

wirtschaftlich-gesellschaftliche und sprachlich-kulturelle Eigenart der ganzen baltischen Region vernichtet werden, auch wenn diese Einheit „von innen gesehen“ mehrschichtig und konfliktreich war.

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SUMMARY

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*“Being Baltic”, Baltic-Germans, and Estonians*

The ethnic term and simultaneously toponym “Baltic”/“Baltics” is quite common today, and the Baltic states or peoples located on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea tend to be seen in the western world as an entity. The origin of the name, however, is not unambiguously clear. The well-known Baltic-German writer Georg Berkholtz was the first to publish an article on the term “Baltic” back in 1882, after it had begun to be used in a new context. The main aim of this article is to explain the reasons for the rebirth of this term that suddenly spread in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

It seems that the Russian central government began treating the Baltic provinces as an administrative and cultural whole before the local Germans started to do so. Terms such as *Ostzeiskii krai* or even *Pribaltiiskii krai* were used officially, and all three provinces were subordinated in 1801 to one governor general. The attitude of the central government, however, remained divided. On the one hand the region was seen as belonging together, but on the other hand, from the aspect of unification policy, separate administrative units were seen to be useful. The more the czarist government interfered into the affairs of the Baltic provinces, the more the local aristocracy looked to its own interests, and there was a growing desire to protect the region’s autonomy, special identity and culture. This started to become particularly apparent in the 1860s, when a large proportion of the Russian nationalist public began to portray itself as a vehement enemy of the supposedly separatist German-like provinces.

The position of the Baltic Germans between the three forces of Germany, Russia and the native peoples of the region was complicated. The somewhat indistinct concept of “being Baltic” could not entirely solve identity problems. In itself, the concept of a one and unified Baltic people was not merely a dream of writers, because it was also supported by Livland based liberal politicians and publicists at the end of the 1870s. Theoretically such a unity was possible, but practically it was not feasible. Sharing rights with the native peoples turned out to be just too difficult a task for the whole of the Baltic-German public.

After becoming co-editor of “Eesti Postimees” in 1879 it was actually Harry Jannsen who introduced the concept of the Baltic countries and the Balts in the Estonian media. In doing this he also adopted the idea of

national sovereignty. Jannsen also hoped that the Livonian liberal gentry were prepared for reform. However, his statements brought about criticism in the “Revalsche Zeitung”. The German newspaper hinted that the Estonian people were not yet ready for political rights. In the early 1880s the prestige of the Baltic Germans in the eyes of St Petersburg diminished. Carl Robert Jakobson’s writings became more pointed and he criticized the “being Baltic” thesis formulated by Jannsen – “first a Balt, and then an Estonian”. Simultaneously Jannsen’s own attitude towards Baltic Germans had become more critical. Now he claimed that the term “Baltia” was being misused because it was seen as dominated both by German language and mentality. Eventually, he founded a German-language newspaper in Tallinn in 1882 called “Die Heimath” which was unfortunately short-lived. By 1883, however, the Baltic German press had become somewhat more restrained.