young age (he was then no older than 45), he already had a significant bald spot on his head. Before me stood a tall, broad-shouldered gentleman with a thick mustache and likewise thick eyebrows. Above the mustache, on the upper lip, there was a scar from a rather deep wound, received by him, as I heard, in a duel when he was young."¹⁰ Alekseev was perplexed by the somewhat ridiculous attire of the German politician, who would always go out into the living room in an old, shabby robe, with a night cap on his head while smoking expensive cigars. While to V. Alekseev the "Iron Chancellor" seemed to be a sincere, open and rather good-natured person, in most articles and notes of the authors of the conservative camp, it is proved that he, on the contrary, was a hypocrite, constantly played a double game and was never distinguished by humanity, especially in relation to his opponents. As for his ability to bear a grudge, it sometimes reached such a degree that Bismarck did not spare anyone, even Emperor Wilhelm I, to whom he owed much.

A writer for *Russkij vestnik*, someone who signed their name as E.G.G., wrote: "Condemned, because of the extraordinary clarity and depth of his mind, to see what was inaccessible to the eyes of others, he was constantly subjected to the bitter torment of being unable to share with anyone that which made up the essence of his intellectual and spiritual life."¹¹ Bismarck's desire for seclusion in his estate was noted by many of his Russian contemporaries, who suggested that it was amid the silence of Varzin's oaks that he developed strategies for the growth of the German Empire, while the city bothered him with its courtliness and excessive vanity. The famous journalist V.A. Gringmut, using the example of the "Iron Chancellor," noted the following obstacles to the activities of any statesman: "He can keep only his expectations to himself, but as soon as he begins to act upon them, he immediately falls victim to the criticism of his comrades, his subordinates, all of the press and all of society..."¹²

Bismarck recounts in his memoirs that he went through a long evolution from republican views to an admiration for absolutism. Perhaps this was precisely what prompted V.A. Timiryazev of *Istoricheskiy vestnik* to claim that Bismarck was the most perfect opportunist, and that all of his state activity was unsystematic and depended on the circumstances of time and place. This point of view runs counter to the prevailing one among conservative journalists, the idea of the clarity of the political constructions of the German chancellor, who was a devoted servant of the Hohenzollerns and was ready to make any sacrifices in order to preserve the monarchical system in the Reich. This is most convincingly proved in one of the articles of *Russkij vestnik*: "This principle of moral responsibility solely before his country was Bismarck's only guide for many years of his activity. This responsibility lies at the heart of all his policies, both internal and external, and only it can explain much that at first glance seems inconsistent in the words and deeds of one of the most logical politicians of our century."¹³ Thus, the "Iron Chancellor" was perceived as an ardent reactionary, the most consistent of all the Prussian Junkers.¹⁴

M.N. Katkov, discussing the fact that Bismarck was often called a feudal lord and an absolutist, insisted that he was far from being either. Sometimes journalists recognized certain actions of his as more revolutionary than all the decisions of the Frankfurt Parliament put together. In general, the German chancellor was an enemy of radical transformations, seeking to achieve his goals through long, fruitful work: "The name of Bismarck is associated with the idea of a policy of surprises, carefully thought out and thoroughly prepared in advance."¹⁵

In the Russian conservative press, there was a point of view that in Bismarck's activities, his foreign policy prevailed over his domestic one. One of the most controversial issues in the famous German chancellor's intra-German politics is the so-called "Kulturkampf", or "struggle for culture", a term coined by the famous German pathologist and politician Rudolf Virchow.

⁹ Esin B.I. *Istoria russkoi zhurnalistiki XIX v.*, 246-247.

¹⁰ Alekseev V. "Vospominaniya byvshego uchitelya russkogo yazyka knyazyza Bismarka," 449.

¹¹ E.G.G. "Bismark v svoikh vospominaniyakh." *Russkij vestnik*. 1899. No. 2, 4.

¹² Gringmut V. A. "Za chto ubili Pleve?" *Sobr. statey V.A. Gringmuta*. T. 3. M.: "Russkaya pechatnya", 1910, 84.

¹³ V. T. "Bismark v svoikh i chuzhikh vospominaniyakh." *Istoricheskiy vestnik*. 1899, No. 4, 508.

¹⁴ Interestingly, this point of view had survived even into the second half of the twentieth century. See for example Chubinsky, V.V. *Bismarck. Political biography*. Moscow: Mysl', 1998, 8.

¹⁵ E.G.G. "Bismark v svoikh vospominaniyakh." *Russkij vestnik*. 1899. No. 2, 539.

Noting the successful beginning of Kulturkampf, *Russkaya Starina* (Russian Antiquity) reporters wrote that Bismarck demonstrated “how to work with the Catholic clergy in order to return it to the path of religion and truth.”¹⁶ In these words, one can clearly detect little notes of delight about the oppression of the Catholic Church, which competed with the Orthodoxy.

However, already in the late 1870s, and especially at the turn of the 1880-1890s, articles in the conservative press increasingly admitted that the words of the Reich Chancellor “we will not go to Canossa”

were not destined to come true: after certain successes of Kulturkampf in the early years, later the Catholics managed to regain almost all of their lost rights and privileges. V.A. Gringmut was fairly sarcastic in his evaluation of the results of this struggle with the Vatican and its representatives inside Germany. He wrote: “Bismarck, who did not bend his proud arrogance before anyone, who had never recognized himself as being defeated, bowed to the ‘miserable prisoner of the Vatican’ and really did go to Canossa, repealing his formidable May laws against the Catholic clergy.”¹⁷ The authors of *Istoricheskij vestnik* cited the success of anti-clerical legislation in France, where the authorities managed to significantly reduce the influence of the church on the resolution of secular matters, as an example for Bismarck to follow. At the same time, the writers of conservative publications do not delve deeply into the causes of Kulturkampf’s failure in the German Empire, limiting themselves only to comments that the “Iron Chancellor” was defeated in an unequal struggle. And only in *Moskovskije Vedomosti* do journalists put forward their hypothesis: “...everyone knows that the German Chancellor is forced to make concessions to the clerics due to the flourishing of parliamentarianism in Prussia, which he perforce had to reckon with.”¹⁸

Some conservative journalists argued that Bismarck did not have a clear program of relations with various parties, that he acted in accordance with the prevailing circumstances and did not give preference to any of the parties, finding it quite natural to cooperate with one of them when it was necessary. Others believed that the “Iron Chancellor”, by virtue of his Junker origin, had strong sympathies for both German conservative parties, believed the Progressives and Social Democrats to be obvious enemies within the empire, and was indifferent to the Liberals and the Catholic Center Party. At the same time, the question of the imperial chancellor’s relations with the parties was inextricably linked with the problem of his assessment of parliamentarism. On this issue, the authors of these articles and editorials have no disagreements: they all considered Bismarck to be an opponent of parliamentarism, using as evidence his statement that English parliamentary was not suitable for Germany, and therefore, the main role in the functioning of the state should belong to the government, not to parliament. In one of the articles of *Russkij vestnik*, we read: “... it is impossible to imagine a better refutation of parliamentarism than Bismarck’s attitude towards various political parties in parliament throughout his entire extensive career...”¹⁹

It was only after the resignation of the “Iron Chancellor” that articles appeared in the Russian conservative press criticizing his policy towards the German parties. It did not go unnoticed that from 1866 to 1878 the “Iron Chancellor” found support among the National Liberals, but after they refused to adopt an extreme law against the Socialists, he broke off his alliance with them and returned to a union with the Conservatives, from whose ranks in fact, he had first moved into the political arena. Russian conservative journalists thought that it was only against the party of Social Democrats that Bismarck always waged a fierce struggle, his defeat in which played a significant role in the resignation of the statesman.

M.N. Katkov, in an article for *Moskovskie vedomosti*, writes that the Iron Chancellor, with his usual insight and understanding, finds that Progressists are worse than Social Democrats.²⁰ Apparently, in the perception of the conservative Russian press of those years, the Social Democrats and Progressives were the main opponents of the Reich Chancellor in domestic politics, sometimes even opposing the process of unification of the country, which, in their opinion, went completely awry, connecting the German lands only in a mechanical way and giving Prussia excessive influence.

¹⁶Poslednyaya pol'skaya smuta: Rasskazy ochevidtisa. 1861-1864 // Russkaya starina. 1875. T.12, 186.

¹⁷Gringmut V. A. “Konchina papy.” Sobr. statey V.A. Gringmuta. Polit. stat'i. T. 2. M.: tipografia Imperatorskogo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1908, 237.

¹⁸Moskovskie vedomosti. 1883. No. 154, 4.

¹⁹E.G.G. “Bismark v svoikh vospominaniyakh.” Russkij vestnik. 1899. No. 4, 503.

²⁰Moskovskie vedomosti. 1884. No. 122, 4.

Touching on the relationship of Bismarck with representatives of the Prussian royal dynasty, the journalist “E.G.G.” of *Russkij vestnik* expressed his opinion on the future chancellor’s attitude towards King Friedrich Wilhelm IV: “... while as a subject, staying true to the oath of allegiance, he, as a statesman, made every effort to avert the disastrous consequences of the king’s inconsistency in matters of both foreign and domestic politics.”²¹ However, the journalists provided the most coverage to Bismarck’s relations with Wilhelm I. The prevailing point of view was that the emperor owed much to his first minister, who sometimes allowed himself to criticize his sovereign.

It did not go unnoticed by the journalists that in the event of a disagreement with Wilhelm I on critical issues, Bismarck threatened to resign, after which the emperor always accepted his point of view.²² A writer for *Istoricheskij Vestnik*, V. Timiryazev, analyzing the memoirs of the “Iron Chancellor”, writes angrily: “That he speaks unfavorably of the empresses, of Friedrich and Wilhelm II, this can still be explained by their hostile actions against him, but that he speaks contemptuously and harshly of Wilhelm I, whom he constantly called his sovereign, his “master”, and who had always effaced himself before him, giving him complete freedom of action and all the laurels, is decisively monstrous.”²³

As for the relations of the “Iron Chancellor” with Friedrich III, they were characterized as hostile on both sides, as mentioned above. The Chancellor’s interaction with Wilhelm II was perceived differently. In the first years after Bismarck’s dismissal, it was he who was blamed for the cooling in relations between them. According to the editors of *Istoricheskij vestnik*, at the beginning of the reign of the inexperienced and intemperate Wilhelm II, the presence of the wise, gray-haired chancellor at his side seemed more necessary than ever. However, the emperor, known for his desire to rule on his own, almost immediately began to intrigue against his chief minister; nevertheless, according to the representatives of the national conservative press, the latter was always guilty. At the same time, Bismarck continued his propaganda against Kaiser Wilhelm II even after his resignation, publishing anonymous articles in periodicals loyal to him.

Let us turn to an analysis of the perception of Otto von Bismarck’s foreign policy, and first of all, to the problem of the unification of the German Empire. The authors of most articles and editorials point to the chancellor as the main initiator of the consolidation of the Germans into a single empire; however, in some issues of *Istoricheskij vestnik*, journalists question this statement. As evidence, they refer to the *Diary* of Emperor Friederich III, the publication of which provoked an angry reaction from the head of the German government. The fact is that the *Diary* shows that the main credit for the unification of Germany should have actually gone to Friederich III, from whom the “Iron Chancellor” “had insolently stolen the idea and brought it to life in order to achieve fame. It seems that one should not rush to conclusions and take this assumption on faith. Let us not forget that the emperor, who ruled the country for a little over three months, had always had a strained relationship with Bismarck due to their divergent political views. In addition, the Kaiser was married to Victoria, a representative of the English royal court and daughter of the great Queen Victoria; both of them had a strong influence on him, and the relationship of Friedrich’s wife with the “Iron Chancellor” was characterized by mutual hostility. Let us also take into account the fact that diaries and memoirs always reflect only one point of view, and therefore the author wants to appear in the best light and sometimes to foist his mistakes on the shoulders of others while seeking to attribute all possible fame to himself. This statement likewise applies to Bismarck’s memoirs, in which he wrote that plans to unite the disparate Germanic lands formed in his head long before the beginning of the 1860s.

There was no consensus among Russian conservative journalists on the question of who was the hero of the unification of the German Empire. Most of them unconditionally recognized the “Iron Chancellor” as the creator of German unity. The “Iron Chancellor’s” magnificent diplomatic planning of the emerging conflicts and his ability to find the right moment to strike while contriving to depict Prussia as the party in need of defense were especially noted. At the same time, many journalists supported the rise of an aggressive Prussia, fearing during the years of rampant revolutionary movements that they would lose an important partner in the European security camp. Similar views were held by the staff of the newspaper *Vest’* (The Message) (1863-1870), which, after the abolition of serfdom, became a mouthpiece for the interests of the conservative nobility. Regarding the future German chancellor, they wrote: “The unification of Germany is the cherished dream of the Germans, and they strive irresistibly towards it.

²¹ E.G.G. “Bismark v svoikh vospominaniyakh.” *Russkij vestnik*. 1899. No. 2, 548.

²² The German kaiser declared regarding the chancellor’s possible resignation: “His independence is at times intolerable. But his homeland needs him, and Empress Augusta cannot forgive Bismarck for owing everything—her crown, her splendor—to him.” Laptev, B.N. *Germanskiy konservatism v epokhu Bismarcka. Ot partii vlasti k parlamenskoj oppozitsii*, 9.

²³ V. T. “Bismark v svoikh i chuzhikh vospominaniyakh.” *Istoricheskij vestnik*. 1899. No. 6, 996.

Let Mr. von Bismarck's properly organized, skillful, and energetic government lead them towards this aspiration, rather than people acting on the suggestions of a street mob."²⁴

M.N. Katkov assessed the actions of the German Chancellor during the preparation of the wars with Denmark and Austria: "In this brave and even brazen way of action one can clearly detect the arrogant hand of Mr. von Bismarck, this original man who develops more and more courage even while being surrounded by increasing difficulties."²⁵ Supporting the policy of the "Iron Chancellor" in the Austro-Prussian war, the Russian journalists were guided, first of all, by the desire to see the defeat of the utterly ungrateful

Austria, which repaid the Romanov dynasty for its help in suppressing the revolution of 1848-1849 by joining the anti-Russian coalition during Crimean War of 1853-1856. But as Prussia successfully consolidated German lands, conservative Russian journalists began to change their minds about Bismarck²⁶: in the same *Vest'* the authors of various articles begin to express concerns that the Germans, having united their country, might continue military operations in neighboring states. As for the Franco-Prussian war, according to M.N. Katkov, Bismarck had deceived the French government while it was advantageous to him, and when he realized that the time had come for a decisive battle with the "natural adversary", France was immediately sent the Ems dispatch as bait, which was not left unanswered by the offended French. Katkov poses the following question: "German patriots think that with the victories of Bismarckism, an era of domination and even supremacy begins for Germany. Alas! Isn't this rather the beginning of the end? Isn't this the sign of a coming era when others will occupy the pinnacles of history?"²⁷

The first time the German politician had to deal with Russia was during the Crimean War of 1853-1856, when he represented Prussia in the Frankfurt Union Diet. A writer for *Istoricheskiy Vestnik*, Pavel Usov wrote about the Iron Chancellor's indignation with all the powers' desire to secure an alliance with France during the Crimean War.

V. Timiryazev of *Istoricheskiy Vestnik* claimed that during the Crimean War Bismarck secured a reputation as a Russophile not through concrete actions, but through unconfirmed exclamations of his friendly position towards the Russian empire. The journalist noted: "Thus, from the very beginning of his relations with Russia, he exclusively adhered to the interests of his homeland even though he tries in his memoirs to credit himself with sympathy for Russia in the dark days of the Sevastopol campaign and boasts that he did not share the Prussian Liberal Party's antipathy towards Russia, which was supported by the future Empress Augusta, although Russian blood flowed in her."²⁸ It is easy to see that Russian conservative journalists trusted neither the "friendly" speeches of the Iron Chancellor nor his memoirs.

Of particular interest to Russian researchers are the years of Prussian Ambassador Otto von Bismarck's stay in St. Petersburg as the official representative of the Hohenzollerns. In Soviet historiography there was a point of view that the "Iron Chancellor" was extremely annoyed by this appointment, believing that only shortly before it, he had figured out all the intricacies of the Frankfurt Parliament's "fox den".²⁹

However, *Istoricheskiy Vestnik* writer V. Timiryazev, who certainly cannot be suspected of sympathizing with the German Chancellor, expresses a slightly different opinion: "Be that as it may, when he was appointed envoy to Russia in 1859, he was received at the Russian court as a true friend of Russia, and he immediately felt as if at home (heimatlich), according to his own expression in a letter to his wife."³⁰ However, the same journalist writes that Bismarck's further statements and, especially, the contents of his memoirs give reason to believe that the Prussian envoy was not keen on the mores that prevailed at the Romanov court, among which he especially criticizes theft, bureaucracy, drunkenness, as well as the uncouth manners of the young generation and its supposedly strong Germanophobic sentiments. Nevertheless, V. Timiryazev and the former Russian language teacher of the "Iron Chancellor" V. Alekseev argued that Bismarck was sympathetic to the generations of Gorchakov and Alexander II, with whom the Prussian envoy had a particularly warm relationship.

²⁴Vest'. 1864. No. 37, 7.

²⁵Katkov M. N. *Sobranie peredovykh statey Moskovskikh vedomostey*. 1864. M.: izdanie S.P. Katkovo, 1897, 73.

²⁶This is confirmed by well-known scholars. See for example: Obolenkaya S.V. *Obrozovanie Germanskoi imperii i Russkoe obshchestvo // Metamorfozy Evropy*. M.: Nauka, 1993, 166.

²⁷Katkov M. N. *Sobranie peredovykh statey Moskovskikh vedomostey*. 1870. M.: izdanie S.P. Katkovo, 1897, 536.

²⁸V. T. "Bismark v svoikh i chuzhikh vospominaniyakh." *Istoricheskiy vestnik*. 1899, No. 7, 285.

²⁹This point of view is shared by contemporary Russian researchers. See for example *Inostrantsy i ikh potomki v Peterburge: nemtsy, frantsuzy, britantsy (1703-1917): istoriko-kraevedcheskie ocherki*. Sankt-Peterburg: Satis, 2003, 129.

³⁰V. T. "Bismark v svoikh i chuzhikh vospominaniyakh," 285.

The former pedagogue once asked the Prussian ambassador his opinion on Russia. In his memoirs, V. Alekseev wrote the following: “He had a high opinion about Russia, predicted a great future for her and based his opinion on the fact that when a peasant is sent to the army, after a year, the dirty, downtrodden, lazy and illiterate person becomes almost unrecognizable, turning into a vigorous, prominent, agile and sharp-witted one; if the people have such predispositions, then they can only serve in their favor. In general, as he put it, Russia is a ‘drunken peasant’.”³¹ The journalists of the *Istoricheskiy Vestnik* pointed out that Bismarck preferred Moscow to Petersburg because he did not like stone buildings, and besides, the current capital of Russia elicited his admiration for its majesty and open spaces.

V. Timiryazev summed up the results of the “Iron Chancellor’s” tenure as Prussian envoy in St. Petersburg in 1859-1862: “But no matter how sharply Bismarck spoke of Russia and the

Russians, he was happy in Petersburg, and he so desired to stay there that when the question of his new appointment was raised, Emperor Alexander believed the sincerity of his regret at leaving Petersburg and offered him a place in the Russian service. Of course, the future chancellor refused it and stated that he wanted to stay in Petersburg only as a representative of Prussia.”³²

According to Russian conservative journalists, the fruitful activity of the “Iron Chancellor” helped him conclude the Alvensleben Convention during the Polish uprising of 1863.³³ But V. Timiryazev believed that “this political and military agreement, however, did not bring any benefit to Russia, and the same Bismarck discouraged the Prussian king from helping Russia against Poland, since a pan-European war could arise in which Prussia would have to act hand in hand with Russia against Austria, England and France.”³⁴ Let us note that in no other studies is there a statement to support the idea that the Alvensleben Convention was the initiative of Wilhelm I, and not his faithful servant.

The representatives of this political orientation were pained by their perception of the results of the Berlin Congress most of all. Journalists of *Russkiy vestnik* (whounfortunately did not indicate their names) reasoned that the famous chancellor, not hindering the advancement of both Russia and Austria in the Balkans, sought to promote the dominance of the German Empire in the western part of the European continent, which was also the location of the “original enemy” of the Germans, France. V. Timiryazev consistently claims that at the congress the “Iron Chancellor” betrayed Russia, which had considered him a true friend, not an “honest broker”. He notes that Bismarck, in his memoirs, tries to clear himself of all accusations, putting all the blame on the Russians themselves. Timiryazev also heaps accusations on the head of Russia’s mission at this congress, Chancellor A.M. Gorchakov, and Russia’s second plenipotentiary, Count P.A. Shuvalov. The journalist’s negative attitude to the activities of his country’s representatives at the Berlin Congress was fully expressed in the following words: “Prince Gorchakov played a particularly miserable role in this congress even though he was not the second representative of Russia but the first, as the ‘Iron Chancellor’ avers; but in view of his old age, ill health and circumstances, he did not take an active part in the meetings, but only, so to speak, was present at his own diplomatic humiliation. Bismarck managed all his intrigues, which were crowned with complete success, through the second commissioner of Russia, his friend, Count Shuvalov...”³⁵

The antagonistic relations between the Chancellors of Russia and Germany are mentioned in all articles that examine the attitude of the German statesman to Russia. The same V. Timiryazev writes that the turning point in relations between the two great politicians was 1875, when there was a threat of a new Franco-German war, prevented only by the intervention of Petersburg. Up to this point, there had been practically no conflicts between them; moreover, the German chancellor assigned himself a secondary role, often stating that it was from the Russian chancellor that he had learned the art of diplomacy. However, as the German Empire strengthened, its creator was increasingly weighed down by his subordinate role, while Gorchakov did not want to surrender his primacy as the leading European diplomat, which inevitably resulted in a conflict in 1875 in connection with the question of the future of France as a great power. Discussing the new spiral of their confrontation at the Congress of Berlin, V. Timiryazev wrote that Bismarck was able not only to strengthen Germany’s position in Europe, but also to take revenge on Gorchakov for his humiliation in 1875.

³¹ Alekseev V. “Vospominaniya byvshego uchitelya russkogo yazyka knyazy Bismarka,” 453-454.

³² V. T. “Bismark v svoikh i chuzhikh vospominaniyakh.” *Istoricheskiy vestnik*. 1899, No. 7, 288.

³³ Bismarck’s arguments about the reasons that inspired him to support the Russian Empire during the Polish uprising are interesting. More details: Bismarck O.v. *Diegessamelten Werke*. Bd. X.-S. 163-164.

³⁴ V. T. “Bismark v svoikh i chuzhikh vospominaniyakh,” 288.

³⁵ V. T. “Bismark v svoikh i chuzhikh vospominaniyakh.” *Istoricheskiy vestnik*. 1899, No. 7, 294-295.

A journalist of *Moskovskie vedomosti*, V.A. Gringmut pointed to Bismarck and Beaconsfield as the main culprits of Russia's diplomatic humiliation. However, later he would express regret that the Russian Empire does not have its own "Iron Chancellor" and would call on the country to deliberately raise the same "top notch" leaders devoted to the homeland. *Moskovskie vedomosti* editor M.N. Katkov, denouncing the chimeric nature of the "League of the Three Emperors" and the "close" friendship of Austria and Russia within it, evaluated the congress of great powers that took place in the German capital as follows: "... he melted the seeming strongholds of former international groups and coalitions, and now everything is uncertain again."³⁶

After 1878, according to the editors of *Istoricheskij Vestnik* and *Russkij vestnik*, Bismarck, who had always been afraid of an open rift with Russia due to his fear of suffering a crushing defeat at its hand, begins to pursue an anti-

Russian policy in the financial and diplomatic sphere, which resulted in the customs war of Petersburg and Berlin in the 1880s, actively supported by the press of both countries, which contributed to higher levels of turmoil. The Iron Chancellor expressed his inimical stance towards Russia even more openly by first forging an alliance with Austria-Hungary, and then with Italy, which was the basis of the Triple Alliance directed against Petersburg. When discussing the fact that Bismarck, after being dismissed in 1890, criticized the governments of Caprivi and Hohenlohe for severing ties with Russia, Russian conservative journalists argued that this was nothing more than a cunning ruse aimed at trying to regain an important position in the political leadership of the Second Reich, which he himself had created. Contributors to the magazine *Russkij vestnik* bitterly admitted that for many years the "Iron Chancellor" had enjoyed a direct, strong and undeniable influence on the foreign policy of Russia: "There was a time when Russian diplomacy would not take the smallest step without asking the Germans; when its prominent representatives kept turning to Bismarck for advice, they themselves constantly went to visit him at Varzin and Friedrichsruh, which gave rise to the late Katkov's witty comparison of this pilgrimage to the trips Russian princes took to make obeisance to the Golden Horde."³⁷ Despite this clear exaggeration, it is understandable that the journalists were dissatisfied with the influence of foreigners on Russian politics. Journalists of *Istoricheskij Vestnik* who wrote about Bismarck agree that "in essence, there was no greater sworn enemy of Russia than this 'honest broker', as he called himself, and no one did so much harm to Russia as his policy of cleverly furthering Germany's interests by exploiting Alexander II's familial affection for old uncle Wilhelm and the characteristic softness of Prince Gorchakov..."³⁸

As for the other trends of the German Empire's foreign policy, they did not find significant reflection in the conservative Russian press of the second half of the 19th-beginning of the 20th centuries. Most conservative journalists were worried about Otto von Bismarck's policy regarding France. So, in the March 1905 issue of *Istoricheskij Vestnik*, the authors of the article "Foreigners on Russia" argue that even as Prussian ambassador to Russia, the "Iron Chancellor" in letters to his homeland spoke out for the inevitable conflict of Prussia with France as the original enemy of the unification of German lands into a single, strong state. The journalists point out Bismarck's complaints to his superiors regarding private informal negotiations between Gorchakov and the French ambassador in St. Petersburg, the Duke of Montebello. The notes of Bismarck's discontent over the emerging Franco-Russian rapprochement served, in the opinion of the magazine, as a kind of harbinger of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871.

V. Timiryazev argued that the German Chancellor "truly not only in words, but in reality was a man of fire and iron. He insisted on the bombing of Paris and the destruction of the whole city in 6 days, demanded that all cities and villages that resisted the Prussians be mercilessly burned, advised that French 'free shooters' captured as prisoners of war should be executed as criminals, etc."³⁹ M.N. Katkov suggested that such an enormous amount of indemnity was assigned to France in order to completely intimidate its government with the immensity of Germany's demands.⁴⁰

As for the policy of the "Iron Chancellor" in relation to other countries, Russian conservative journalists did not ignore the formation process of the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy. They believed that even before the 1866 war, Bismarck had the idea of not destroying Austria permanently in order to turn it into a loyal ally, and more precisely an accomplice in the advancement of German interests.

³⁶Katkov M. N. *Sobranie peredovykh statey Moskovskikh vedomostey*. 1878. M.: izdanie S.P. Katkovo, 1897, 312.

³⁷"Politicheskoe obozrenie." *Russkij vestnik*. 1895 No. 2, 389.

³⁸V. T. "Bismark v svoikh i chuzhikh vospominaniyakh." *Istoricheskij vestnik*. 1899, No. 7, 283-284.

³⁹V. T. "Bismark v svoikh i chuzhikh vospominaniyakh." *Istoricheskij vestnik*. 1899. No. 4, 295.

⁴⁰As noted by the famous Soviet researcher P.A. Zayonchkovsky, by the 1880s, Katkov had changed from a supporter of the Russian-German alliance into "a zealous 'Germanophobe', calling for rapprochement with France." Zayonchkovsky P.A. *Rossiiskoe samoderzhavie v kontse XIX stoletia (Politicheskaya reaktsia 80-x nachala 90-x godov)*. M.: Mysl', 1970, 71.

And the chancellor managed to achieve his goal, which was largely prompted by the obvious cooling of Russian-German relations after the Berlin Congress of 1878. Russian journalists accused him of striving to direct the interests of Russia and Austria towards the Balkans.⁴¹ According to representatives of the conservative press of Russia in those years, the “Iron Chancellor” did not fully respect his Austrian allies, and only those among them who sought to be in the fairway of his politics were considered his friends; he tried to eliminate independent statesmen from major diplomacy in every possible way.

M.N. Katkov believed that Germany’s second ally in the Triple Alliance, Italy, did not inspire much confidence in the German chancellor since “the rapprochement between

Germany and Italy began only from the time when a man completely devoted to the monarchical principle and distinguished by his solid energy in curbing parliamentary parties, the current minister-president, Depretis, became the head of the Roman Cabinet in May 1881.”⁴² The journalists of *Istoricheskiy Vestnik* explain Bismarck’s criticism of the Triple Alliance after his resignation in 1890 with his desire to blame others for his own miscalculations and mistakes, as well as to regain lost ground in the political leadership of the German Empire.

The colonial policy of the “Iron Chancellor” is mentioned only by *Moskovskie Vedomosti*, and this is limited to general phrases about convening a conference in Berlin in 1884 on the problems of the territorial division of Africa and the inevitable impact of this process on the internal situation in Germany.

Summing up the results of Bismarck’s domestic and foreign policy over his entire political career, V. Timiryazev writes sarcastically: “For thirty years, the iron chancellor has ruled over Germany and for twenty years, over Europe; he turned Prussia and its old, weak, indecisive king into a German empire and a powerful emperor; he gradually humiliated Denmark, Austria, France, and partly Russia; inside Germany, he waged a fierce struggle with parliament, clericals and socialists; finally, he turned all of Germany and all of Europe into a huge military camp. That is all he has done and all he can boast about.”⁴³ In general, similar estimates are also typical of other conservative periodicals in the Russian Empire in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

1.2 The Perception of the “Iron Chancellor” in the Liberal Journalistic Environment of the Russian Empire

Unlike their conservative colleagues, liberal journalists were more limited in their ability to influence the reader because they were often censored, which sometimes led to the closure of a newspaper or magazine. According to B.P. Baluev, the desire to compromise with the reaction was costly for the liberal press in those years.⁴⁴

The correspondents of liberal periodicals made quite numerous descriptions of the German Chancellor. One of the most common allegations was the idea that he completely lacked any principles. Journalists of *Vestnik Evropy* (Herald of Europe) and *Golos* (The Voice) mention this more than once, in particular the famous francophile Evgeny Isaakovich Utin: “Bismarck did not have his own ideas, his own principles, except for the one principle of profit, advantage, that could go against the dream German people. He never knew the meaning of the word principle, and besides, he considered it stupidity to constrain himself with any kind of abstraction.”⁴⁵

According to B.P. Baluev, *Vestnik Evropy*, edited by historian M. M. Stasyulevich, was the most typical liberal magazine of the time.⁴⁶ Founded in 1866, it continued to exist until 1918.

B.I. Esin pointed out a certain contradiction in the ideas of the magazine’s staff: “The political ideals of the editors did not go further than a constitutional monarchy, and it was only natural that the magazine had a sharply negative attitude to revolutionary methods of struggle and was fencing itself off from the revolution. But since *Vestnik Evropy* nevertheless talked about the benefits of reform, it was constantly attacked by the conservative press led by Katkov’s *Russiy Vestnik*.”⁴⁷

⁴¹Researcher V.V. Degoiev develops this idea: “Bismarck was not satisfied with any of the possible clashes between the great powers, be it Russia’s defeat or triumph, not to mention the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. In the Balkans, he needed a “draw” in favour of the great Germany.” Degoiev, V.V. *Rossiya i Bismark // Zvezda*, 2003, No. 7, 137.

⁴²*Moskovskie vedmosoti*. 1884. No. 13, 25.

⁴³V. T. “Bismark v svoikh i chuzhikh vospominaniyakh.” *Istoricheskiy vestnik*. 1899. No. 7, 300.

⁴⁴Baluev B. P. *Politicheskaya reaktsiya 80-kh godov XIX veka i russkaya zhurnalistika*, 191.

⁴⁵Utin E.I. “Prakticheskaya filosofiya XIX veka.” *Vestnik Evropy*. 1873. No. 5, 173.

⁴⁶Baluev B. P. *Politicheskaya reaktsiya 80-kh godov XIX veka i russkaya zhurnalistika*, 182.

⁴⁷Esin B. I. *Istoriya russkoy zhurnalistiki XIX veka*, 222.

In addition to his unscrupulousness, the German Chancellor possessed, in the opinion of Russian liberal journalists, one more negative trait: despotism. Someone who signed their name as “A.B.” from *Vestnik Evropy* believed that Bismarck constantly tried to give his harshness a soft appearance and, if he failed in this endeavor, it was certainly not due to a lack of free will. It was typical for the liberal press of the Russian Empire to identify the despotism of the German Chancellor as Machiavellianism, and they noted that Bismarck was the second person in the 19th century after Napoleon Bonaparte who embodied in his nature the features described by Machiavelli in his immortal work *The Prince*. The renowned journalist G. B. Iollos emphasized: “Bismarck tries to act by mechanical means instead of persuasion, and his despotic, passionate nature does not stop short of tyranny.”⁴⁸ Thus, the “Iron Chancellor” was perceived as an imperious character, without principles, and ready to use force to overcome difficulties.

Journalists from other publications also wrote about Bismarck’s worship of power. L.Z. Slonimsky argued that the German chancellor inherited the despotic traits of his character from his Junker ancestors, known for their tough, strong-willed temperament.

In addition, he raised power to the point of law, proving that the strong is always right. E.I. Utin agreed with Slonimsky: “Bismarck respected power because he saw it as the only possible means to achieve what the ideas, sighs, platonic exclamations, and moral languor of the Germans could not achieve.”⁴⁹ The peculiar worldview of the “Iron Chancellor” was influenced by his time of birth: April 1, 1815, when all of Europe was excited about the news of the return of Napoleon Bonaparte from the island of Elba. His close relatives’ tales of the horrors of the French invasion and the heroes of the liberation campaign were the first and most powerful impressions that influenced Bismarck’s childhood years.⁵⁰

Journalists also noted the famous politician’s penchant for vengeance and his ability to bear a grudge: he never forgave insults and plotted revenge in a thorough manner, sometimes over the course of several years. In many ways, his revenge was associated with his rejection of any opposition, with the desire to elevate all those who disagreed with his political program to the rank of enemies of the state, which often gave rise to despotism that took on extraordinary proportions. G.B. Iollos believed that Bismarck used anyone who stood in his path to fully satisfy his need for hatred, an emotion that he felt no less strongly than his love for his wife. The contributors of *Vestnik Evropy* argued that despite his impatience with the opposition, the “Iron Chancellor” understood the need for broad public control over state affairs. It had not yet occurred to him to put the convenience of government above the general and permanent interests of the country.⁵¹

In addition, Russian liberal journalists noted Bismarck’s sometimes excessive frankness, irritability, a desire to tease and provoke his adversaries, as well as a lack of humanism and of moderation in punishing his opponents. To this we can add selfishness and arrogance, which prevented the chancellor from establishing a constructive dialogue with his interlocutors and reaching a compromise with the opposition.

At the same time, all the journalists were struck by the mighty willpower and perseverance of the “Iron Chancellor” in accomplishing the tasks he had set for himself. His vast reserves of vital energy allowed him to work sometimes for several days and nights without sleep, which also gave him similarities with Napoleon Bonaparte.⁵² The Russian pre-revolutionary liberal press also noted the great creative mind of the German politician, although they stipulated that he did not like to study and often neglected his classes in favor of duelling, in which he was a recognized master. It was noted that in many ways he developed his own mental abilities while staying at his estates, where he could lead the quiet, measured life of a typical rural dweller and engage in self-education, studying books on history, political economy, agronomy and geography’s. Slonimsky testifies to the influence of rural life on the formation of the “Iron Chancellor’s” personality: “A prolonged stay in the family estate made Bismarck the way he was when he subsequently entered the political field—vigorous and indefatigable, quick-witted and frank to the point of insensitivity, not knowing any conditional barriers and never losing his composure.”⁵³

⁴⁸Iollos G. “Bismarck.” *Vestnik Evropy*. 1898. No. 9, 319.

⁴⁹Utin E.I. “Prakticheskaya filosofiya XIX veka.” *Vestnik Evropy*. 1873. No. 5, 194.

⁵⁰Slonimsky L. “Literatura o Bismarke.” *Vestnik Evropy*. 1911. No. 10, 317.

⁵¹“Inostrannoe obozrenie.” *Vestnik Evropy*. 1884. No. 4, 831.

⁵²A.S. Yerusalimsky wrote about the way Bismarck also borrowed much from Napoleon III. Yerusalimsky A.S. *Bismarck: diplomatiya i militarizm*. M.: Nauka. 1968, 28.

⁵³Slonimsky L. “Bismarck v novom osveshchenii.” *Vestnik Evropy*. 1903. No. 3, 334.

The journalists recognized Bismarck's brilliant diplomatic abilities, which also helped him in communicating with Wilhelm I since the conservatism of the latter sometimes extended to such a degree that he refused to recognize the realities of the time, preferring to stay in his own, idealized world, where absolute monarchy reigned and where the head of state was connected to his subordinates by divine bonds, acting as the viceroy of God on earth. The Chancellor was a stranger to such sentiments, because he was, above all, a practical person and tried to take into account the realities of the era. One of the organizers of the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary, K.K. Arsenyev, indicates that for all his calmness, very often the calculations of the Prussian politician were based on the mistakes of the enemy, a strategy that is most precarious and unreliable, which immediately revealed the "Iron Chancellor" as a brave, sometimes reckless gambler, a very dangerous tendency for a statesman. However, fortune almost always smiled on him, so the calculations paid off.

E.I. Utin, on the contrary, believed that the German chancellor always acted according to a well-considered plan, paying no attention to any magnanimous digressions. L. Slonimsky noted Bismarck's desire to act exclusively in accordance with state interests, juxtaposing the "Iron Chancellor" with the Russian chancellor Gorchakovin this respect.

If the former "firmly knew and felt that a statesman can only be inspired by the needs and interests of his own country, and therefore did not attach any importance to conventional international formulas and fictions that assumed faith in the authority and unity of Europe," then the latter, "on the contrary, had a weakness for broad and nebulous prospects in which Russia's interests played only a subordinate and secondary role."⁵⁴ According to liberal journalists, Bismarck never sought personal gain, but only strove to consolidate the position of Germany; he always kept himself somewhat distant at the imperial court, while maintaining considerable independence from the Hohenzollerns.

Paying attention to the fact that the first chancellor of the German Empire excelled among the rest of the Prussian Junkers, representatives of the liberal press complimented his genius, great intelligence, composure, resourcefulness, observation, courage, but at the same time, his cautiousness. G. Iollos wrote: "Bismarck never lacked courage, but he had much more intelligence in trying to transfer to France all responsibility for the clash of peoples, for the sea of spilled blood."⁵⁵

Noting the oratorical abilities of the German politician, the *Vestnik Evropy* journalists believed that his speeches could not be called brilliant, as they often had no structure, while the chancellor's voice was a direct contrast to his powerful figure; moreover, he often paused lengthily between words. However, Bismarck's charisma enabled him to enact the necessary laws and regulations. L. Slonimsky drew attention to the religious quest of the "Iron Chancellor," who went from pantheism through philosophical atheism to the belief that the Christian God supports Prussia and Germany, and that care for the citizens of the Reich is not the task of the Social Democrats, but of the emperor, who implements God's commandments on earth. The journalist also noted the extraordinary modesty of the apartments of the unifier of Germany in Berlin, as well as in Friedrichsruh, where he led a quiet, measured life, contributing to the rapid restoration of his energy, so necessary in resolving public affairs.

Thus, representatives of the Russian pre-revolutionary liberal press provide mixed opinions about the personal qualities and character traits of the "Iron Chancellor". It seems that L. Slonimsky provided the most objective description of him: "Bismarck was a statesman of a cultured Prussian type, a supporter of solid, conscious power, a committed conservative, but at the same time, a decisive opponent of administrative routines, a defender of popular and parliamentary participation in government affairs, and an advocate of new progressive principles in the political system of the nation. These were not contradictions in his character, but organically connected manifestations of a deeply practical mind, free from stereotyped ideas and prejudices. Bismarck was a man of integrity, and to him, his political and professional career was a matter of patriotic vocation, not personal advancement or material calculation."⁵⁶ Thus, in this quotation, Bismarck personifies the image of the "ideal German".

Representatives of all the Russian liberal publications at the turn of the 20th century admit that the domestic policy of the "Iron Chancellor" was less successful than his international diplomacy, since the eminent politician had to interact with a set people completely different from diplomats, relations with whom Bismarck was able to build to the maximum benefit of Prussia, and later Germany. One of the issues of Bismarck's internal policy most frequently discussed in the liberal press was his behavior during the ministerial crisis and budgetless rule of 1862-1866.

⁵⁴Slonimsky L. "Knyaz' Bismark v ego otnosheniyakh k Rosii." *Vestnik Evropy*. 1903. No. 7, 319-320.

⁵⁵Iollos G. "Bismark." *Vestnik Evropy*. 1898. No. 9, 332.

⁵⁶Slonimsky L. "Bismark v novom osveshchenii." *Vestnik Evropy*. 1903. No. 3, 330.

It was during this period, according to the staff of *Vestnik Evropy*, that the despotism of the “Iron Chancellor’s” policy manifested itself to the greatest extent since he did not want to make any compromises in the struggle against the Prussian Landtag. E.I. Utin, noting the indignation in all German lands over the situation in Prussia during those years, argued: “How could it be otherwise when all of Germany was a witness to the obvious despotism with which the government of Wilhelm and Bismarck ruled the Prussian people?”⁵⁷ Over time, the imperial chancellor, realizing that it is impossible to constantly govern the country exclusively by force, recognized the usefulness of the opposition and even called upon them to act, which helped him reduce the level of tension in society and identify problems that needed urgent solutions. This point of view, put forward by L.Z. Slonimsky, was not shared by all his colleagues; many of them believed that Bismarck’s policy, on the contrary, evolved over time from fairly liberal to ultra-reactionary positions.

Both in the liberal and conservative Russian pre-revolutionary press, one can observe the following trend in relation to assessments of the personality and actions of the

“Iron Chancellor”: before 1890, criticism and praise addressed to him were rather restrained, which could apparently be explained by the desire to avoid censorship and complications in Russian-German relations, but after Bismarck’s forced resignation, materials about him became more and more ambiguous, presenting him sometimes as the most worthless politician elevated to high positions due to random circumstances, and other times as a demigod whose influence had been felt in all European events for many years. For example, *Vestnik Evropy* journalists wrote: “As long as the personality of Prince Bismarck reigns supreme over all the political interests of the country, this strange and sickly state of the empire, erected only twelve years ago and already suffering from the sad signs of premature old age, will continue.”⁵⁸

Significant attention is paid by the liberal press of the Russian Empire to Bismarck’s relations with the representatives of the Hohenzollern dynasty. The point of view that the imperial chancellor devotedly served them only because of deep patriotic feelings for his native Prussian, and later German soil was quite widespread. However, in reality he had a low opinion of the representatives of the Prussian royal dynasty, as G. Iollos wrote: “Bismarck did not acknowledge himself as the executor of other people’s will; his mental superiority, of course, was something that not only he did not doubt himself, but also something he did not allow others to doubt...”⁵⁹ Most journalists noted that, despite some contempt for Wilhelm I, the “Iron Chancellor” considered him the most capable of all the emperors and kings under whose rule he had ever found himself. Bismarck was particularly critical of Friederich III and Wilhelm II, as well as the women of the royal family. Reflecting on the relationship between Wilhelm II and his elderly political mentor, the journalists of *Vestnik Evropy*, *Golos* and *Nedelnya* (The Week) agreed at first that the reign of the new Kaiser, who was striving for broad democratic transformations, would be more favorable for Germany, and indeed for Europe as a whole, than the activities of Otto von Bismarck, who was obviously tired of the big political stage. However, already at the turn of the century, they were disappointed in Wilhelm II, and nostalgia for the leadership of united Germany’s first chancellor set in. At the same time, many previous evaluations of his policy were revised.

According to the staff of liberal publications, one of the most important problems in which the opinions of Wilhelm II and his “Iron Chancellor” diverged was the social issue. Often, Bismarck’s policy in the field of social legislation was called “state socialism”, while its creator himself preferred to call it practical Christianity, embodied in legislation. L.Z. Slonimsky argued that state socialism was not a matter of despotism or accidental personal conviction; it was not invented by Prince Bismarck, nor by anyone else, but constituted a logical inference from the existing situation of monarchical governments in constitutional Europe.⁶⁰ Moreover, the “Iron Chancellor” “borrowed only a few ideas, ones that fit into his state administration scheme, from F. Lassalle, Rodbertus, and Stecker. In contrast to Slonimsky, his colleague in *Vestnik Evropy*, a certain “I.Ya.”, argued that the famous chancellor can be confidently called the first figure who in practice carried out the policy of state socialism, the theoretical basis for which was prepared by his official economist, Professor A. Wagner. The journalist noted that scholarly theories, like their authors, served in the hands of the German chancellor often only as an instrument of his policy and not as its source, and he used them exactly to the extent that this was necessary according to his reasoning in order to achieve his goals.⁶¹

⁵⁷Utin E.I. “Frantsiya i Prussia.” *Vestnik Evropy*. 1870. No. 8, 818.

⁵⁸“Inostrannoe obozrenie.” *Vestnik Evropy*. 1883. No. 4, 871.

⁵⁹Iollos G. “Iz ‘Mysley i vospominaniy’ kniazya Bismarka.” *Vestnik Evropy*. 1899. No. 1, 322.

⁶⁰Slonimsky L. “Gosudarstvennyy sotsializm v politike i literature.” *Vestnik Evropy*. 1884. No. 7, 289.

⁶¹I.Ya. Bismark i gosudarstvennyy sotsializm” *Vestnik Evropy*. 1890. No. 8, 730.

Without exception, all representatives of the liberal pre-revolutionary press believed that the “Iron Chancellor”, despite all excuses regarding the lack of political relations with one of the leaders of the labor movement, F. Lassalle, borrowed from the latter the idea of universal suffrage.

Bismarck’s policy regarding parliamentary parties in the German Reich was not left without coverage in the liberal press of the Russian Empire. Journalists of *Nedelya* and *Golos*, as well as the majority of *Vestnik Evropy* writers, believed that the “Iron Chancellor” had no obvious party preferences, seeking to cooperate with a particular party at the right moment, after which he could move away from his former associates. A striking example of this were the events of 1866 and 1878, when Otto von Bismarck broke away from the Conservatives and Liberals, respectively. According to journalists, the imperial chancellor always had hostile feelings only for one party, namely, the Social Democrats, with whose leaders, A. Bebel and W. Liebknecht, he constantly had to debate in parliament.

It was precisely to counter this party that the social policy of the German government was undertaken, since forceful methods alone did not produce results in the struggle against the organized labor movement.⁶² All liberal publications of the Russian Empire without exception admitted that despite all of the chancellor’s efforts, particularly the “law against the public danger of Social Democratic endeavours” passed in 1878, he suffered a devastating defeat in his prolonged struggle against the labor movement.

The staff of the newspaper *Nedelya* (founded in 1866 by General Mundt, it went out of business several times due to censorship warnings and a lack of subscribers) noted: “Prince Bismarck has long sought to constitute a government majority in the Reichstag that would approve unconditionally all the bills proposed by the ministry.”⁶³ Thus, the parties were needed by the head of government of the German Empire to solve pressing state problems. And he was not at all embarrassed to involve even former “enemies of the empire” in their solution, for example, the Catholic party of the Center, whose name is largely associated with the famous “struggle for culture” (Kulturkampf), i.e. a policy against the claims of the Catholic Church on secular power.

The Russian liberal press of the second half of the 19th – beginning of the 20th centuries expressed some support for Bismarck’s “cultural struggle”, which brought them closer in some respects to the representatives of the conservative press. The statement by the German chancellor that the Germans would not go to Canossa either spiritually or physically was met with approving words by the journalists of *Golos* and *Vestnik Evropy*, who noted that a similar struggle against the privileges of the Catholic Church in secular power was then being waged in many European states.

Among the representatives of the Russian pre-revolutionary liberal press, there was no single point of view on the issue of the political preferences of the “Iron Chancellor”. The journalists of *Vestnik Evropy* and *Nedelya*, noting that Bismarck fought against the clerics as dangerous enemies of German unity and freedom, claimed he was a liberal. G. Iollos expressed a different opinion: “Bismarck sometimes only partially followed the true principles of conservatism in the last years of his reign, when he too had fallen into barren old age... It would be ridiculous to rank Bismarck as an admirer of freedom: his imperious and intolerant nature could not stand opposition and allowed freedom only for himself...”⁶⁴ G. Iollos wrote further: “A return to the old ways could not constitute his political ideal because it would destroy his own merits, and was not his social ideal since dreams were altogether alien to his strong mind.”⁶⁵

As for the resignation of the first chancellor of the German Empire in March 1890, it should be noted that hopes for this event had long been expressed in the Russian liberal press of those years. However, journalists were shocked by the way the famous politician’s political career came to an end: “The final removal of Prince Bismarck from the political arena, which he had occupied for so long and partially imbued with his personality, was accomplished much sooner and in a completely different manner than what one could have supposed until recently.”⁶⁶

Liberal journalists paid greater attention to the analysis of Otto von Bismarck’s foreign policy. And the earliest event to which they paid attention was the behavior of the future great chancellor during the Crimean War. One may notice a disagreement on this issue between two writers of *Vestnik Evropy*, L. Slonimsky and G. Iollos.

⁶²Kaiser Wilhelm II also wrote about Bismarck’s different methods of managing social policy. More details on this: Sokolov B.V. *Germankaya imperiya: ot Bismarka do Gitle*. M.: Eksmo, 2003, 65.

⁶³*Nedelya*. 1878. No. 31 (June 30), 6.

⁶⁴Iollos G. “Bismark.” *Vestnik Evropy*. 1898. No. 9, 328.

⁶⁵Iollos G. “Bismark,” 328.

⁶⁶“Inostrannoe obozrenie.” *Vestnik Evropy*. 1890. No. 4, 848.

The first insisted that during the Crimean War, the Prussian envoy in Frankfurt led the “party” of pro-Russian conservatives, demanding non-interference in this military conflict, or as a last resort, support for Russia; the second argued that Bismarck acted not for the sake of Russia but against Austria and did not at all have those strong sympathies for the Russian Empire of which Slonimsky spoke.

L. Slonimsky wrote: “Bismarck found the Prussian cabinet ready to join the convention designed by the three Western powers and supplemented, on the suggestion of Austria, with a special article, by virtue of which all four contracting powers were obligated not to make a separate peace with Russia.”⁶⁷G. Iollos objected to this, saying that the “Iron Chancellor” did not then have sufficient influence to have a decisive impact on the politics of Prussia; moreover, the author of *Thoughts and Memories* could have deliberately exaggerated his role in the events he described in order to escape blame for the cooling of Russian-German relations.

Much more thoroughly covered by the Russian liberal press was Bismarck’s 1859-1862 stay in Petersburg as Prussian envoy. The journalists were at times perplexed when they spoke of the initially unpleasant reaction of the diplomat who found out that he was being sent from Frankfurt am Main to the Russian capital because he was welcomed there as an insider, as a representative of a closely-related royal court and, moreover, as a tried and tested old friend. He made a charming personal impression with his striking aristocratic figure, his approachable character, his free, worldly wit and his resourcefulness.⁶⁸

It seems that it would be quite correct to assume that Bismarck simply did not want to leave the “Frankfurt fox den”, which he had studied in detail, and from which it was easier for him to follow German and European affairs than from distant, northern Petersburg. In addition, one must not forget about stereotypes in outsiders’ perception of Russia. For example, a friend of the future chancellor, American historian John Lothrop Motley wrote to him: “...I doubt that you will be satisfied with the fact that you are plunging beyond the Arctic Circle, where you seem to be going... You are going to St. Petersburg, and to me it’s the same as if you had emigrated to the planet Jupiter.”⁶⁹

The journalists of *Vestnik Evropy* wrote with some regret: “The inner life of Russia was of little interest to Bismarck and was not even noticed by him at all; a social movement accompanied by major government reforms passed him by; he studied only those aspects of Russian everyday life that were directly or indirectly related to the political concerns of the German nation.”⁷⁰It seems that this position was quite natural, taking into account that throughout his political career, the “Iron Chancellor” had shown himself to be a consistent exponent of German national interests, in the provision for which all other problems inadvertently faded into the background. In addition, the opinion of the *Vestnik Evropy* journalists clearly clashes with the messages of the representatives of the conservative press of the Russian Empire, although even this opinion should be taken into account as an evocative example of the difference in perception between the two camps. The fact that already during his stay in St. Petersburg the Prussian diplomat touched upon the Polish question, so significant for both powers, in conversations with Emperor Alexander II and his entourage, did not escape the attention of the journalists.

It was during these years, as E.I. Utin believed, that the main distinguishing feature of Bismarck’s foreign policy was founded, namely, the same mixture of skilfully calculated secrecy with great apparent frankness, as well as a mixture of extraordinary courage with extreme caution and restraint.⁷¹In the future, the “Iron Chancellor” would be practically credited as the founder of Realpolitik, and L. Slonimsky in his articles insisted that within Prussia, Bismarck, appointed in 1862 as minister-president, was perceived as a politician who indulged the wishes of Russia, which forced him to withstand strong opposition from parliament and the press. The behavior of the “Iron Chancellor” during the Polish uprising of 1863 did not provoke much interest in the liberal press of the Russian Empire.

In 1873, E.I. Utin wrote: “The unity of Germany, which had not been part of his initial plan for a strong and powerful Prussian state, and which he therefore mocked with such irony, now becomes a necessary seasoning to accompany all his speeches, no matter what issue they relate to.”⁷²This point of view is rather an exception to the rule, as other liberal journalists believed that the “Iron Chancellor” had hatched the idea of the unification of Germany long before the war with Denmark,

⁶⁷Slonimsky L. “Knyaz’ Bismark v ego otnosheniyakh k Rossii.” *Vestnik Evropy*. 1903. No. 7, 306.

⁶⁸Slonimsky L. “Knyaz’ Bismark v ego otnosheniyakh k Rossii,” 311.

⁶⁹Quotation: Ivanyakov R.I. *Bismark v Peterburge: politicheskaya deyatel’nost’ O. Bismarka v period prebyvaniya na posty poslannika v Sankt-Peterburge (1859-1862 gody): monografiya*. Pskov: Pskovskiy yuridicheskiy institut FSIN, 2008, 6.

⁷⁰Slonimsky L. “Knyaz’ Bismark v ego otnosheniyakh k Rossii,” 312-313.

⁷¹Utin E.I. “Prakticheskaya filosofiya XIX veka.” *Vestnik Evropy*. 1873. No. 6, 522.

⁷²Utin E.I. “Prakticheskaya filosofiya XIX veka.” *Vestnik Evropy*. 1873. No. 5, 179.

Although it was initially perceived by some as a means of distracting the population from problems inside Prussia. During the Austro-Prussian War, the majority of the journalists supported Prussia since everyone still remembered the ungrateful behavior of the Habsburgs during the Crimean War. The writers of *Golos* were dissatisfied with the passivity of Russia's policy, especially in connection with Bismarck's trip to Biarritz, where, as they had feared, the Prussian minister-president, promising concessions to Napoleon III, would thereby receive freedom of action in Germany, which could lead to dangerous unrest on the western borders of the Russian Empire. In general, A.A. Kraevsky's publication *Golos* (1863-1883), out of all the liberal newspapers, was the most persecuted by the government. The newspaper was quite popular both in Russia and abroad; its circulation exceeded 20,000 copies. B.I. Esin wrote: "... the newspaper's oppositional stance was only for show, a fact that was also understood by the Central Administration for Press Affairs, which defined it as follows: '*Golos* is one of the most widespread newspapers both in Russia and abroad. Bearing in mind more material benefits than literary and political goals, this newspaper, naturally, could not set a definite course, which therefore changed and continues to change depending on the circumstances.'"⁷³

In the early 1880s, the newspaper was subjected to censorship attacks and went out of business.

The journalists of *Vestnik Evropy* repeatedly pointed out that Bismarck succeeded in fulfilling his cherished dream—the expulsion of Austria from Germany—at a rather high cost: for a while he fell out with Emperor

Wilhelm I, who, however, could not manage without his faithful chancellor for long, so he quickly tried to make peace with him; more significant was the fact that the Prussian minister-president disagreed with the military since his confrontation with them would ultimately become one of the reasons for his resignation in 1890.⁷⁴

K. Arsenyev from *Vestnik Evropy* suggested that "Iron Chancellor's" political mind had never shown greater power and brilliance than during the preparation for the war with France, when he needed not only to lull and calm Napoleon III, agitated against Prussia by public opinion, Empress Eugénie, and the Austrian Minister Drouyn de Lhuys; he also needed to restrain all those who were blinded and intoxicated by the swift, complete triumph of Prussian arms.⁷⁵

In the magazines *Vestnik Evropy*, *Golos*, and the weekly newspaper *Nedelya* it was suggested that the head of Prussian politics was in no hurry to start a war with France because he was not sure of the neutrality of the great powers, primarily Russia, and for a long time could not find out the combat effectiveness of the French army. The "Iron Chancellor" was not able to mislead the Russian liberal press on the question of the true instigator of the Franco-Prussian war. *Golos* correspondents claimed that Bismarck was responsible for the national movement spreading in Germany and sought to cover "every German head with a Prussian helmet."⁷⁶ Similar positions were upheld by *Birzhevyye vedomosti* (Stock Exchange News), founded in 1861 by K.V. Trubnikov and reflecting the interests of the commercial circles of the liberal bourgeoisie. In 1905, the newspaper was a mouthpiece of the Constitutional Democratic party, but in 1917 it was shut down for anti-Bolshevik propaganda. The journalists of *Birzhevyye vedomosti* expressed their theory on the provocations of the Prussian minister-president against France, and also expressed concern that his hypocritical statements about the French being instigators of the war should alert other European states. The journalists of *Nedelya* doubted the abilities of the "Iron Chancellor" to 'Prussify' Germany and insisted that the opposite would happen: Prussia would be Germanized, and Bismarck would not last long in power in a state whose people wanted peace. The examples given reflect spontaneous perceptions of Bismarck during the war. Obviously, over time, there was a certain reappraisal of the actions of the "Iron Chancellor" in the era of the wars for the unification of Germany that moved towards a detailed analysis based not on emotions, but on facts.

In the year of the death of the "Iron Chancellor", G. Iollos expressed a point of view that would have seemed unlikely during the lifetime of the great diplomat, saying that following the Franco-Prussian War, Bismarck's main goal in foreign policy was to preserve a pan-European peace, since a possible conflict could have threatened the existence of the German Empire.

⁷³Esin B. I. *Istoriya russkoy zhurnalistiki XIX veka*, 243.

⁷⁴Bismarck criticised even Moltke, who in many respects predetermined the further political career of the "Iron Chancellor." For more details, see: Bismarck O.v. *Die gesammelten Werke*. XIV.-S. 797.

⁷⁵Arsen'ev K. E. "Pervye pobedy Bismarka." *Vestnik Evropy*. 1890. No. 10. 801.

⁷⁶*Golos*. 1870. July 31, 6.

Therefore, when concluding peace with France, Bismarck proved that he could “see further” than his collaborators and opponents: against the will of Wilhelm I, who did not part with the principle of legitimacy, although his crown served as a direct refutation of it, Bismarck insisted on recognizing the republic, and did not change his view even in the early years of the new reign in France when the monarchists in Germany, relying on court ties, were not averse to interfering in French internal affairs.⁷⁷

Modern Russian researcher S.A. Yurtaev, discussing the “Iron Chancellor’s” search for allies in Europe after the unification of Germany, pointed out that Austria and Russia were the most acceptable partners for the Germans in that era. This was due, firstly, to the fact that Germany had no contentious issues with Russia; on the contrary, dynastic ties and long-standing cooperation only strengthened their mutual understanding; secondly, Austria did not feel a need for revenge since Bismarck did not bring the war with it to complete defeat and, therefore, did not humiliate it.⁷⁸ In addition, Austria needed full agreement with Germany since France, its potential ally, was excluded from the big diplomatic stage for several years due to significant devastation as a result of the war with Prussia.

It is interesting that during the “war alarm” of 1875, representatives of the liberal publications of the Russian Empire did not accuse the German chancellor of the intention to conclusively rout

France; on the contrary, the journalists of *Golos*, for example, considered the war unlikely due to the fact that France had not yet succeeded in regaining its strength after the debacle of four years ago, and the safety of Germany was ensured by participation in the League of the Three Emperors. They noted a certain limitation in Russia’s role in this alliance as it was supposedly most beneficial to Germany, whose chancellor skillfully played on the disagreements between Austria and Russia.

An alliance with Germany, in the opinion of *Golos* writers, was necessary for Petersburg in order to avoid the formation of a pan-European coalition, as it was during the Crimean War; therefore, despite all the rumors, in Bismarck’s foreign policy “we had before us only straightforward and irrefutable evidence of his affection for our fatherland.”⁷⁹

It was after the “military alarm” of 1875 that a noticeable cooling was observed in relations between two brilliant diplomats—Bismarck and Gorchakov—which sometimes led to clashes and mutual hostility. The dominant view among the liberal press was that they were too different as politicians, so they could not come to a common denominator in solving mutual problems. According to L. Slonimsky, Bismarck “knew and felt strongly that a statesman could be inspired only by the needs and interests of his own country, and therefore did not attach importance to conventional international formulas and fictions, which assumed faith in the authority and unity of Europe. Prince Gorchakov, on the contrary, had a weakness for broad and nebulous prospects, in which Russia’s interests played only a subordinate and secondary role.”⁸⁰

G. Iollos also addressed relations between Russia and Germany’s heads of foreign policy, indicating that of all the European diplomats, Bismarck was most angry with A.M. Gorchakov. Vivid evidence of this is provided in the “Iron Chancellor’s” memoirs, where he noted all the negative character traits and activities of his Russian counterpart.

Relations between the two Chancellors probably reached the highest level of tension during and, especially, after the Berlin Congress of 1878. At the same time, there is a certain evolution in the assessments of this event by Russian pre-revolutionary liberal newspapers and magazines: at first it was the “honest broker” who was declared guilty of Russia’s diplomatic defeat at the congress, but over time the blame was shifted onto the shoulders of the Russian delegates to the congress. This is convincingly proven by S.A. Yurtaev.

It is curious that *Vestnik Evropy* and *Golos* had diametrically opposed views on the activities of the Russian delegates to the congress. The journalists of the first laid the blame for the defeat of Russia at the congress on Shuvalov and Gorchakov, and instructed them follow Bismarck’s example; however, Kraevsky and his staff assured the Russian people that they should be grateful to their representatives for everything that they had managed to achieve since they were opposed by the powers of almost the entirety of Europe.

⁷⁷Iollos G. “Bismarck.” *Vestnik Evropy*. 1898. No. 9, 334.

⁷⁸Bismarck noted: “How to fill the space of Europe that is still occupied by the Austrian monarchy from the Tyrol to Bukovina? New formations in this space could only be revolutionary in nature for a long time.”

⁷⁹ Quotation: Yurtaev S.A. *Vneshnyaya politika O. fon Bismarka v 1871—1890 godakh v otrazhenii obshchestvennogo mneniya Rossii*, 58.

⁸⁰Slonimsky L. “Knyaz’ Bismarck v ego otnosheniyakh k Rosii.” *Vestnik Evropy*. 1903. No. 7, 319-320.

After the Congress of Berlin, a discussion began in the liberal press of the Russian Empire about the feasibility of Russia's participation in the League of the Three Emperors. And the opinion was unanimously expressed that "for Russia, participation in the schemes of Prince Bismarck would be, at the very least, purposeless."⁸¹ This was confirmed by the Bulgarian crisis and the "customs war" between Russia and Germany. However, the liberal press did not call for a breakdown in relations with Germany, but stated that it was necessary to take into account more of Russia's own interests than to worry about Europe's reaction to any of Russia's actions. The staff of *Golos* and *Vestnik Evropy* wrote that after his resignation, the "Iron Chancellor" in all his speeches on foreign policy did not tire of saying that he always considered himself a friend of Russia, despite repeated accusations by Russian newspapers of his betrayal at the Congress of Berlin. However, the journalists assumed that this was nothing more than a political ploy aimed at shifting responsibility for the cooling of Russian-German relations onto the military, the new Chancellor Caprivi, and Wilhelm II. Nevertheless, two months after the resignation of the first chancellor of Germany, one could read in *Vestnik Evropy*: "Foreign policy issues in Europe have lost a significant share of burning interest since Prince Bismarck left the stage."⁸² It seems that this phrase convincingly proves how significant Bismarck was as a figure in European diplomacy at that time.

1.3. An Analysis of the Personality and Activities of Otto von Bismarck in the Democratic Publications of the Russian Empire

Due to the fact that there were few democratic publications in the Russian Empire, and moreover, they were all under close supervision of the Central Administration for Press Affairs and Division 3, the number of mentions in them of any actions of German Chancellor O. von Bismarck is much smaller than of ones found in the conservative and liberal press. Nevertheless, the accumulated material allows us to draw certain conclusions about the perception of the personality and activities of the famous politician in the pre-revolutionary democratic press.

Democratic journalists recognized the "Iron Chancellor" as having remarkable abilities, which, however, were mostly aimed at suppressing the opposition and resolving issues by any means necessary, regardless of any moral principles. The authors of international news articles of the journal *Otechestvennye zapiski* (Notes of the Fatherland) noted on several occasions that the development of Bismarck's personality was greatly influenced by the years of his turbulent youth, when he often drank and led a debauched life, terrifying the people around him. In addition to this, in his character there was an amazing mixture of carelessness and fanaticism, passion and phlegmatic shrewdness. He ardently wanted to suppress all the liberal aspirations of the time, and yet he did not at all respect the past.⁸³ Founded in 1818 by writer and historian P.P. Svinin, according to a number of researchers (Baluev, Esin), *Otechestvennye zapiski* was the most influential publication of the democratic cohort. The influence of this publication can be judged based on the following words of B.P. Baluev: "No matter how much we might flip through the pages of the so-called opposition-bourgeois-liberal and bourgeois-democratic publications, we will not find in them such a bold protest against the growing repression in the country."⁸⁴ Such an implacable position led to the closure of the magazine in 1884.

According to the writers of the democratic press of the Russian Empire, the German Chancellor was characterized by a policy of maneuvering between the leading classes of society: he would forge an alliance with a party to solve state problems, and then he could easily break ties with his former allies. Among his main qualities the following stood out: courage, dexterity, determination, the ability to clearly understand the basic needs of the time; at the same time, he was characterized by his contempt for morality and lack of fastidiousness regarding the means used to achieve his goals, as well as his inconstancy and restlessness. The epithet used in relation to Bismarck by the journalists of *Otechestvennye zapiski*, a "revolutionary of reaction," which combines such opposing concepts, is significant. It seems that here it meant that the chancellor was always ready to resort to extreme measures to protect the existing foundations.

It was noted in the democratic press that the "Iron Chancellor" was intended for military service by nature because he was handsome, well-built, brave, endowed with an extremely robust physique and in general those physical and mental qualities that would be useful to a good commander on the battlefield.⁸⁵ And yet, he had a strong partiality to reading books on history, law, and jurisprudence.

⁸¹ Quotation: Yurtaev S.A. Vneshnyaya politika O. fon Bismarka v 1871—1890 godakh v otrazhenii obshchestvennogo mneniya Rossii, 118.

⁸² "Inostrannoe obozrenie." Vestnik Evropy. 1890 No. 6, 799.

⁸³ "Graf Bismark." Otechestvennye zapiski. 1866 T. 167, 64.

⁸⁴ Baluev B. P. Politicheskaya reaktsiya 80-kh godov XIX veka i russkaya zhurnalistika, 235.

⁸⁵ "Graf Bismark." Otechestvennye zapiski. 1866 T. 167, 65.

Regarding the perception of Otto von Bismarck's domestic policy, we note that the democratic press pays considerable attention to his dealings with the conservatives and liberals. According to the journalists of *Delo* and *Otechestvennye zapiski*, the "Iron Chancellor", despite many progressive innovations, never belonged to the liberal camp; according to his character and the conditions of his upbringing, he was destined to become a conservative. It is not surprising, therefore, that in many speeches he did not tire of emphasizing his adherence to the Prussian Junkers, although at times he showed contempt for their "dullness". Bismarck transferred any opposition to the category of enemies of the state and waged a merciless fight against them, not stopping short of the most insidious methods. Despite the many threats in letters sent to him, Bismarck had never been subjected to any attacks by the common people. However, as the correspondents of *Novoe Slovo* (New Word) noted, in 1866, at his suggestion, a "political police" was established, which was intended to protect the king and the first minister, allowing them to open letters, telegrams, etc.⁸⁶ The magazine *Novoe Slovo*, which in its short history had gone from liberal populism to "legal Marxism", was published in St. Petersburg in 1894-1897.

Journalists of democratic publications had a unique assessment of the relationship between Wilhelm I and his chancellor. In their opinion, the emperor's main merit in his service to Germany was that "he managed to choose such a grand personality as

Bismarck, who, having remarkable abilities, a flexible conscience, and diabolical pride, became an important historical weapon."⁸⁷

Journalists from the democratic camp did not conduct special studies on the internal politics of the "Iron Chancellor". Therefore, we have no way to characterize their perception of, say, Kulturkampf or the social legislation of the unifier of Germany. When talking about the life and work of Otto von Bismarck after his resignation, democratic journalists wrote that most of his critical speeches were directed at the new government, headed by Emperor Wilhelm II, but the retired politician himself was largely responsible for the current situation in the country since for many years he had ruled the country by himself and had failed to instill in it a functioning democratic system.

Let us turn to the assessments of the "Iron Chancellor's" foreign policy. The staff of Russian democratic publications emphasized that during the era of the wars for the unification of Germany, the Prussian minister-president had been on the verge of resignation several times since sometimes his actions met with opposition from practically the entire population of the country.⁸⁸ A correspondent of *Delo*, A. Lalosch, noted that "Bismarck presumes a purely mechanical path of unification, a path of conquest and of inciting the basest nationalist instincts, he builds from hot iron and under a mountain of human corpses the innovative machine of the new national Germany."⁸⁹ A. Lalosch's colleague, V.N. Shelgunov, stated that the head of the Prussian government was an instrument of unity, but not an instrument of freedom, since his methods of uniting the country were incompatible with the very concept of freedom. The democratic press, condemning both Napoleon III and Bismarck, nevertheless tended to prefer the former, considering him less dangerous than his German counterpart. *Delo* (Labour) was the second most important publication of the democratic press, published in St. Petersburg in 1866-1888 by famous journalists N.I. Shulgin and G.E. Blagosvetlov. B.I. Esin summed up the disappointing result of the last years of the magazine's publication: "Under pressure from the government and censorship from 1884, after the arrest of Shelgunov and Stanyukovich, *Delo* as an organ of democracy ceases to exist: it loses its social significance, is published by random people, irregularly, and by 1888 its publication finally stops."⁹⁰

L. I. Narochitskaya drew attention to the fact that the writers of yet another democratic magazine, *Russkoe slovo* (Russian Word), spoke out against Bismarck's unifying policy in Germany, fearing revolutionary actions that would spread to other countries.⁹¹

⁸⁶ "Obzor zagranichnoy zhizni." *Novoe slovo*. 1894 No. 6, 149-150.

⁸⁷ "Obzor zagranichnoy zhizni." *Novoe slovo*. 1894 No. 7, 205.

⁸⁸ The modern German historian H. Schulze quotes the words of the "Iron Chancellor" about the difficulties of the unification of Germany, pronounced by Bismarck in May 1868: "If Germany achieves its national goal in the 19th century, then it would seem to me something great, but if it happens in ten or even five years, it would be something exceptional, an unexpected gift from God." Quotation: Schulze H. *Kratkaya istoria Germanii*. M.: Ves' mir, 2004, 110. It remains a mystery whether the German politician was dissembling then or whether he really did not believe in the possibility of a speedy unification of Germany.

⁸⁹ *Delo*. 1871 No. 2, 4.

⁹⁰ Esin B.I. *Istoria russkoi zhurnalistiki XIX v.*, 189.

⁹¹ Narochitskaya L.I. *Rossiya i voiny Prussii v 60-x godakh XIX veka za ob"edenenie Germanii "sverkhu"*, 255.

When the creation of the German Empire was solemnly proclaimed in Versailles in January 1871, the whole populace as one applauded the “Iron Chancellor” since he was able to realize the cherished dream of many generations of Germans. *Otechestvennye zapiski* correspondent G.Z. Eliseev assured his readers, however, that the German people would be happy only when the rule of “Bismarcks” came to an end there, and this would only be possible on the condition that the growth of militarism stopped in the country, the role of the Junkers decreased significantly, and a real parliamentary rule was established. Otherwise, the further strengthening of Germany could lead to a violation of the European balance, inevitably causing a pan-European war, which would not be good for anyone.

Authors whose names, unfortunately, could not be identified, wrote about the German chancellor in international news articles for *Otechestvennye zapiski*: “Even the cruelty and greed that he expressed in the war and the peace treaty with France was only an expression, albeit an incomplete one, of the feelings and relations of almost the entire German people towards France.”⁹² Thus, the entire German people may share in the responsibility for the cruelties committed during the Franco-Prussian. This provides another reason to talk about the identification of all Germans with Bismarck, which has repeatedly occurred among the political and intellectual elite of the Russian Empire.

On the whole, the staff of *Novoe slovo* magazine adhered to a negative view on the foreign policy of the “Iron Chancellor”, writing: “Since 1879, as is well-known, German politics, under the rod of Prince Bismarck, has acquired some completely false foundations that could be extremely dangerous for rest of the world. Carried away by the idea of nationalism, Prince Bismarck has imposed on Germany a policy that is in all respects narrow and self-centered, and which can only be supported by political deceptions and armaments that are based on threats and violence.”⁹³ The journalists of *Novoe slovo* constantly criticized the policy of armed peace systematized by the “Iron Chancellor”, and noted that even after his resignation, it continued to function successfully.

Bismarck’s attitude towards Russia was perceived by the magazine’s staff as strictly hostile, an example, in their opinion, being the subordinate position of Petersburg in the League of the Three Emperors, as well as the customs war and other economic obstacles placed by the German chancellor in the path of his eastern neighbor.

The greatest amount of criticism was heaped on the behavior of the German Chancellor at the Berlin Congress. So in the newspaper’s July 16, 1878 issue, one can read the following about Bismarck: “The peace effort in which he has succeeded is consistent with all his policies, namely, that the great powers of England, Russia and Austria should mainly pay attention to the southeast of Europe, and not to the west, where Germany could have complete domination.”⁹⁴ Therefore, one should not Bismarck’s post-resignation statements that it was the “new course” politicians who ruined Germany’s relations with Russia—they only aggravated them, primarily as a result of the mistakes of the first chancellor’s student, Emperor Wilhelm II. Describing Russian-German relations in 1871-1890, the journalists of *Novoe slovo* summarize: “At the moment, Prince Bismarck refers to the fact that he has managed not to break friendly relations with Russia, to remove her from rapprochement with the French and, at the same time, to create secret and explicit military treaties against her (or rather, ‘conspiracies’) and ruin her with ‘military’ duties and other economic measures.”⁹⁵

An analysis of the image of the “iron chancellor” in the Russian press allows us to draw the following conclusions. Otto von Bismarck was one of the politicians most often mentioned in the Russian periodical press of his time. Publications with different socio-political orientations sometimes differed significantly from one another in their evaluations of the his personality traits and endeavors.

Conservative newspapers and magazines, the most influential in the Russian empire in the period of time we are considering, primarily drew attention to the policy of the “Iron Chancellor” aimed at strengthening the monarchical system in Germany. Monarchical solidarity held a place of essential significance here. However, the German politician was often criticized, in particular for the measures he undertook that contributed to greater freedom of trade relations in the German Empire.

In liberal publications, one can trace a certain evolution in the assessments of the personality and activities of Otto von Bismarck: from the beginning of his political career until 1871, liberal journalists quite often criticized the German statesman for his excessive conservatism and backwardness;

⁹² “Inostrannaya khronika.” *Otechestvennye zapiski*. 1872 No. 11, 88.

⁹³ “Politicheskoe obozrenie.” *Novoe slovo*. 1894 No. 4, 349.

⁹⁴ Quotation: Ado V. I. Berlinskiy kongress 1878 g. i pomeshchichye-burzhuznoye mnenie Rossii., 110.

⁹⁵ “Politicheskoe obozrenie.” *Novoe slovo*. 1894 No. 1, 408.

However, the tumultuous transformations in the united Reich in the years 1871-1878 caused the negative assessments to give way to positive ones, and Bismarck was perceived as the most brilliant politician of his time. However, the “Iron Chancellor’s” turn towards a protectionist economic policy and the persecution of the Social Democrats subsequently elicited negative assessments from liberal journalists.

The democratic press consistently criticized both the character traits of the German politician and his government activities. Nevertheless, even some representatives of the democratic press, such as N.K. Mikhaylovsky, were very sympathetic to the “Iron Chancellor” and noted his merits in improving the material conditions of the majority of the German Empire’s population. A characteristic feature of the assessments of all the democratic publications was that they consistently criticized Bismarck’s struggle against the Social Democrats as well as his social policy, considering it only a means of distracting the workers from participating in the political struggle.

Noting that Bismarck’s foreign policy aspect always prevailed over his domestic one, and that he was, above all, a first-class diplomat, Russian journalists recognized his significant achievements in unifying Germany. However, the German Empire’s further victories in Europe provoked alarm and apprehension, and sometimes even calls to repulse the aspirations of the German militarists, who, in the opinion of the Russian journalists, sought to occupy a leading position on the continent. Relations between Germany and Russia were the topic of greatest interest to representatives of the Russian press during the years of

Bismarck’s chancellorship. Their assessments were significantly influenced by the journalists’ political preferences, but over time, as this study showed, these opinions could change significantly. Thus, in the Russian press of the second half of the 19th – beginning of the 20th centuries, a complex and ambiguous image of the “Iron Chancellor” developed, and moreover, this image repeatedly changed over the course of several decades.

Opinions on Bismarck have always been subjective, and a huge influence on them was exerted by the political position and preferences of the journalists themselves, who studied the figure of the German statesman to illustrate their own rightness, first of all, in solving all-Russian problems. The contexts changed over the years, as did the political environment and the image of the chancellor, and adjustments were made in almost all areas of the Russian press. As a result, the cumulative image of a German in the periodical press of the Russian Empire began to be associated with the figure of Bismarck, who was recognized as the “ideal Prussian”, the embodiment of all the characteristic qualities of the German people.