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## Poles and Finns under Russian rule

**Abstract:** An attempt to compare Russian Tsar Alexander I was the head of the Grand Duchy of Finland, which the Russian army captured in 1809 as a result of the Russo-Swedish war. The final act of the Congress of Vienna of June 1815 decided to establish the Kingdom of Poland. Beside the title of Grand Duke of Finland tsar, Alexander I was awarded the title of the King of Poland. From that moment on, for over one hundred years, the fate of the Grand Duchy of Finland and the Kingdom of Poland was intertwined during the rule of five Russian tsars.

The aim of this paper is to answer the question whether two different ways on the road to independence – romantic Polish way with national uprisings, and pragmatic Finnish, relative loyal to the Russian tsars – had an impact on their policy towards both nations. The Kingdom of Poland and the Duchy of Finland were autonomous, were in a personal union with Russian tsars, had their own constitutions, parliaments, armies, monetary systems and educational structures, and official activities were held in Polish (Polish Kingdom) and Swedish (in the Grand Duchy of Finland). Both countries also had their own universities.

The first national uprising in the Kingdom of Poland, which broke out in November 1830, resulted in a wave of repression. The Constitution was replaced by the so-called The Organic Statute, the Sejm (the Parliament) and the independent army were liquidated. The Kingdom was occupied by the mighty Russian army, and in 1833 martial law was introduced. The second national uprising of January 1863 led to another wave of repression and intensive Russification of Polish territories. In 1867, the autonomy of the Kingdom of Poland, its name and budget were abolished. From 1872 the Polish language was only an optional choice. After 1863, the policy of the Russian authorities changed towards the Grand Duchy.

A session of the Finnish parliament (Eduskunta) was convened for the first time since 1809, the new parliamentary law allowed the dissemination of the Finnish language. After the deadly assault on Alexander II in 1881, his son Alexander III made attempts to limit also Finland's autonomy. The years 1899–1904 were called the first period of Russification in Finland (“the first period of oppression”). The Manifesto of June 1900 introduced obligatory Russian language in correspondence of officials with Russia. In 1901, the national Finnish army was liquidated. In Russia this was the beginning of the process of the empire's unification into one cultural, political and economic system. After a short thaw as a result of the 1905 revolution in Russia, the Grand Duchy of Finland, the so-called “second period of oppression” and anti-Finnish politics took place. During

the great war of 1914–1918, the Grand Duchy was on the side of Russia. The territories of the former Kingdom of Poland were under German rule since 1915. After the outbreak of the revolution in Russia, the Eduskunta (on 6 December 1917) passed a Declaration of Independence. After a short period of regency, on 19 July 1919, the Finns adopted the republican system with a parliamentary form of government.

On 11 November 1918 Germany surrendered on the Western Front. On that day, the Regency Council in Warsaw handed over military authority to the Polish Legion commander Józef Piłsudski. Although Poland still had to fight for the final shape of the state, the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 1918 is considered the first day of recovered Polish independence.

**Keywords:** Russian Empire, Finland, Poland, political systems comparison.

## Introduction

In 2018, many European countries celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the armistice and end of the Great War, later called the First World War. As a result, three great empires fell – Russia, Austro-Hungary and Turkey. For many nations it meant a chance to create their own nation-state or obtain a right to sovereign existence. Among them was Poland, which after 123 years faced the chance to regain an independent state. The same held true for Finland, which as a result of a combination of various circumstances, what Timothy Snyder calls “an unpredictability of history”<sup>1</sup>, managed to create a nation-state and, against all odds, uphold it. Both nations were subjects under dominion of the same monarchs twice. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was Swedish dynasty of Vasa kings and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Russian Romanovs. In case of the latter, the common history of Poles and Finns covers period between the Congress of Vienna and the Congress of Versailles, that is, from the fall of the French Emperor Napoleon to the fall of the Russian tsar Nicholas II. The Congress of Vienna created the Kingdom of Poland and sanctioned existence of the Grand Duchy<sup>2</sup> of Finland under the rule of the Russian tsar Alexander I. From then on, for over a century, the fate of both nations was associated with the fortune of the Russian tsars and the fate of a powerful empire. Both, the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Finland, constituted the western edge of the empire, in terms of civilization as well as in the geography (Fig. 1).

The purpose of the following text is to analyze the fate of the inhabitants of both political structures and an attempt to find an answer to the question whether the

<sup>1</sup> S. Sierakowski, 2018, *Wyobrazić sobie Polskę. Rozmowa z Timothyem Snyderem, amerykańskim historykiem, o stuleciu polskiej niepodległości*, “Polityka”, 45: 14, 7–13 November.

<sup>2</sup> Literally Grand Principality. (Fin.): Suomen suuriruhtinaskunta, (Swed.): Storfurstendömet Finland, (Rus.): Великое княжество Финляндское (Velikoye knyazhestvo Finlyandskoye).



Fig. 1. Political division of the Russian Empire under the rule of the tsar Alexander I  
 Source: <https://www.deviantart.com/spiritwriter123/art/The-Good-Tsar-561246337>

revolutionary moods in the Kingdom of Poland and the loyalist attitude of Finns towards legal authority of the Russian monarchs translated into a different tsarist policy towards each of them. A quick look at the history of Finland may create such an impression, but deeper analysis indicates the astonishing resemblance of the Russian policy towards both nations regardless their loyalty. In order to understand why it was possible, it is necessary to recall a few of the most important facts from the history of Finns and Poles.

The common fate of Poles and Finns, in a broader sense, can be roughly divided into three major periods: the Swedish period, the Russian period and the struggle for independence during World War I. There may be a slightly different time span defining the said periods, Finnish independence came one year earlier than the

Polish one. Nevertheless, both Poles and Finns were subjected to the same domestic and foreign policy of the Russian monarchy. I will briefly analyze the similarities and differences of their rule in historical perspective, starting with Finland.

### **The Swedish period – Under the Vasa rule**

The fate of the Scandinavian nations was defined by the goals of the Kalmar Union (1397–1523) (Cieślak 1983: 44). The Union was formed to block German expansion northward into the Baltic region. It was organized under rule of one monarch and was composed of the three kingdoms: Denmark, Sweden and Norway. The Swedish nobleman Gustav Vasa (1496–1560) revolted in 1523 against the Kalmar Union and the rule of the Danish-Norwegian king Christian II (1426–1481). In the so-called Swedish War of Liberation (1521–1523)<sup>3</sup>, which is also described as a rebellion or a civil war, the Swedes captured Stockholm in June 1523 and Gustav Vasa was elected the King of Sweden (Cieślak 1983: 55). On 1 September 1524, Sweden signed the Treaty of Malmö and withdrew from the Kalmar Union. Gustav I Vasa founded a dynasty that ruled Sweden-Finland for more than a century. Finland remained integrated with the Swedish state.

The Protestant Reformation, in Martin Luther's version, which he initiated in Germany in 1517, gained popularity among different social groups of Swedes. As an effect, in 1527 the Swedish Parliament (Riksdag) decided to break its ties with Rome. This acceptance of Lutheranism enabled Gustav I Vasa to create a stronger centralized state. After the last Catholic king of Sweden, Sigismund, lost the throne, the Lutheran Church could flourish without any limitations (Cieślak 1983: 57).

In 1581 Finland was made a titular grand duchy by the King John III of Sweden (1537–1592), who had held the title of the Duke of Finland (1556–1563) when he was a young prince. The title Grand Duke of Finland did not result in any Finnish autonomy because Finland was an integrated part of the Kingdom of Sweden and had full parliamentary representation in the Riksdag. However, the title of the Duke of Finland was used by some of John's successors on the throne for next two centuries<sup>4</sup>.

Prince John, Duke of Finland, later John III King of Sweden, married in 1562 in Vilnius Catherine Jagellonica (1526–1583), a Lithuanian and Polish princess.

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<sup>3</sup> Also known as Gustav Vasa's Rebellion and the Swedish War of Secession. A. Ganse, *Swedish War of Liberation. 1521–1523*, World History at KMLA (Korean Minjok Leadership Academy), <http://www.zum.de/whkmla/military/16cen/sweddan15211523.html>

<sup>4</sup> In 1802 the title got new a new dimension. To keep Finland within Sweden in the face of increased Russian pressure, King Gustav IV Adolf gave the title to his new-born son, Prince Carl Gustaf, who died three years later.

His son, Sigismund III Vasa (1566–1632) ascended both the Polish-Lithuanian and Swedish thrones. In the years 1587–1632 he was the king of Poland and in the years 1592–1599 also king of Sweden. He has lost the Swedish crown by an act of the Riksdag and abdicated in 1595 to Charles IX (1550–1611). “His long reign coincided with the apex of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth’s prestige, power and economic influence” – wrote Franciszek Siarczyński<sup>5</sup>.

During the Swedish period, Finland was merely a group of provinces and not a national entity. Finland was governed from Stockholm, the capital of the Finnish provinces at that time. Consequently, the Swedish legal and social systems took root in Finland. “Feudalism of the continental variety never became rooted in Sweden nor in Norway or Finland” – underlines Franklin Scott (1988: 58). Manorial Serfdom (where freedom of movement is denied) and slavery were explicitly made illegal in Sweden in the 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>6</sup>. Finnish peasants were never serfs and they always retained their personal freedom, as it was the case in the Russian empire.

### Under Russian rule – Tsar Alexander I

The 19<sup>th</sup> century Napoleonic wars ended the centuries-old union between Sweden and Finland. In the aftermath of Napoleon’s victory over the Russian troops at Friedland (14 June 1807), the treaties of Tilsit were signed in July 1807 (with Russia and Prussia). Under Napoleon’s pressure Russia agreed to join the Continental System and the Blockade against Great Britain<sup>7</sup>. As a result, tsar Alexander I invaded Finland. The so-called Finnish War between the Kingdom of Sweden and the Russian Empire lasted from February 1808 to September 1809 (Szordykowska 2011: 83–96). After an overwhelming victory by Russia, Sweden formally ceded Finland to Russia by the Treaty of Hamina (Swedish: Fredrikshamn) on 17 September 1809. The war of 1808–1809 was the last joint war of the Swedish-Finnish union and is called the Final War<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> F. Siarczyński, 1843/1858, *Obraz wieku panowania Zygmunta III. Króla Polskiego i Szwedzkiego: zawierający opis osób żyjących pod jego panowaniem, znamienitych przez swe czyny pokoju i wojny, cnoty lub występki dzieła piśmienne, zasługi użyteczne i cele sztuki*, t. I, Poznań 1843, ss. 337; t. II, Poznań 1858, ss. 405; see also: <http://travel.yodelout.com/polish-and-russian-political-history-sigismund-iii-and-the-republic-1588-1632/>

<sup>6</sup> *How did Sweden/Scandinavia switch to the feudal system?*, [https://www.reddit.com/r/AskHistorians/comments/19zdt8/how\\_did\\_swedenscandinavia\\_switch\\_to\\_the\\_feudal/](https://www.reddit.com/r/AskHistorians/comments/19zdt8/how_did_swedenscandinavia_switch_to_the_feudal/)

<sup>7</sup> *The Continental System and the blockade 1807–1811*, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Napoleonic-Wars/The-Continental-System-and-the-blockade-1807-11>

<sup>8</sup> *The Final War. The Swedish-Russian War of 1808–1809*, <http://www.multi.fi/~goranfri/index.html>

A Finnish historian writes that: “Russia planned at first to annex Finland directly as a province of the Russian Empire, but in order to overcome the Finns’ misgivings about Russian rule, tsar Alexander I offered them the following solution. Finland was not annexed to the Russian Empire but was joined to Russia instead through the person of the tsar. In addition, Finland was made an autonomous state – the Grand Duchy of Finland – with its inherited traditions intact. Thus, the laws and constitution of Finland remained unchanged, and the tsar took the place of the Swedish king as sovereign. The official forms of government inherited from the era of Swedish absolutism were sufficiently autocratic to allow the tsar to accept them largely intact”<sup>9</sup>.

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Two years earlier, under the Tilsit Treaty, in July 1807, the Duchy of Warsaw was established. It comprised, in general, the lands taken over by the Prussians during the three partitions of the Polish Kingdom at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1809, as a result of an unsuccessful attack of Austria on the Napoleon army, the Duchy was additionally enlarged by the lands from the Austrian partition. The final shape of the Duchy of Warsaw was a compromise between Napoleon and Alexander.

On 22 June 1812, Napoleon announced the beginning of the Second Polish War. The Parliament of the Duchy of Warsaw (Sejm) announced restoration of the Kingdom of Poland. After the defeat of Napoleon in 1812, Russian troops entered the territory of the Duchy and *de facto* put an end to its existence. However, the Duchy of Warsaw *de jure* ceased to exist three years later. Compromises and decisions on the future of the Polish territories were made on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1815, at the Congress of Vienna. Russia signed with Prussia and Austria bilateral conventions on the division of the Duchy of Warsaw and a tripartite convention on the establishment of the Free City of Kraków and the Grand Duchy of Poznań. The Congress of Vienna took a decision about a personal union of the Kingdom of Poland with the tsar of Russia. The ruling tsar, Alexander I was awarded the title of Polish king.

### **Finns under the Russian rule From Alexander I to Alexander Sergejevich Menshikov**

In 1809 the Finnish Diet acknowledged tsar Alexander I as a Grand Duke. For his part, Alexander confirmed the rights of the Finns, in particular, freedom to pursue their customs and religion and to maintain their identity: “Providence having placed us in possession of the Grand Duchy of Finland, we have desired by the present act to confirm and ratify the religion and the fundamental laws of the land, as well as the privileges and rights which each class in the said Grand Duchy in

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<sup>9</sup> <http://motherearthtravel.com/history/finland/history-4.htm>

particular, and all the inhabitants in general, be their position high or low, have hitherto enjoyed according to their constitution. We promise to maintain all these benefits and laws firm and unshaken in their full force“ (Johnson *et al.* 1899: 198) – announced Alexander I to the members of the Diet.

Alexander I had a rather positive attitude toward Finland. He especially favored the old University of Turku, which was a Swedish university from 1640 until the Finnish War in 1808 (Cieślak 1983: 84). The University’s name ”The Royal Academy of Turku”, after creation of Duchy of Finland in 1809, was changed to the Imperial Academy of Turku. In order to exercise control over the Grand Duchy more easily, Alexander decided in 1812 to move the Finnish capital from Turku to Helsinki, which was in proximity to the capital of Russia, Saint Petersburg. After a big fire in Turku, which destroyed the old University, Russian authorities decided to transfer it in 1827 to Helsinki. In 1828 it was renamed again and called the Imperial Alexander University in Finland (Cieślak 1983: 137–138; Szordykowska 2011: 124–125). The change of the name was in honor of Emperor Alexander I, who had expanded its staff and doubled the budget<sup>10</sup>.

Another positive movement from tsar took place in 1812. Alexander I decided to return to Finland some lands Russia had annexed in the eighteenth century (Fig. 2). “These conciliatory measures were effective, and, as long as Russia respected this arrangement, the Finns proved to be loyal subjects of the Russian Empire, The Diet was formally the lawmaking body of the government; it could not initiate legislation, however, but could only petition the tsar to introduce legislation. The tsar, moreover, could summon and could dismiss the Senate without reference to the Diet. There was an independent judicial system. Finland even maintained its own customs system, and taxes collected in Finland remained in the country. Finns were exempted from conscription into the Russian army” – writes a Finnish historian<sup>11</sup>.

The agreement reached between the Diet and the tsar gave him direct control over the government of Finland. To execute his authority the tsar appointed a Governor-General as his representative and advisor. The first chief governing institution in the Grand Duchy was the Governing Council, which consisted of two divisions, one for the administration and executing the law, the other for the direction of the national economy, and was composed of fourteen Finns appointed by the tsar (Kirby 2006: 83). In 1816 it was renamed the Imperial Senate of Finland and was subordinated to the Committee for Finnish Affairs in St. Petersburg, which presented Finnish requests to the tsar. The Governor-General was constitutionally the chairman of the Senate of Finland. With one exception, all the governor-generals were Russian.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.helsinki.fi/en/helsinki-university-museum/about-us/history-of-the-university>

<sup>11</sup> *The Russian Grand Duchy of Finland*, <http://countrystudies.us/finland/10.htm>

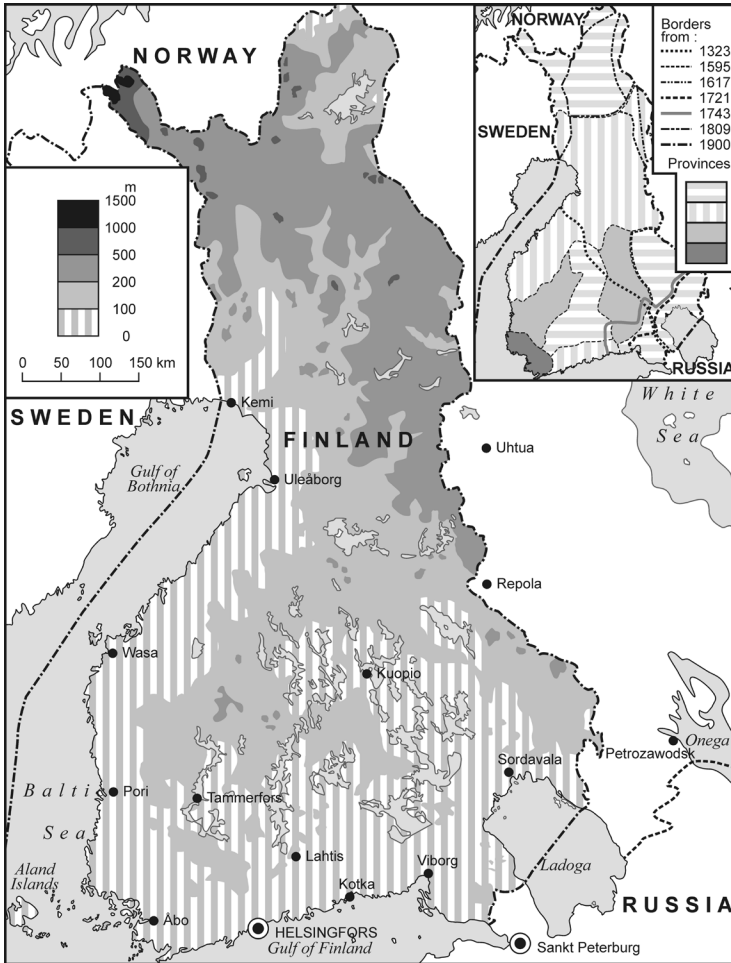


Fig. 2. Russian map of the Grand Duchy of Finland

Source: based on Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary (ca. 1900).

The interests of the Grand Duchy of Finland in the imperial court in St. Petersburg was represented by a Minister–Secretary of State for Finland in Helsinki (before 1834 the title was secretary of state). All acts of the Emperor concerning the Grand Duchy, were to be countersigned by this State Secretary, or deputized officials.

The key role in establishing Finnish institutions played Arseny Zakrevsky (1783–1865), Governor-General of Grand Duchy of Finland in the years 1823–1831. He was a controversial figure. He perceived his stay in Finland as a necessary evil. He treated this country in a hostile way, he said many times that



he treats Finland as a swift Siberia, and therefore a place of exile (Szordykowska 2011: 107–108). The Committee for Finnish Affairs was wound up in 1826 at the instigation of Governor-General and replaced by a non-advisory State-Secretariat for Finnish Affairs in Petersburg. It shifted the balance decisively to the Senate in Helsinki. Zakrevsky may have won the right to present directly to the emperor matters relating Finland, but he also obtained permission to absent himself from the sessions of the Senate because he was not able to follow without an interpreter (Kirby 2006: 85). Being a military man and a hard-liner, he was trusted by the Emperor Nicholas II and in the period 1828–1831, he also briefly served as the Minister of Interior of the entire empire. From 1828 he resided in St. Petersburg<sup>12</sup>. “However, internal administration of Finland remained separated from that of empire, and in spite of his formal position as chairman of the Senate, the Governor-General, was not able to exert much influence” – writes David Kirby (2014: 80).

In 1831 he was replaced by Alexander Sergeyeovich Menshikov (1787–1869) who resided in St. Petersburg and who was simultaneously the Russian Minister of the Navy. During his functioning as a Governor-General there was a certain duality of administrative institutions – there were two offices of the Governor-General, one official in Helsinki and the other unofficial in St. Petersburg. “A Governor-General’s assistant, called to life in 1812, served the monarch in the Senate’s absence. This position existed until 1854, it is the office of the prince of Menshikov who is in office until the end” – writes Barbara Szordykowska<sup>13</sup>.

Despite all the efforts to build joint institutions for binding Grand Duchy with the Empire, Finns felt the autocratic power of the tsar. The Finnish Diet was dismissed in 1809, and it was not reconvened for more than fifty years.

“Although the government of the grand duchy represented an uneasy balance between the traditions of Finnish self-government and those of Russian autocracy, as long as the Russians respected the balance, the Finnish people were satisfied. The period of Russian rule was characterized by peaceful internal development, largely because, for the first time in centuries, Finland was free of war”<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> He was elevated to the title of count in the Finnish Nobility and was registered in the House of Nobility under the name Zakrevsky as the Finnish comital house number nine. This made him and his family “Finnish citizens”, which also meant that afterwards, when out of office, they did not need passports to go to the territory of the grand duchy from the Russian side of the border, a coveted privilege, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arseny\\_Zakrevsky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arseny_Zakrevsky)

<sup>13</sup> This position was restored in 1885 and existed until the end of the Empire. B. Szordykowska (2011: 109).

<sup>14</sup> *The Russian Grand Duchy of Finland, 1809–1917*, <http://countrystudies.us/finland/10.htm>, p. 5.

### The Russian tsars and the Kingdom of Poland From Konstantin Pavlovich of Russia to Crimean War

The Kingdom of Poland was formally established on the basis of the Russian-Austrian-Prussian Treaty of 3 May 1815<sup>15</sup>. Article V of this treaty stated that the lands of the Duchy of Warsaw remaining under Russian control were bound to Russia by their constitution and handed over to eternally into the hands of the “Enlightened Emperor of All Russia” (Fig. 3).

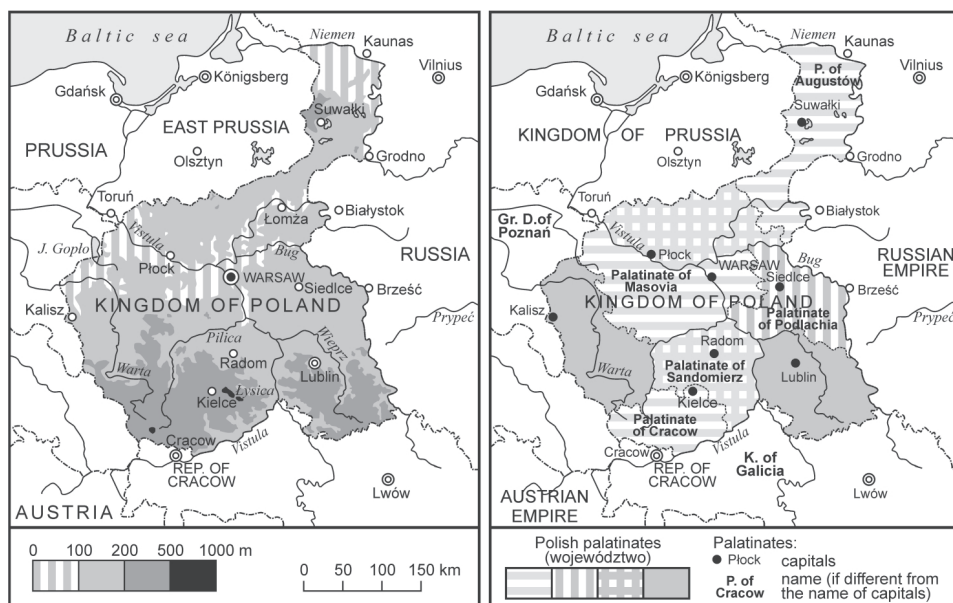


Fig. 3. Kingdom of Poland – physical and political-administrative maps

Source: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/70/KingdomofPoland1815.jpg>

Alexander I, the King of Poland 1815–1825, raised high expectations. In his youth and during the early years of his reign, Alexander often used liberal rhetoric. As the tsar he initiated some social reforms and liberal educational reforms. In the years 1815–1832 the Kingdom of Poland had its own constitution, own Parliament (Sejm), army, currency and the University of Warsaw. Official activities were held in Polish. The foreign policy of the Kingdom belonged to the royal prerogatives.

In the years 1815–1832 the government was based on the Constitution of the Kingdom of Poland. The first *Namiestnik* (representative, governor) of Kingdom of Poland was general Józef Zająček (1752–1826), former commander of the

<sup>15</sup> It was also called the Congress Kingdom.

16<sup>th</sup> Division of Infantry during Napoleon's war with Russia. His position then was comparable to that of a viceroy (Magocsi *et al.* 1974: 77–78). However, an unofficial governor of the Kingdom of Poland 1815–1831 was Konstantin Pavlovich of Russia (1779–1831), the Grand Duke, brother of tsar Alexander. He received also the post of commander-in-chief of the forces of the Kingdom, to which later (1819) was added the command of the Lithuanian troops and of those of the Russian provinces that had formerly belonged to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Over the time, the freedoms granted to the Kingdom were gradually taken back and the constitution was more and more ignored by the Russian authorities. Alexander I of Russia never formally crowned himself as the King of Poland.

Under the Nicholas (1796–1855), emperor of Russia and King of Poland in the years 1825–1855, Grand Duke Konstantin maintained his position. He had no intention of respecting the Polish constitution, one of the most progressive in Europe at that time. He eliminated Polish social and patriotic organizations, the liberal opposition, and replaced Poles with Russians in important administrative positions. He was commonly considered as an enemy of the Polish nation and his command over Polish Army led to serious conflicts within the officer corps. These frictions led to various conspiracies throughout the country, most notably within the army. Armed struggle began when a group of conspirators led by a young cadet from the Warsaw officers' school, took arms on 29 November 1830 and attacked the Belvedere Palace, the main seat of the Grand Duke. The spark that ignited the military mutiny in Warsaw was a Russian plan to use the Polish Army to suppress France's July Revolution and the Belgian one, in clear violation of the Polish constitution. The uprising began on 29 November 1830 ended on 21 October 1831. It caused mass emigration, which involved thousands of Poles, particularly from the political and cultural elites.

Things dramatically worsened after the November uprising. On February 1832, tsar Nicholas I (1796–1855) decreed that Poland was an integral part of Russia. The university was closed. The martial law was implemented in 1833 and Russian laws and currency were introduced. The constitution was replaced by an "Organic Statute". The tsar ordered the liquidation of the Sejm and an independent army (Słownik encyklopedyczny 1997/1998: 377). Warsaw was only little more than a military garrison.

The Crimean War 1853–1856 brought fundamental change in the domestic policy of the Russian Empire. The war arose from the conflict of great powers in the Middle-East and was more directly caused by Russian demands to exercise protection over the Orthodox Christian subjects of the Ottoman sultan. Another major factor was the dispute between Russia and France over the privileges of the Russian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches in the holy places in Palestine. The Crimean War was managed and commanded very poorly on both sides.

The war, however, forced the new Russian emperor Alexander II (who succeeded Nicholas I in March 1855) to undertake measures to overcome Russia's backwardness in order to compete successfully with the other European powers<sup>16</sup>. One of the first steps was abolition of serfdom in 1861. He hoped that agricultural production could be modernized and made more efficient and this would help the transformation of Russia from a backward agricultural economy into a modern industrial and capitalist economy. Alexander I agreed to introduce some reforms, which would make Russia more modern society. Among these were the creation of representative bodies called *zemstva*, in effect a form of local government in villages and provinces. He also begun to reform the army and navy and the penalty code. An amnesty for the Polish participants of the November Uprising raised hopes for relaxation of the system.

But while Alexander's reforms satisfied some, they did not go far enough for radicals, who demanded political change at higher levels. The amount of anti-tsarist dissent and unrest increased after the reforms of the 1860s. By the 1870s Alexander's reformist spirit had dwindled and he was forced to impose repressive measures<sup>17</sup>. After an assassination attempt in 1866, Alexander adopted a somewhat more reactionary stance.

### **The Russian-Finnish political see-saw From the Crimean War to the first "era of oppression" (1899–1905)**

There was also a Finnish chapter of the Crimean War (Anderson 1969). The proximity of St. Petersburg, the Russian capital to water was a tempting target for an Anglo-French fleet, which in April 1854 entered the Baltic twice to attack the Russian naval base at Kronstadt. The outnumbered Russian Baltic Fleet confined its movements to the areas around its fortifications. At the same time, the British and French commanders considered the Sveaborg fortress too well-defended to engage and limited shelling of the Russian batteries to two attempts in 1854 and 1855, and initially, the attacking fleets limited their actions to blockading Russian trade in the Gulf of Finland. Naval attacks on other ports on the island of Hogland in the Gulf proved more successful. Allies conducted also raids on less fortified sections of the Finnish coast (Colville 1940). These battles are known in Finland as the Åland War (Ponting 2011: 2–3).

Alexander II's significant reforms gave Finland new hope. The biggest change was brought to the position of the language. In 1858, Finnish was made the official language of local self-governments in provinces, where Finnish was the majority

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<sup>16</sup> *Crimean War*, [in:] *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Crimean-War>

<sup>17</sup> <https://alphahistory.com/russianrevolution/reform-and-reaction-in-russia/>; M. Kozelsky (2012).

the language spoken. After over half a century, Alexander called in 1863 the Diet and announced that the Finnish language would have equal position to Swedish and Russian in the Grand Duchy. The law was expanded in 1865 and declared that the state offices must serve the public in Finnish if requested. In the 1870s the education laws gave a right for secondary schools to teach in Finnish.

The position of the Diet was also strengthened. Since 1869 it could initiate various legislation and the tsar was obliged to summon the Diet every five years. The same year an act on religion was also passed, which limited the influence of the State on the church. On top of it, Finland got the right to implement its own monetary system (the Finnish markka) (Szordykowska 2011: 151–153) and could maintain own national army.

On 1 March 1881 Alexander fell victim to an assassination plot in the Russian capital St. Petersburg. It was the sixth of assassination effort, this time the final one. Ironically, on the very day he was killed, he signed a proclamation – the so-called Loris-Melikov constitution. “Just the day before he died, Alexander II had completed plans to create an elected parliament and he intended to release these plans within a few days. Perhaps if Alexander II had lived Russia would have become a constitutional monarchy and not been led down the path the country ultimately took” – speculates an author on the Site for Royal News and Discussion<sup>18</sup>.

Alexander II was succeeded by his 36-year-old son, Alexander III, who rejected the Loris-Melikov constitution. All the internal reforms initiated by his father the new tsar considered to be too liberal. In his opinion, Russia must be saved from anarchical disorders and revolutionary agitation not by the parliamentary institutions and so-called liberalism of western Europe by three principles: Orthodoxy, autocracy, and Russification [*narodnost* /nationality]. Alexander’s political ideal was a nation composed of only one nationality, one language, one religion, and one form of administration. He planned to achieve his goal in three steps: imposition “of the Russian language and Russian schools on his German, Polish, and Finnish subjects, by fostering Orthodoxy at the expense of other confessions, by persecuting the Jews, and by destroying the remnants of German, Polish, and Swedish institutions in the outlying provinces”<sup>19</sup>.

The February Manifesto of 1899, was an imperial decree that ensured direct tsarist rule of Finland without consulting either the Finnish Senate or the Diet (Cieślak 1983: 182). In fact, it reduced Finland to the status of the other provinces of the Russian Empire, and it paved the way for further Russification. This triggered a wave of protests to in the form of petitions called the Great Address, signed with more than 500,000 Finns. In March 1899 these petitions were submitted Alexander III, who ignored them (Szordykowska 2011: 190).

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.unofficialroyalty.com/march-13-1881-assassination-of-tsar-alexander-ii-of-russia/>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Alexander-III-emperor-of-Russia>

The next acts made the situation even worse. The Language Manifesto of 1900, made the Russian the main official language of the Empire in administration and in government offices (Szordykowska 2011: 193–194). What finally transformed Finnish resistance into a mass movement was the new conscription law of 1901 and the new role of the Finnish army (Szordykowska 2011: 201–202). It was originally called into being as an independent army with the sole mission of defending Finland. The new law incorporated the Finnish army into the organizational structure of Empire's army, which from then on could be put into action anywhere. The Finns responded again with a massive petition and again it was ignored by the tsar. This time the Finns decided to take action and responded with a campaign of passive resistance. To the first conscription based on new law in 1902 that dramatically altered the nature of the Finnish army they responded with the so-called Army Strike. In practical terms it meant limited response to the draft, from about half in 1903 to about four-fifths 1904 of eligible did not report. The Russian military command considered the Finns unreliable for military purposes, and... released them from military service in return for the levy of an extra tax payable to the imperial government.

The domestic policy of the Russian government in this period took a turn for the worse and repressive measures against the Finns were applied. The Finnish civil servants, which opposed Russification were fired and replaced by those which were ready to act accordingly to the new laws. The censorship was expanded and in April 1903 and Governor-General Nikolai Bobrikov<sup>20</sup> was granted dictatorial powers. General Bobrikov was a notorious reactionary who had been given “dictatorial powers of extraordinary extent” by the tsar, set out “to break the national spirit and wipe out the constitutional liberties of a people who loved freedom, and who enjoyed it by virtue of the fundamental laws of the land, which their Russian Sovereigns have successively sworn on their accession to observe. General Bobrikoff” – reported the “Times” in June 1904<sup>21</sup>.

It is little known that Russian oppression was met with a growth of an active and conspiratorial resistance. The movement, called the Kagal (Kagaali) (Cieślak 1983: 185), named after a similar Jewish resistance organization in Russia, succeeded in assassinating Bobrikov by the Finnish Senate clerk Eugen

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<sup>20</sup> Governor-General Nikolay Ivanovich Bobrikoff [Bobrikov] (1839–1904); B. Szordykowska (2011: 187–188).

<sup>21</sup> “The Times” (London), 17 June 1904, p. 9, [in]: Jensen R., 2018, *The 1904 Assassination of Governor General Bobrikov in the Context of the Era of Anarchist Terrorism; Terrorism in Nordic Countries*, “Terrorism and Political Violence”, 30(5): 828–843.

Schauman in June 1904<sup>22</sup>. The first era of Russification came to an end with the outbreak of revolution in Russia.

A Finnish historian give four reasons why the Russian nationalists had reasons to favor the Russification of Finland<sup>23</sup>.

“First, continued suspicions about Finnish separatism gained plausibility with the rise of Finnish nationalism.

Second, Finnish commercial competition began in the 1880s.

Third, Russia feared that Germany might capitalize on its considerable influence in Sweden to use Finland as a staging base for an invasion of Russia. The Russian government was concerned especially for the security of St. Petersburg.

Fourth, there was a growing desire that the Finns, who enjoyed the protection of the Russian Empire, should contribute to that protection by allowing the conscription of Finnish youth into the Russian army. These military considerations were decisive in leading the tsarist government to implement Russification, and it was a Russian military officer, Nikolai Ivanovich Bobrikov, who, in October 1898, became the new Governor-General and the eventual instrument of the policy”<sup>24</sup>.

### **From January Uprising to 1905 Revolution**

After Alexander II (1818–1881) became emperor of Russia and king of Poland in 1855, he decided to relax the strict and repressive regime that had been imposed on Poland as a result of the November Insurrection. Alexander granted a few minor political concessions to the Poles, including granting amnesty for exiled Poles in Siberia and the reopening of the Polish Medical Academy. He raised hopes among the Poles that they might regain some degree of independence. Reform movements in Russia began to spread to Poland in 1861. “Secret societies among the gentry and the intelligentsia began to organize themselves, spurred by the success of the unification movement in Italy and the abolition of serfdom in Russia” (Kieniewicz 1967: 132–133). Conspiratorial groups opposed any form of Russian rule in Poland remained active and gained support, particularly among students and other groups of urban youth.

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<sup>22</sup> It is counted as perhaps the first political assassination in Finnish history, or at least as the first since the Middle Ages. H. Aittokoski, *Finland shaken 100 years ago by murder of Governor-General Bobrikov*, Helsingin Sanomat International Edition, 15 June 2004, <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/1076153076611>

<sup>23</sup> Also called “Finnish separatism,” a policy started during the “first era of oppression” (1899–1905) and continued during the second era (1909–1917). *Main outlines of Finnish History*, <https://finland.fi/life-society/main-outlines-of-finnish-history/>

<sup>24</sup> *The Rise of Nationalism in Finland*, <http://countrystudies.us/finland/11.htm>

The plan to recruit all radical youth into the Russian army and the announced conscription, on 14–15 January 1863, led to a national insurrection. “Although the insurgent army survived the winter of 1863–1864 in southern Poland, leaders of the rebellion who had not already fled the country were arrested in April 1864. Their execution four months later marked the end of the January Insurrection”<sup>25</sup>. The “January Uprising” of 1863–1864 was suppressed after eighteen months of fighting. Hundreds of Poles were executed, and thousands were deported to Siberia (Morfill 1902: 429). Thousands of Polish insurgents were transported to the “Nerchinsk silver-mining district” (Kennan 1981: 280). All territories of the former Poland-Lithuania were excluded from liberal policies introduced by Alexander II. The martial law in Lithuania, introduced in 1863, lasted for the next 40 years. Native languages, Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Belarusian were completely banned from printed texts. The Polish language was prohibited in both oral and written form from all provinces except Congress Poland, where it was allowed in private conversations only (Davies 1996: 828).

The January Uprising led to the formal abolition of the political and administrative autonomy. The Kingdom was divided into ten provinces, each with an appointed Russian military governor and all under the control of the Governor-General in Warsaw. All former Polish government functionaries were deprived of their positions and replaced by Russian officials. In effort to stronger integration with the Russian Empire (although Russian emperors wore the title of the king of Poland and were represented by their governors) semi-official use of the name of the Land on Vistula River (Nadwislanski Kraj, Privilslinsky Krai) began to be used, although the name “Kingdom of Poland” still functioned.

On 13 March 1881, Alexander fell victim to an assassination plot in Saint Petersburg by member of the *Narodnaya Volya*, [People’s Will party], Ignacy Hryniewiecki.

His successor Alexander III was determined to restore law and order in Russia. He ordered the execution of the leaders of his father’s assassination and exiled many leaders of revolutionary political groups. Furthermore, Alexander enforced strict censorship laws on political pamphlets and repealed many of the reforms and liberties that had been granted by his father. He undertook measures to weaken Judaism through persecution of the Jews. The latter policy was implemented in the “May Laws” of 1882, which banned Jews from inhabiting rural areas and shtetls [village settlements] (even within the Pale of Settlement) and restricted the occupations in which they could engage<sup>26</sup>.

Nicholas II (1868–1918) was given nicknamed Nicholas the Bloody by his political adversaries due to the Khodynka Tragedy, when over 1,300 people were

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/event/January-Insurrection>

<sup>26</sup> *The May Laws*, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1132-alexander-iii-alexandrovich-emperor-of-russia>



killed and another 1,300 injured in a human stampede at his coronation, and also because of anti-Semitic pogroms during his reign. “The tsar’s subsequent poor handling of the Bloody Sunday [workers’ demonstration] also contributed to his image as ruthless, uncaring and unsympathetic to the needs of the people. Instead of engaging in a dialogue with peaceful demonstrators, he left St. Petersburg and allowed his generals and the police to deploy troops and shoot unarmed people”<sup>27</sup>. In the time of the unrest and revolution in 1905, the nickname “Nicholas the Bloody” became popular and was often repeated in the press.

Bloody Sunday, the violent suppression of the 1905 Russian Revolution, the executions of political opponents, and his responsibility for the effects Russo-Japanese War.

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The Revolution in the Kingdom of Poland (1905–1907), also known as the Polish Revolution of 1905, was a major part of the Russian Revolution of 1905 in Russian-partitioned Poland (Ascher 1994: 157–158). One of the major events of that period was the insurrection in capital of textile industrial city of Łódź, in June 1905. The demands of the demonstrating masses included both requests for the improvement of the workers’ living conditions, as well as political freedoms. The question of autonomy for Poland was also frequently raised. In 1905, Poland was at the verge of a new uprising, revolution, or a civil war. Some Polish historians even consider the events of that period a fourth Polish uprising against the Russian Empire. National consciousness had risen among the Polish peasants.

Despite the failure of the revolution<sup>28</sup>, the Russian government conceded to some of the demands, in particular, russification was partially reversed in education in Poland.

### **From 1905 Revolution to Civil War The second era of oppression (1909–1917)**

A policy also known as Russification, started during the “first era of oppression” (1899–1905) and continued during the second era (1909–1917)<sup>29</sup>. As I wrote before, in 1905 Russia faced a humiliating defeat in the Russo-Japanese War and amidst the turmoil in St. Petersburg. The Revolution which broke out this year in Russia gave Finland a short breathing spell and a room for a new legislative reform (Cieślak 1983: 191). In 1906, the tsar proposed that the antiquated Finnish Diet be replaced by a modern, unicameral parliament. The Finns accepted the

<sup>27</sup> *People, Nicholas II of Russia*, <https://www.bl.uk/people/nicholas-ii-of-russia>

<sup>28</sup> More details: N. Davies (2005: 273–278).

<sup>29</sup> *Main outlines of Finnish history*, <https://finland.fi/life-society/main-outlines-of-finnish-history/>. According to Polish author: 1907–1914, B. Szordykowska (2011: 214–222).

proposal, and the Eduskunta was created (Szordykowska 2011: 211–212). Also included in the tsar’s proposal was the provision that the parliament be elected by universal suffrage, a plan that the Finns accepted, thanks to the spirit of national solidarity they had gained through the struggle against Russification<sup>30</sup>.

However, the idea of reforms in Finland was not shared by the most influential person in Russia at that time – prime-minister Pyotr Stolypin (1862–1911). The second period of oppression begun round 1907. In Autumn of this year he formed the Special Conference of the Affairs of the Grand Duchy of Finland to deal with the so-called “Finnish problem”. In 1909 he obtained permission from Nicholas II to call into being a Special Committee on Matters Dealing with the Grand Duchy of Finland and got a free hand to re-arrange relations between Helsinki and St. Petersburg. Nicholas II especially disliked the Finns. As he put it during his conversation with German ambassador in 1907, “the Finns were at very low cultural level with regard to morality, and nothing good is to be expected from them” (Ascher 2002: 307).

He denied the rights of the Eduskunta to legislate on matters of general state interests. “Stolypin’s 1910 legislation decreed that all laws were to be made by Russian imperial institutions, with the Senate and Eduskunta merely having the right to voice an opinion” (Kirby 1980: 234). Stolypin wished to destroy Finland’s autonomy and disregarded native tongues and cultures of non-Russian subjects, believing them to be traditional and ritualistic at best. The Finnish Diet tried once again to combat Stolypin, but his position was strong enough to win and he had support from Nicholas II. Of course, Stolypin was unaware that such actions only fanned the flames, and as result of his policy he was assassinated on 14 September 1911 by Dmitry Bogrov, a Ukrainian, “leftist revolutionary”.

From Stolypin’s death henceforward, the Russian form of rule can be called a monarchist dictatorship until Russia’s collapse during the Russian Revolution.

## Great War and independence

What Britannica defines briefly as: “World War I, also called First World War or Great War, an international conflict that in 1914–1918 embroiled most of the nations of Europe along with Russia, the United States, the Middle-East, and other regions. The war pitted the Central Powers – mainly Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey – against the Allies – mainly France, Great Britain, Russia, Italy, Japan, and, from 1917, the United States. It ended with the defeat of the Central Powers<sup>31</sup>, was contemporaneously described as the “war to end all wars”<sup>32</sup>. But its

<sup>30</sup> *The Russian Empire*, <http://countrystudies.us/finland/13.htm>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-I>

<sup>32</sup> The phrase is often associated with Woodrow Wilson, the US President, <https://www.quora.com/Why-is-the-quote-The-War-to-End-All-Wars-ironic>

costs were beyond imagination. It was one of the largest wars in history, it led to the mobilization of more than 70 million military personnel, including 60 million Europeans, over 16 million people-soldiers and civilians alike – were killed and the war itself was unprecedented in the slaughter, carnage, and destruction. Yet, the same time with collapse of the three empires it gave a hope to some European nations to rewrite their own history and create independent states, like Poland and Finland.

### **The Polish road to independence**

Russian troops left Warsaw on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 1915 and German troops marched in. The Russian rule was over. The new occupying forces restored many national symbols illegal under the Russian partition. It was possible to use the Polish language in offices again, the celebration of the 3<sup>rd</sup> May Constitution was resumed, and Warsaw could return to its former name, the capital city. During the German military campaign in the ethnically Polish territory, Poles were subjected to forced labor and confiscation of food and private property. After the German and Austrian failures on west European front their attitude to Poles changed and the Germans postulated the establishment of a dependent state, which would help to create a Polish army to replace German losses. The Act of the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 1916 was a declaration, signed by Emperors Wilhelm II of Germany and Franz Joseph of Austria, which promised the creation of a Kingdom of Poland in exchange for a draft of new recruits from German-occupied Poland for the war with Russia. On 14 January 1917, a Provisional Council of State was created, and a provisional government, consisting of fifteen members chosen by the German and ten by the Austrian authorities. On 21 April 1917, the Council of State passed a proclamation in favor of the formation of a Polish army (Polnische Wehrmacht).

The relations between Polish military forces and Germany and Austria were complex. In August 1914 Polish Legion (the name of the Polish military force) was established in Galicia. The Legion and their leader Józef Pilsudski became “a founding myth for the creation of modern Poland”. The unit was an independent formation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Initially Pilsudski supported the Central Powers against Russia, but in 1917 he realized that they were in no position to guarantee the independence of Poland. He decided to turn to Entente, particularly to France and the United Kingdom. When in July 1917, the Central Powers demanded that the soldiers of the Polish Legion swear allegiance and obedience to the Emperor Wilhelm II, Pilsudski and most of the soldiers of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigades of the Legions refused to make the oath. Pilsudski and his chief of staff Kazimierz Sosnowski were arrested on 22 July 1917 and interned in the German fortress of Magdeburg. Polish units were disbanded and the men were incorporated into the Austro-Hungarian Army.

In the meantime, a new structure the Regency Council of the Kingdom of Poland (*Rada Regencyjna*, or *Rada Regencyjna Królestwa Polskiego*) was temporarily appointed as the highest authority until a monarch or Regent would be appointed.

The next step was taken on 7 October 1918. The Regency Council of Kingdom of Poland declared the independence of Poland. On 23 October 1918 a government, with Józef Świeżyński as prime Minister, was established, without approval of the German authorities. From 1 November branches of the Polish Military Organization began disarming German and Austrian soldiers, 6/7 November 1918 socialist Ignacy Daszyński established in Lublin a Provisional Government of the People's Republic of Poland.

On 10 November 1918 Józef Pilsudski came to Warsaw having been previously released from prison in Magdeburg. 11 November 1918 – Pilsudski was appointed Commander-in-Chief by the Regency Council and was entrusted with creating a national government for the restored Polish State.

In the symbolic sphere this date has been recognized as the birth of the independent state, the Second Republic of Poland.

### **The Finnish way**

Although Finland was an autonomous Great Duchy within the Empire it could not escape the negative effects of a World War, if Russia was involved. On the other hand, in the summer of 1914, the Russians were afraid that the Finns might revolt or that the Swedes would attack Finland. For the Russians it was a very sensitive area because as it was in close proximity to Saint Petersburg. To control situation, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July in the Grand Duchy a state of war was declared. Taking into consideration a possible offensive of German forces near the capital of their Empire, by the end of 1914 about 35,000 Russian soldiers were deployed to different locations in Finland.

The Finns did not have an army and they were not required to send soldiers to the front. At the same time, many Finns joined the Russian Army as volunteers. The best known of Finns, Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim, the future Marshal of Finland and president of the country, reached even the rank of general. There were only 500 Finns that volunteered to fight in the Russian army in the autumn of 1914. This number included doctors and nurses who worked at the front<sup>33</sup>.

Not all Finns were loyal to the Russian Empire. Some of them perceived Russian actions during the war were as an attempt at total assimilation. In May 1915, a group of Finnish activists made an agreement with the Germans, which allowed for about 2,000 volunteers that fled from Finland to benefit from military training in Germany

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<sup>33</sup> *The Finns in the First World War*, <http://www.europecentenary.eu/the-finns-in-the-first-world-war/>

(Kubiak 2017: 68). These Finnish volunteers formed a military unit called the Jäger Bataillon, and in May 1916 they were sent to fight on the Eastern Front<sup>34</sup>.

The war significantly affected the Finnish economy. The most important industry, the wood industry, had been severely hit by the loss of Western export markets. However, the metallurgical industry benefited from Russian war orders, which made possible an unprecedented development. Production values increased fourfold in three years, and the number of employees doubled in only two years. Finland's relative economic flourishing lasted until 1917, when Russian orders ceased, leading to massive layoffs that affected the entire country<sup>35</sup>.

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The Russian Revolution of 1917 change situation of Finns dramatically. Events in Russia developed rapidly and can be described as a two-step-process: from the February Revolution to the October Revolution. The February Revolution was a popular uprising, and developed spontaneously on the streets of St. Petersburg, when the tsar was visiting troops on the front. The tsar Nicholas II was removed from power and on 15 March 1917 signed officially abdicated the Russian throne. The October Revolution (also called the Bolshevik Revolution) was a much more deliberate event, run by a small group of people, which called themselves the Bolsheviks. When they realized there no chance to maintain power in an election-based system without sharing power with other parties, they formally abandoned the democratic process and in January 1918 declared a "dictatorship of the proletariat". This led to a civil war between two factions, of the so called the Reds and the Whites. The Red Army fought for the Vladimir Lenin's ideology supported by the Bolsheviks and the White Army represented a large group of loosely allied forces, including monarchists, industrialists and supporters of democratic socialism (Szordykowska 2011: 231–236).

The Decree on Peace, written by Lenin, which passed on the second day of the Second Congress of the Soviet of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 1917, change the situation again. "In the Decree on Peace, Lenin appealed to the governments of all the warring states and to their peoples to conclude an immediate truce. The truce would last no less than three months to allow for the completion of peace negotiations by representatives of all peoples dragged into war and for the convocations of popular assemblies of all countries for the confirmation of peace conditions. Thus, while the language was careful, it was, in effect, a call for European-wide revolution. The world was astonished, fighting on the Eastern Front was instantly suspended and Russian forces evaporated"<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Kurland, but soon it was withdrawn from the front line and stationed in Lipawa. B. Szordykowska (2011: 226).

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.europecentenary.eu/the-finns-in-the-first-world-war/>

<sup>36</sup> [https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/decree\\_on\\_peace](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/decree_on_peace)

The second act, the Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia signed by Lenin and Stalin on 8 November 1917, proclaimed “The right of the peoples of Russia to free self-determination, even to the point of separation and the formation of an independent state”<sup>37</sup>. Collapse of the Russian Empire caused a power vacuum in Finland, and a subsequent struggle for dominance leading to militarization and escalation of the crisis between the left-wing labor movement and the conservatives. The Russian Bolsheviks polarized Finnish society and in course of 1917 two semi-paramilitary forces – the Red Guards (the Reds) and a Self-defense Corps (White Guards, Whites) – were created (Kubiak 2017: 69). Growing social unrest and five-day general strike led to election of a new government of Pehr Evind Svinhufvud (1861–1944) and to summon the so-called Independence Senate. New prime-minister presented a declaration to Eduskunta, which on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December 1917 passed a Finnish proclamation of independence (Szordykowska 2011: 228).

On 27 January 1918, the Finnish government ordered the disarmament of all remaining Russian garrisons by the forces of the White Guard, and on the same day the Reds proclaimed a revolution. The violent clashes between the two parts led to a bloody civil war, which lasted from 27 of January 1918 to the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1918. The Reds carried out an unsuccessful general offensive in February 1918, supplied with weapons from Soviet Russia. A counteroffensive by the Whites began in March and was reinforced by the German military detachments in April. Decisive battles took place in Tampere and Vyborg. Both were won by the Whites. The next two, the battles of Helsinki and Lahti, were won by German troops. The Whites (led by General Mannerheim) were better organized and benefited from the involvement of members of the Jäger movement and had commanding officers with experience in the Russian Army.

Political violence became a part of this warfare. Around 12,500 Red prisoners of war died of malnutrition and disease in camps. About 39,000 people, of whom 36,000 were Finns, perished in the conflict.

In the aftermath, the Finns passed from Russian governance to the German sphere of influence with a plan to establish a German led Finnish monarchy. Juho Kusti Paasikivi, and his government offered the crown to Prince Frederick Charles of Hesse, brother-in-law of Wilhelm II. When elected as the king instead of grand duke, this would mark a new status, that of an independent nation. But before Frederic managed to reach Finland, on 9 November 1918, Wilhelm II left the scene and Germany was declared a republic. Two days later, on 11 November 1918, the armistice between the belligerents of World War I was signed. Wilhelm II abdicated and the king-elect Frederick (Finnish name Väinö I) renounced the throne (14 December 1918).

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<sup>37</sup> *Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia*, <https://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/government/1917/11/02.htm>

Pehr Svinhufvud, prime-minister of the first independent Finnish government resigned on 12 December 1918 and general Gustav Mannerheim, moderate monarchist, the leader of the Whites during the Finnish Civil War, was appointed as a Regent (Kubiak 2017: 70–71; Mannerheim 2017: 131). Social democrats won three quarters of the parliament's seats in the election of 1919 and Finland adopted a republican constitution (Kubiak 2017: 71). In July 1919, Finland's first president Kaarlo Juho Ståhlberg (1919–1925) replaced Mannerheim. Finland became a republic (Mannerheim 2017: 145).

The new Act on the Formation of a Government (a new republican constitution) was adopted by the Eduskunta on 21 June 1919 and on 19 July entered into force. The Finns adopted the republican system with the parliamentary government (Cieślak 1983: 232).

### **Pilsudski and Mannerheim compared**

The independence of Poles and Finns has been in an inseparable way associated with two outstanding personalities: Józef Klemens Pilsudski and Carl Gustaf Mannerheim. Although they had different backgrounds and different attitudes concerning Russia, they also shared some astounding similarities. They were born in 1867, they both became marshals. The first one held the honorable title of First Marshal of Poland until the end of his life, the second was the only Finnish officer who had this degree in Finland's entire history. Mannerheim was drafted into the Finnish Cadet Corps, the equivalent of today's middle school military. He gained the qualifications of a professional soldier and at the age of 20 he was already an officer. Later, in 1887, he joined the tsarist army and started his military career as a simple officer in the 15<sup>th</sup> Alexandria Cavalry Regiment in Kalisz, then in the guard of the tsaritsa Maria Feodorovna, and during the Russian-Japanese war he became a lieutenant general based merits in the Battle of Mukden. In 1907 he was transferred to the Kingdom of Poland, where he was the commander of the Uhlans regiment in Mińsk Mazowiecki, the regiment of the Imperial Guard in Warsaw and finally the cavalry corps in Kalisz<sup>38</sup>.

Pilsudski and Mannerheim came from landowners' families. Pilsudski, related to the old Lithuanian nobility, Mannerheim came from the Swedish-Dutch aristocracy, whose representatives had titles of counts and barons. They were both patriots, but they manifested their love for their homeland in a completely different way.

They both loved horses. Pilsudski had his favorite mare, Kasztanka, Mannerheim devoted all his free time to breeding horses and had many favorite animals, including a stallion bearing his second name Gustaf.

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<sup>38</sup> Memories of seven years of military service in Kingdom of Poland Mannerheim described in: C.G. Mannerheim (2017: 41).

Pilsudski and Mannerheim had an incredible political intuition. Both cooperated with partition countries, although the idea of independence was obvious to Pilsudski from the very beginning. Mannerheim in 1917 stood at the head of the Finnish army, whose first task turned out to be the suppression of the Bolshevik movement in Finland. He accomplished this with the support of the Germans. When in December 1918, Finland formally became an independent state, he was chosen to be a regent, replacing the prince Frederic Wilhelm of Hesse, aspiring to the throne in Helsinki. He helped to introduce of the social democrat republican regime with the strong executive power of the president. In the first election of 1919, he lost to Kaarlo Juho Ståhlberg. After the electoral defeat, he removed himself from political life for a time and started breeding his favorite steeds.

After returning to Warsaw, Pilsudski received on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, the day of signing the ceasefire between Germany and the western allies in the Compiègne forest, full military power and, then, full civilian three days later. Thus, he replaced the Regency Council, although unlike his Finnish “colleagues” he did not think seriously about resurrecting any monarchy in Poland.

Both men met for the first time in 1919. Mannerheim visited Pilsudski in Belvedere in the course the Polish-Russian war (Mannerheim 2017: 151–152). Marshall Pilsudski died in 1935 and did not witness the atrocities of World War II. General Mannerheim was called in again to defend his country against the Soviet Union in Winter War (30 November–13 March 1940) and the Continuation War (1941–1944). Chosen the sixth President of Finland in 1944, since 1942 the marshal of Finland, Mannerheim signed the armistice with the Soviets and declared war on Germany. In 1946 he resigned from his position, left Finland and settled down in Switzerland, where he died in 1951.

## Conclusions

After the defeat of Napoleon, the alliance of Three Black Eagles (the emperor of Austria, the king of Prussia and the tsar of Russia), was meant to protect Europe from any new revolutionary ideas and ensure eternal peace. The decisions adopted at the Congress of Vienna were to serve this purpose. The Russian tsar Alexander I, at the beginning of his reign an enlightened and quite liberal monarch, strengthened Russians positions on the north-western and western flanks by extending his power to Finnish and Polish territories. The establishment of the Grand Duchy of Finland should prevent any invasion of St. Petersburg from the north (in a straight line from Helsinki it is only 302 km/188 miles). The Kingdom of Poland was a link with Western Europe and could serve as an experimental platform in the field of industrial innovation, which later with the successes could be applied in the other corners of the empire.



The Finnish nation and the Polish nation, which by historical coincidence, were placed under the rule of Russian tsars, started from a completely different position. The Poles had a state-long tradition and a strong national identity. Finns were part of the Kingdom of Sweden and lived in the shadow of the dominance of Swedish culture. They did not have real autonomy, and, in addition, their official language was Swedish, which fulfilled this role for the greater part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The number of concessions granted to Finns by Alexander II, especially in the field of language and education, seemed to be the right way to develop relations with tsarist Russia. A great blow and surprise for the Finns were the governments of successive tsars, who had completely abandoned and reversed the liberal political reforms of Alexander II. Two waves of Russification not only polarized Finnish society but also influenced and strengthened the national movement.

Paradoxically, the policy of Russification carried out by the Russian government in the Kingdom of Poland, which was mostly the repression and punishment for waves of national uprisings, were eased as a result of the Polish revolt of 1905. In Finland Russification after 1905 reached another, more intense level.

The outbreak of World War I aroused the anxiety of the Finns, but they were not directly involved on the battle fields. The Poles, on the contrary. Not only did they hope for a consequential conflict between the states responsible for partitions of Poland, but they actively participated in the war on both sides of the front. All of them hoped that under the wings of one of them a free Polish state would emerge.

The fate of the Grand Duchy of Finland was directly connected with the situation in Russia and was treated by the States of the Entente as a zone of Russian influence. The situation was different in the case of the Poland. President of United States, Woodrow Wilson's 1917 State of the Union Address left no doubts that the independent Polish state would regain the independence.

The Bolshevik Revolution and the Civil War that broke out in nearby St. Petersburg, found a bloody reflection in Helsinki. The fights between the Whites and the Reds ended with the victory of the first ones. Confronted with the political vacuum that emerged after the Lenin's decrees, the Finnish monarchists on 6 December 1917 declared the independence of Finland. The Finns' military cooperation with the Germans in the last phase of the war made it harder for the Entente states to recognize Finland's independence (Szordykowska 2011: 230).

In the domestic policy, the monarchists lost the election in favor of social democrats and declared Finland a republic. The existence of Finland was however threatened again by the Bolsheviks. The peace treaty with the Soviet Russia signed in Tartu in 1920 ended that state of insecurity. That year the Republic of Finland joined the League of Nations.

Also, Poland, despite, American support, had a long way to true independence. The Greater Poland Uprising and the Silesian uprisings, as well as the diplomatic struggle with the Council of Ambassadors in Paris about the final shape of the Polish borders ended only in 1921.

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Back to the question that I posed in the preface to this article. The problem of Russification of Finland has been and still is a puzzle for many people interested in Russian-Finnish relations. Here is one of such question put recently on the Internet forum "Paradox interactive": "The russification, introduced with typical Imperial Russian adroitness, proved to be counterproductive [...] This is mind boggling for me. I understand the reasons behind the russification of formerly Polish territories. The Poles were always a rebellious element and were not willing to accept being part of Russia ever. But Finland? [underlined by R.Ż.] The Finns were so loyal that they formed volunteer corps for various imperial wars, including the crushing of Polish uprisings, where they performed spectacularly. During Polish campaigns the Imperial army was plagued by officer resignations, desertions and ever entire units going over to the Poles. The Finns had no problem with that, despite taking part in crushing of liberal rebellions.

I have no answer why did the Czars decided time for Finland to become Russian? Didn't they have more pressing problems to solve and better ways to satisfy the Russian extreme nationalists?"<sup>39</sup>.

There are many possible answers to such a question. The easiest, though least fertile from a scientific point of view, is the reference to national characteristics, as it is the case of the question found on the internet (Poles are rebels and the Finns are a calm and loyal people). In global politics, this statement is irrelevant. The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Crimean War showed Russia that existing policy towards different nations of the Empire is no longer possible and effective. The multitude of languages in the empire, the different ways of administering the administrative units, and even various armies, which in theory were not subject to Russian tsars (Finland) required the centralization of the state. To compete with modern European states Russia had to go through a painful process of the full centralization and unification of the state. Numerous unification processes in Europe showed that was the only way to modernize a state (Germany, Italy). Russification was the most severe method to achieve that goal. It can therefore be said, with some certainty, that local national interests had to fall victim to the modernization of the Empire. In the case of an authoritarian state, like Russia, this process had a more brutal and more speculative course than in countries with democratic institutions.

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<sup>39</sup> <https://forum.paradoxplaza.com/forum/index.php?threads/what-was-the-reason-for-russification-of-finland.783856/>

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### Polacy i Finowie pod panowaniem rosyjskim

**Zarys treści:** Car rosyjski Aleksander I był głową Wielkiego Księstwa Finlandii, które rosyjska armia zajęła w 1809 roku w wyniku wojny rosyjsko-szwedzkiej. Ostateczny akt potwierdzający zdobycz uchwalił Kongres Wiedeński w czerwcu 1815 roku, na którym postanowiono także ustanowić Królestwo Polskie. Obok tytułu cara i Wielkiego Księcia Finlandii, Aleksander I otrzymał tytuł króla Polski. Od tego momentu, przez ponad sto lat, losy Wielkiego Księstwa Finlandii i Królestwa Polskiego spłotyły się pod rządami pięciu kolejnych rosyjskich carów.

Celem artykułu jest próba odpowiedzi na pytanie, czy dwa różne sposoby na zdobycie niepodległości – romantyczny sposób polski z powstaniem narodowymi i pragmatyczny fiński, względnie lojalny wobec caratu, miały wpływ na politykę Rosji wobec obu narodów. Królestwo Polskie i Księstwo Finlandii były autonomiczne, miały charakter unii personalnej z carami rosyjskimi, kraje te posiadały własne konstytucje, parlamenty, armie, odrębne systemy monetarne oraz edukacyjne, a życie urzędowe toczyło się w języku polskim (Królestwo Polskie) i szwedzkim (w Wielkim Księstwie Finlandii). Oba kraje miały także własne uniwersytety. Dopiero po pierwszym powstaniu narodowym w Królestwie Polskim, które wybuchło w listopadzie 1830 roku, w wyniku fali represji konstytucja została zastąpiona przez tzw. Statut Organiczny, a Sejm i odrębna armia zlikwidowane. Królestwo było okupowane przez potężną armię rosyjską, a w 1833 roku wprowadzono stan wojenny. Drugie powstanie narodowe ze stycznia 1863 roku doprowadziło do kolejnej fali represji i intensywnej rusyfikacji ziem polskich. W 1867 roku Autonomia Królestwa Polskiego, jego nazwa i budżet zostały zniesione. Od 1872 roku język polski był tylko wyborem opcjonalnym.

Po 1863 roku zmieniła się także polityka władz rosyjskich w stosunku do Wielkiego Księstwa Fińskiego. Posiedzenie fińskiego parlamentu (Eduskunta) zostało zwołane po raz pierwszy w 1809 roku, nowa ustawa parlamentarna umożliwiła rozpowszechnianie języka fińskiego. Po śmiertelnym ataku na Aleksandra II w 1881 roku, jego syn Aleksander III również próbował ograniczyć autonomię Finlandii. Lata 1899–1904 nazwano pierwszym okresem rusyfikacji Finlandii („pierwszy okres ucisku”). Manifestem z czerwca 1900 r. język rosyjski został wprowadzony obowiązkowo w korespondencji urzędników z Rosją. W 1901 roku została zlikwidowana narodowa fińska armia. W Rosji był to początek procesu unifikacji imperium w jeden system kulturowy, polityczny i gospodarczy. Po krótkiej odwilży, w wyniku rewolucji w Rosji w 1905 r., w Wielkim Księstwie Fińskim nastąpił tzw. „drugi okres ucisku” i pogłębiła się polityka antyfińska. Podczas wielkiej wojny 1914–1918 Wielkie Księstwo stanęło po stronie Rosji.

Natomiast tereny byłego Królestwa Polskiego znalazły się od 1915 roku pod panowaniem niemieckim. Po wybuchu rewolucji w Rosji, fińska Eduskunta uchwaliła 6 grudnia 1917 roku deklarację niepodległości. Po krótkim okresie regencji, 19 lipca 1919 roku, Finlandia przyjęła system republikański z parlamentarną formą rządu. 11 listopada 1918 roku Niemcy poddały się na froncie zachodnim. Tego dnia Rada Regencyjna w Warszawie przekazała władzę wojskową dowódcy Legionów Polskich – Józefowi Piłsudskiemu. Choć Polska wciąż musiała walczyć o ostateczny kształt państwa, dzień 11 listopada 1918 roku jest uważany za pierwszy dzień odzyskania polskiej niepodległości.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Cesarstwo Rosyjskie, Finlandia, Polska, porównanie ustroju politycznego.

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