

The Personality and Political Activity of Otto von Bismarck Through the Eyes of the Russian Political Elite during the second half of the 19th century

Alena Eskridge Kosmach

Professor of History, Francis Marion University, Florence, SC, USA

DOI: [10.55559/sjahss.v2i10.149](https://doi.org/10.55559/sjahss.v2i10.149)

Received: 05.08.2023 | Accepted: 01-10-2023 | Published: 14.10.2023

Electronic reference (Cite this article):

Kosmach, A. E. (2023). The Personality and Political Activity of Otto von Bismarck Through the Eyes of the Russian Political Elite during the second half of the 19th century. *Sprin Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(10), 34–52. <https://doi.org/10.55559/sjahss.v2i10.149>

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ABSTRACT

The attention towards the figure of Bismarck, known as the "Iron Chancellor" was connected with the fact that when he was in 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 very few state officials who respected the Russian Empire and considered it 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 documents of the second half of the 19th century.

Keywords: *Bismarck, Germany, Russia, Chancellor*

Introduction

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 very few state officials who respected Russian Empire and considered it 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 documents of the second half of the 19 th – the beginning of the 20 th century. The opinions expressed by the Russian political elite had a great influence 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 by the Russian political elite towards the personality and the political activity of the German Chancellor. Russian political elite was very tightly connected, not very broad social group, which was the subject for the decision making process in the field of the most important strategic decisions in the sphere of politics and also this group had extremely high potential for the implementation of these decisions into practice. Russian political elite had shared values, stereotypes, norms of behavior and also closeness to power in the country. Russian political elite of the second part of the 19 th century included emperors, the members of the imperial family of Romanovs, the representatives of the state bureaucracy, and also the influential representatives of the regional powers.

The German Chancellor, as Characterized by Russian Political Figures

1.1 How Bismarck was perceived by Russian emperors and members of the House of Romanov

Bismarck had the opportunity to interact with three Russian monarchs—Nicholas I (1825-1855), Alexander II (1855-1881), and Alexander III (1881-1894). The German politician could not have had any lengthy communications with the first since Nicholas died when Bismarck was still a little-known diplomat. This is why it has not been possible to find any evidence of Nicholas I am showing interest in Bismarck. Alexander III, as the most “Russian” of all the emperors, preferred to abstain from an aggressive foreign policy; moreover, he was brought up since childhood in an atmosphere of hatred for everything Prussian and German due to his mother’s Danish lineage (the war between Denmark and Prussia in 1864 led to Copenhagen losing the territories of Schleswig and Holstein). Consequently, Alexander III seldom voiced his assessments of foreign statesmen. Bismarck communicated most frequently and closely with Alexander II, who has left behind some interesting entries in his diary. It clearly shows the evolving relations between the Russian monarch and the “Iron Chancellor”: the Congress of Berlin in 1878 became the tipping point. The diary of Alexander II prior to July 1878 clearly shows respect and even admiration for Bismarck’s personality, which the Russian monarch describes using epithets such as “ingenious” and “strong-willed,” noting the German statesman’s brilliant diplomatic abilities. Also interesting is the tsar’s assessment of a potential union between the Russian Empire and Prussia, expressed in his June 1870 diary entries. Reflecting on the words of Bismarck, who had promised to build the most powerful and influential union in the world, the Russian emperor wrote somewhat pessimistically: “Russia will play the same part [that of a junior partner], though I will tell Bismarck about it at our next meeting, and Russia, as always, will lose in this affair.” (GARF, pp. F. 678. O. 2. D. 1., 36.)

Thus, Alexander II understood, even while witnessing the first successes of the future German chancellor, that a union with this dexterous and cunning diplomat would inevitably put the interests of Russia in a subordinate position in relation to Prussian interests. However, recognizing the promising outlook of the union, the Russian emperor agreed to cooperate with Bismarck, although he later regretted it. Alexander II still tried for a long time to establish relations on an equal footing, sometimes engaging in prolonged conversations with the German diplomat and conveying the content of those talks in his diary entries. (GARF, pp. F. 678. O. 2. D. 2., 6.) Even at the beginning of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, the Russian emperor feared a breakdown in relations with Bismarck although he was perfectly aware that the latter was impeding the progress of Russian interests in the East. The best evidence of Alexander II's apprehensions is the facts that having found out from the dispatches of Russian Ambassador in Berlin P.P. Ubri about the "Iron Chancellor's" displeasure with the accusations of the Russian press, he wrote in his diary: "The situation is dire, and we must take measures to preserve Bismarck's goodwill." (GARF, pp. F. 678. O. 2. D. 6., 3.)

As of 1878, the diary entries of the Liberator Tsar contain more and more criticism of the German politician, who had positioned himself as an intermediary in the negotiations between Russia and England. Alexander II feared Russia would become diplomatically isolated in Berlin, as he eloquently expressed in the following lines: "In the course of the congress, Bismarck made friends with Andr ssy, which makes me wary of discord in our relations with Germany." (GARF, pp. F. 678. O. 2. D. 6., 3.) The diary contains no other entries that involve an assessment of the German Chancellor's actions during the Congress of Berlin. However, it is known that the emperor and his Prime Minister Gorchakov considered this event to be the bitterest defeat of their lives. (Ado V.I., *Berlinskii Kongress*, 1878) (*Istoricheskieszapiski.*, 1961, pp. No. 69, 135-138.) In 1879 Alexander began to label Bismarck with the nickname "Bulldog," attributing to him excessive "gluttony" and juxtaposing him with Wilhelm I: "My uncle [Wilhelm] is an honourable man, he sincerely loves me, but I feel he is under the 'Bulldog's' guardianship." (GARF, pp. F. 678. O. 2. D. 8., 15.) Despite his criticism of Bismarck, the Russian emperor fully supported the initiative of his ambassador in Berlin P.A. Saburov to renew the alliance with Germany. (Nauka, 1968, pp. 156-157)

Alexander II remarked that the Berlin newspapers' hounding of the Russian chancellor Gorchakov was organized by his political opponent, Bismarck; the letters of the Russian ambassador in Berlin, Ubri, also supported this claim. The tsar assessed these facts as follows: "In my opinion, Bismarck wants to achieve [Gorchakov's] dismissal at any cost, and he is convinced that as soon as Gorchakov is removed from his position, he will be replaced by Shuvalov." (GARF, pp. F. 678. O. 2. D. 8., 15.) Considering Shuvalov's idolization of the "Iron Chancellor," this turn of events would play into the hands of the latter by allowing him to influence the Russian Empire's foreign policy. Finally, in a letter to his uncle Wilhelm I, Alexander II wrote about the deviousness of Bismarck, who declared his faithfulness to the German-Russian union, but at the same time was conducting talks with Vienna with the aim of signing an anti-Russian declaration.

The prominent Russian historian and diplomat S.S. Tatischev cites the following fact: in a conversation with French ambassador General Le Fl , the tsar expressed his attitude towards a possible war between France and Germany in 1875, declaring: "However, I am convinced that Germany is far from thinking of starting a war and that all of these regrettable

machinations on Bismarck's part are nothing but ruses to which he resorts in order to assert his authority by spreading the belief that he is indispensable through the agitation of illusory dangers." (Tatishchev, 2006, p. 506) If he had truly spoken those words, then it is apparent whom the Russian emperor considered to be the main culprit in the conflict between France and Germany.

In one of his books, Tatishchev brings up an excerpt from a letter written by Alexander II to the German Kaiser Wilhelm I on November 2, 1879: the tsar complained about Bismarck's actions, which were aimed at a rapprochement between Germany and Austria, contrary to his former assurances of eternal friendship with Russia, which made a deplorable impression as it "misdirected public opinion." (Tatishchev, 2006, p. 878)

However, another Russian autocrat, Alexander III, proudly wrote to his spouse from Berlin on September 29, 1889 that Bismarck "intentionally came here to meet me and was even at the station, something he has not done for the emperor of Austria, nor for the king of Italy (Bokhanov, 2001, p. 107)."

For the Russian emperor, who harboured no illusions as to the chancellor's friendly attitude towards Russia, such behaviour signified a desire to restore the former alliance with the Russian Empire.

Interesting words regarding how difficult it was for Alexander III to face the leading Old World diplomats were written by his spouse Maria Feodorovna (1847-1928): "Oh, how much wise firmness and fortitude, how much intricate restraint, and most of all, how much strong faith and hope is needed for him to ward off all fashions of demonic wiles, directed against him by the hands of Bismarcks and Salisburys. (Pobedonostsevi, 2003, p. 289)" More often than not, the empress presented various problems in Russia as Bismarck's intrigues. It seems she demonized the German statesman: he could not have been at fault for all the misfortunes of his neighbours. What evidently took place here was an outsized transference of the image of Russia's enemy to the identity of one person, the unifier of Germany being that person for the Russian empress. This perception of Bismarck, as the incarnation of the collective image of all Germans, as "the ideal Prussian," was not uncommon in the educated circles of Russian society.

Secretary of State Alexander Alexandrovich Polovtsov (1832-1909) cites Alexander III's words regarding the Bulgarian crisis of 1885: "Bismarck is fairly indifferent to the Bulgarian question since it does not closely affect Prussian interests. If he wanted to do something for us, he could have demonstrated his desire, but he evidently does not wish to do anything (PolovtsovAA, 1966, p. 367)." It seems the "Iron Chancellor" was not idle, but rather he was deliberately dragging Russia and Austria-Hungary into a confrontation in the Balkans, which drained much of their strength.

The Foreign Minister of the Russian Empire from 1900 to 1906, Vladimir Nikolayevich Lamzdorf (1844-1907) describes Alexander III's attitude towards the German political leadership in the beginning of 1889: "... the emperor and empress are now more than ever disposed against Bismarck and even against the German emperor. They call the latter 'a crook and petty lord who thinks too highly of himself and believes that everyone adores him. (LamzdorfVN, 2003, p. 128)'"

According to V.N. Lamzdorf, Alexander III, who did not care for the German politician, was very upset and alarmed by his dismissal since he believed that the chancellor was the true ruler of Germany, and that he did not strive to go to war with Russia, whereas the

same could not be said about the new leadership of the German empire. A.A. Polovtsov confirmed this, stating that the tsar was calmed only by the peaceful assurances of Wilhelm II.

Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich (1866-1933), a grandson of Nicholas I, also disclosed his opinion of the German chancellor. In his *Book of Memoirs*, he closely considered the problem of the interrelations between Bismarck and Russia in the time of Alexander II and Alexander III, criticizing the German politician for his position at the Congress of Berlin and accusing the chancellor of robbing Russia of the fruits of her victories in the war of 1877-1878, having forgotten about Russia's neutrality thought the years of the Franco-Prussian war. Bismarck acted in much the same way in 1888 during his visit to Russia with the young emperor Wilhelm II, allowing himself, to lecture Alexander III on the various issues involved in ruling the empire, contrary to the ethics of diplomacy. On the whole, Alexander Mikhailovich disapproved both of the chancellor, who dreamed of immobilizing Russian forces in Eastern Europe by means of a union with Russia, and of the inexperienced Kaiser Wilhelm II, as shown by this statement: "The 'Iron Chancellor's' projects would no doubt have been implemented if not for Alexander III's personal dislike of the young and volatile emperor, while Wilhelm II and his 'Svengali'¹ could not understand the personality of the Russian emperor. (Velikiy knyaz, 2001, p. 111)"

Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich (1858-1915) is another member of the House of Romanov who mentions the name of the German chancellor in a letter to the famous author Ivan Alexandrovich Goncharov. Describing his return to his company after a brief illness, he remarked with delight: "Here in the camp my soul feels rested... here the sergeant major doesn't contemplate Bismarck's intrigues, the clerk isn't anxious about the fortunes of the perfidious Bulgaria, and the quartermaster doesn't try to make out whether the publisher of the *Moscow News* is a friend or enemy to our fatherland. (Goncharov I.A. *Perepiska s velikim knyazem Konstantin Konstantinovichem*)" This remark testified to the atmosphere that reigned in the highest governmental circles of the Russian Empire and among the numerous members of the imperial house. One could suppose that by the intrigues of the "Iron Chancellor" he meant his economic policy, aimed at limiting the flow of Russian grain and other goods to the German market by introducing high customs duties. Aside from this he could have been referring to Russia's and Austria-Hungary's conflict of interest in the Balkans, which was advantageous for Bismarck.

An analysis of the position of the minister of foreign affairs A.M. Gorchakov, whose communications with Bismarck has been extensively researched, deserves special notice. More often than not, they are characterized as "the battle of the iron chancellors." In reality, one could remark a lengthy evolution from mutual goodwill in the initial years of their acquaintance to open confrontation in the subsequent ones (Akhtamzyan) (*dn Yarozhdeniya.*, 1998, pp. 136-149). Letters and diplomatic reports can serve as key sources of information regarding Gorchakov's perception of Bismarck in the absence of memoirs or diaries. S.S. Tatischev includes some of the former in his book on Emperor Alexander II, citing an interesting assessment of Bismarck by Gorchakov in his letters to the Russian ambassador in Berlin P. Ubr: "a great tempter in the desert. (Tatischev, 2006, p. 708)" In a letter to Ubr dated February 16, 1878, Gorchakov wrote that the "Iron Chancellor" is again "visible at full height," or in other words, he once again had great political weight in the Old World.

¹ A hypnotist who puts a person into a trance, making them obey all of his instructions, is a central character of the novel *Trilby* (1894) by British author George du Maurier.

Reflecting on the possible rapprochement between Austria and Germany, the Russian minister remarked that “this is not even something we could have expected from the honest broker, and especially not something we had the right to hope for, considering our long-standing relations with Prussia (Tatishchev, 2006, p. 848).” Evidently, Gorchakov had counted on Bismarck’s constant assurances of friendly regard towards Russia, believing that these had a real basis and that his fascination with Austria was only temporary. In practice, the “Iron Chancellor” preferred an alliance with the Habsburgs to a rapprochement with Russia.

According to Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Nikolayevich Lamsdorf, Bismarck was too irritable in the last few years of his chancellorship, which sometimes led to gross miscalculations in politics. Lamsdorf wrote in his diary on March 19, 1890: “Apparently, the prince has had poor self-control lately: when leaving the first assembly of the workers’ conference, he said loudly: ‘Rubbish! Rubbish! Rubbish!’, and at a dinner where Wilhelm [II] indulged his passion for oratory and made a speech that ran contrary to his opinions, Bismarck first allegedly gesticulated with his fork, and then pounded it on the table in order to drown out the voice of the monarch, upon whom he bestowed all manner of epithets in private conversations. (Dnevnik, 2003, p. 325)” Thus, as early as 1890 the “Iron Chancellor” behaved somewhat inappropriately, not heeding the opinions of others and trying to discredit the opposition by every means possible, something that the Russian diplomat believed to stem from Bismarck’s excessive vanity.

V.N. Lamsdorf cited the words of his predecessor as minister of foreign affairs, N.K. Girs (1820-1895), spoken in conversation with Alexander III: “I don’t at all consider Bismarck a paragon of purity and innocence, but nevertheless, when it is necessary and useful for our interests to deal with him, then it is better not to quarrel, but to see him as he is, and to try to reach our goals.” (Dnevnik, 2003, p. 181)

War minister of the Russian Empire in 1861-1881, Dmitry Alekseyevich Milyutin (1816-1912) considered Bismarck to be gifted with a wonderful talent for acting, able to pretend to be a “simple, good-natured soul” in a stressful moment, always cordial with guests, but at the same time conceited and slightly cynical. When the future German chancellor served as Prussian ambassador in Petersburg, they often met since they lived not far from each other on the English embankment. This is how Milyutin described the Prussian ambassador: “His outer appearance was not attractive: tall, stout, and broad-shouldered, with a reddish face, a large red moustache, and an almost entirely bald head. In his conversation and in his manner, he did not at all resemble a stiff diplomat; he could rather be taken for a retired military man. He spoke simply and naturally, with the air of an honest man, with a touch of sarcastic wit. (Milyutin, 1999, p. 304)”

One of the Russian delegates at the Congress of Berlin, Dmitry Gavrilovich Anuchin (1833-1900), who later became governor-general of East Siberia, has described his impressions of the German chancellor: “...Bismarck was wearing a black cuirassier-style uniform with yellow piping and epaulettes. Even though I had seen many things in my life, and it would have been hard to surprise me with anything, Bismarck made an extraordinary impression on me. What a powerful personality! Very likely, our Peter the Great was equally overwhelming. Approaching this figure, I involuntarily felt a kind of humility. (Anuchin, 1912, p. 41)” Anuchin remarked that the leader of the congress had grown a white beard that looked very flattering; along with his amiability, it gave him the air of a kindly, wise elder. The Russian envoy did not really like the excessive thriftiness of Bismarck, who had invited

only fifty people to a high society dinner. Anuchin supposed that Bismarck's national upbringing was to blame for it all since every German must be frugal, which was drastically different from the traditions of Russian hospitality. In this instance, the behaviour of one person, the "Iron Chancellor", was perceived by Anuchin as a manifestation of the national traits of the entire German people.

The minister of internal affairs of the Russian Empire, Pyotr Alexandrovich Valuev (1815-1890) remarked on October 8, 1865 that when mentioning the name of the German politician in a conversation with the monarch and his spouse, the empress (a German by birth) Maria Alexandrovna, as if reproaching the minister, said: "To have Bismarck is a blessing, and one can only congratulate Prussia on this. (Valuev, 1961, p. 71)" It is curious that in May of 1866, the brother of the Russian empress, Prince Alexander of Hesse would write about the state of affairs in Germany: "Hatred for Prussia and her dishonest politics... is boundless. Rarely has a name been cursed by all classes of society as the name of Bismarck has. (Vinogradov, 1985, p. 132)"

Head of the Main Directorate for Press Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior Evgeny Mikhailovich Feoktistov (1828-1898) in his memoirs spoke of the "Iron Chancellor" as a first-rate political player and a courageous man, and overall, his memoirs are imbued with great respect for the personality of the unifier of Germany. Among others, Feoktistov cites the words supposedly spoken by the well-known Russian diplomat Nikolai Pavlovich Ignatiev during Bismarck's tenure as Prussian ambassador to Petersburg: "He is an intelligent person, but an extraordinary eccentric; his head is constantly occupied with absurd plans of elevating Prussia and almost re-creating the whole of Europe, and all of this somehow hangs in the air before him without the slightest connection to the current state of affairs; but he's a good fellow and ready to share his fantasies with anyone..." (Feoktistov, 2001, p. 128) Now it is impossible to establish whether Ignatiev really said this, or this was a fabrication told by Feoktistov, who disliked him.

Senator Feodor Gustavovich Terner (1833-1906) drew attention to the fact that Bismarck, while already being an imperial chancellor, continued to live in fairly humble surroundings: "His apartment consisted of bright and spacious rooms, furnished fairly simply. Lunch was served in a large dining room, which was also not distinguished by any special decorations... A good, but not particularly gastronomic lunch..." The Russian politician reached the following conclusion: "Despite his distinguished position, Bismarck was perfectly unpretentious—like a gracious host, conversing animatedly with Ubr, and with me." (Terner F.G. *Vospominaniyazhizni F.G. Ternera*. Tom 1, 215)

Thus, the German politician appeared in a rather favorable light as a moderate, economical, and very practical person, which, however, did not prevent him from smoking expensive cigars. Terner considered the German politician a wise and farsighted statesman who knew how to correctly evaluate a situation and calculate the necessary measures to achieve his goals. The Russian politician was struck by the way "Bismarck, when he was occupied with some thought, began to talk about it directly and openly with anyone he might happen to be conversing with in the given moment, even if it is a person in a rather modest position, which my position at the time undoubtedly was—in complete contrast to the usual secretive habits of diplomats. And this is how he acted always." (Terner F.G. *Vospominaniyazhizni F.G. Ternera*. Tom 1, 215) It is evident that the German chancellor cleverly used his so-called "openness" to outwit his political opponents.

Chief Prosecutor of the Holy Synod Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev in one of his dispatches analyzed an address by the “Iron Chancellor” at the German Reichstag when the latter made a series of brash declarations concerning Russia, among others. Pobedonostsev criticized this speech, pointing out Bismarck’s tendency on the one hand to glorify himself, and on the other, to sneer at his neighbors and even his allies. The Russian conservative remarked: “The morality, as well as the genius of the leader of the Germans can and should interest us only inasmuch as they relate to our fatherland.” (Pobedonostsevi, 2003, p. 492) Pobedonostsevi was certain that Bismarck all too often resorted to misrepresenting facts, or even to outright lying, which obviously did not compliment the reputation of this intelligent man, who was well-versed in many subjects and despite everything had been once described as “great.”

V.N. Lamsdorf remarked that by the end of 1889 – beginning of 1890, the German chancellor could not engage in foreign policy with the same vigor since he was absorbed in his struggle against the socialist movement; in addition, as Russian envoys reported, rumors of Bismarck’s possible dismissal were circulating in the highest circles of German society. For example, chancellor of the embassy in Berlin, count Mikhail Nikolayevich Muravyov (1845-1900) in his letters to Lamsdorf recounts the content of his conversations with the “Iron Chancellor” and makes the conjecture that the latter will indeed soon be removed from “political Olympus.” However, Muravyov was uncertain about whether he should trust the confessions of the German politician, who “not for the first time threatens the state of affairs with his resignation.” (Dnevnik, 2003, p. 295) His speculations were also confirmed by the dispatches of P. Shuvalov, who sympathized with the German chancellor, mentioning that Bismarck announced his departure from big politics together with his son Herbert.

V.N. Lamsdorf did not trust the words of the German chancellor regarding his friendly feelings for Russia being the reason for his dismissal; he supposed that the rift between the Kaiser and the chancellor was due to the discrepancy in their views on domestic politics, primarily on the labor issue. Nevertheless, Lamsdorf wrote sarcastically about all the “honors” bestowed on the “Iron Chancellor” upon his retirement, particularly about his elevation to a ducal title: “In essence, this title rings hollow in comparison with the halo surrounding the name of Bismarck; as for the rank [of Field-Marshal], one can feel someone’s influence behind this.” (Dnevnik, 2003, p. 321) According to V.N. Lamsdorf, everyone in Germany began to forget the “Iron Chancellor” immediately after his retirement, and his complaints about the ingratitude of the young Kaiser Wilhelm II only harmed him. The real consequences of Bismarck’s retirement, or as he himself called it, “a first-rate funeral,” were the decentralization of power and a significant decline in the role of the press. Even after the dismissal of the ex-chancellor, the Russian minister continued to keep track of his life, particularly of the retired politician’s participation in the Landtag elections.

On the pages of V.N. Lamsdorf’s diary, one can read the author’s reflections on Bismarck’s possible reconciliation with the young Kaiser. N.K. Girs’s assistant agreed with his superior that by moving towards a certain rapprochement, the “Iron Chancellor” became morally bound up with the current policy of the government. This was puzzling to the foreign policy leaders of the Russian Empire since Bismarck did not occupy any government post, and this reconciliation would probably be of no benefit to him, except to satisfy his vanity. Yet, Lamsdorf had another piece of information: “Count Shuvalov holds strongly to the opinion that despite the highly publicized reconciliation, Wilhelm II will thoroughly avoid

seeking the former chancellor's advice on questions of foreign policy as well as domestic politics." (Dnevnik, 1894-1896. M.: Mezhdunarodnyeotnosheniya, , 1991, p. 23) In this case, as Lamsdorf wrote, Emperor Alexander III himself agreed with the Russian ambassador in Berlin.

In Lamsdorf's opinion, Wilhelm II sought the advice of the seasoned chancellor more than once; however, he had no desire for him to return to big politics officially, fearing the widespread popularity of the unifier of Germany among the popular masses.

The dispatches of Russian diplomats play a special role in establishing the way any politician is regarded since the diplomats have direct communications with him, as well as the ability to detect public sentiment in their host country. The dispatches of Russian envoys in Berlin are interesting in this regard. In a letter by Pavel Petrovich Ubri, whom the "Iron Chancellor" strongly disliked, one can find lines detailing Bismarck's complaints in a conversation with Pyotr Shuvalov about the German empress, who in the thick of Kulturkampf was persuading the emperor to stop the persecution of the Jesuits. The imperial chancellor accused the duke and duchess of Baden of inciting Wilhelm I to support the Catholics in opposition to his prime minister. The Russian ambassador reported that the head of government found the anti-clerical struggle quite difficult, which was clearly manifested in his increased nervousness.

Ubri also wrote that "the empress and Prince Bismarck both complained, although from different points of view, about the weakness of the Emperor and King, and about his lack of memory increasing over the years." (AVPRI) The Russian ambassador noticed that the German politician attached great importance to the nationalization of the railways. In connection with this, Ubri supposed, "Most likely, the German chancellor sees in this scheme the strengthening of his own cause, founded on material interests." (GARF, pp. F. 678. O. 1. D. 508., 38.) Ubri definitely noted Bismarck's commitment and ability to influence the course of any significant political processes in the Reich, just as he did, for example, on the issue of relations between members of the German diplomatic corps and the press. The ambassador reported that when conversing with a person, the German chancellor most often gave a monologue, preferring to speak rather than to listen to others' arguments: "Prince Bismarck shut his interlocutor's mouth, not talking to him about Turkey and not even giving him the opportunity to give him the letters he had." (GARF, pp. F. 678. O. 1. D. 508., 76.)

Pyotr Alexandrovich Saburov (1835-1918), who replaced Ubri in 1879 as Russian ambassador to Berlin, reflecting in his letter to N.K. Girs on the peculiarities of domestic policy in the Russian and German empires, expressed his wish "that every Russian, and especially Our Ministers could understand our position the way Prince Bismarck understands it instead of putting on airs with pipe dreams and lousy liberalism." (AVPRI, pp. F. 138 O. 467. Delo 51, 78.)

The chairman of the council of ministers of the Russian Empire (1905-1906), Sergei Yulyevich Witte (1849-1915) wrote that the socialist movement compels governments to pay more attention to the needs of the popular masses, and the activity of the first German chancellor served as a vivid example of this.

A delegate of the first State Duma from the Mensheviks, Noe Nikolaevich Zhordania (1869-1953) believed that the "Iron Chancellor" skilfully played on the conflicts between the German parties since he kept to the conservative side in domestic policy, while championing a

certain level of freedom in the field of economics, supporting the *laissez faire* principle, which satisfied various political forces.

In Zhordania's opinion, the German chancellor had two types of socialism in his arsenal: the first, the "aristocratic" type, consisted of robbing the poor in favor of the rich: the other, the "popular" type, entailed carrying out social reform. This was why Bismarck's activity was associated with "sitting on two chairs at once," which finally led to his dismissal. Zhordania concluded: "Bismarck is a whole system, a whole movement unto himself. He runs the affairs of the government and the Reichstag. For twenty years he has been the dictator of the new Germany, nothing happened without him, and everything was done with his accord." (N.N., 1907, p. 106)

Head of the Main Directorate for Press Affairs of the Ministry of the Interior E.M. Feoktistov, discussing Bismarck's unexpected appearance on the big political stage in 1862, noted: "His appointment as prime minister at the very height of the conflict between the Prussian government and parliament surprised many of us here if only because he had not been well known here until now." (Feoktistov, E.M. Za kulisamipolitiki I literatury, 128.) To a certain extent, Feoktistov sympathized with the chancellor, who, given the existing constitutional system of the German Empire, had to resort to bribing deputies of the Reichstag in order to pass the law he considered necessary.

S. Y. Witte had analyzed the conflict between the German chancellor and the well-known Russian historian and diplomat S.S. Tatischev, perceiving with a good amount of skepticism the latter's words about the Russian diplomatic representative in Austria-Hungary being dismissed from his post due to Bismarck's intrigues. Witte wrote: "One must say that, on the one hand, although it is very likely that indeed Tatischev's statements about Bismarck's intrigues were correct, but on the other hand, Tatischev did not behave quite in accordance with his position in Vienna... not as one would wish such a prominent diplomat to behave. (Witte, 2010, p. 477)"

In Witte's opinion, Bismarck did not support Russia at the Congress of Berlin, having forgotten that it was largely thanks to Russia that the Prussian king became the German emperor, and he himself transformed from Minister President to Imperial Chancellor. The disagreements that began to take place between the two countries following 1878 occurred in large part because the all-powerful chancellor did not know Alexander III personally and did not trust the firmness of his character. Witte concluded: "In this state of affairs, the traditional friendly relations gradually cooled off and finally led Bismarck to the creation of the Triple Alliance, and Russia to a gradual rapprochement with the French Republic, which resulted in the implementation of the Dual Alliance (Russia and France)." (Witte, 2010, p. 571)

V.N. Lamsdorf, describing in his diary the events on the cusp of 1886-1887, pointed out that the unifier of Germany addressed the Russian emperor and his entourage several times with assurances of the most benevolent and peaceful disposition within the German Empire, which did not seek to unleash hostilities against France, much less interfere in the Bulgarian crisis. However, the Russian minister emphasized that this "peacefulness" was due to the particular intensification of difficulties in Germany's colonial conquests in 1889 in Samoa and Zanzibar, which provoked parliament to sharply criticize the imperial chancellor.

According to Lamsdorf, the "Iron Chancellor" dedicated less and less attention to foreign policy in the final years of his governance of Germany since many problems had become exacerbated within the country, first of all, the massive scale of the labor movement.

The assistant to the minister of foreign affairs wrote disparagingly about Shuvalov's and Muravyov's "groveling" before the retired German politician and argued that Bismarck attached great importance to having N.K. Girs remain in the foreign minister post for as long as possible, believing that he could always come to an agreement with him. Incidentally, Girs was the only foreign minister whom the "Iron Chancellor" expressly visited. After Bismarck's dismissal, his devotee Pavel Shuvalov disappointedly told Lamsdorf that only now had many of the German politician's intrigues been uncovered. In addition, Shuvalov pointed out the ex-chancellor's involvement in the opposition movement of major landowners: "...it is Bismarck who leads the real unlawful movement of rural lords behind the scenes. Through his agencies, he encourages local Sejms to interfere in the affairs of the empire. (B.N, 1998, p. 88)"

According to Lamsdorf, the ex-chancellor was trying to use his assurances of constant peaceful disposition towards Russia in the press to discredit Wilhelm II and the new chancellor, Caprivi, under whose rule, relations with their powerful eastern neighbor were only worsening. For example, in Lamsdorf's diary entries for May 3, 1891, we read the following: "*Hamburger Nachrichten*, one of Prince Bismarck's publications, continues its attacks on Austria and highlights its preference for an agreement with Russia. (LamsdorfVN, 2003)" We can also find the following paradoxical lines: "Prince Bismarck's publication finds that since Russia suffered a loss due to her breach of the Treaty of Berlin regarding Bulgaria, she could very well have come to an arrangement with the sultan and breached the Treaty of Paris by reaching an agreement on the free passage of our ships—and permission for such passage would have been fully granted to the Sultan. (LamsdorfVN, 2003)" However, Lamsdorf believed that these were merely attempts to gain the goodwill of Russia's leaders, as well as to return his lost positions within Germany.

According to the head lady-in-waiting of the Highest Court, Elizaveta Alexeevna Naryshkina (1838-1928), the idea of the unification of Germany had been a treasured dream of the Prussian envoy to Petersburg from the very moment of his debut as a diplomat. Prince A.M. Gorchakov allegedly told her stories about this. Incidentally, Naryshkina wrote the following curious lines about one episode in the interrelations of the two future chancellors: "Afterwards, when [Bismarck] had brilliantly achieved his dream, on meeting [Prince Gorchakov], he said to him, 'Well, teacher, are you proud of your student?' The prince bowed and replied, 'Like Perugino was proud of Rafael, the student has surpassed the teacher!'" (Naryshkina, 1906, p. 205) Probably, what took place here was diplomatic courtesy, and one should scarcely talk about the sincerity of either politician. Gorchakov himself expressed an interesting thought in a letter to the war minister D.A. Milyutin in 1866: "The political horizon is gloomy and grows darker even in the East. All the trouble comes from the Sphinx, the one on the Seine. Without him, there wouldn't be a Bismarck." (Narochnitskaya, p. 94) Thus, in those years, the Prussian Minister President was still perceived as a second-rate politician, largely oriented towards the French emperor.

N.N. Zhordania thought that in addition to the actual unification of the German lands, the "Iron Chancellor" pursued yet another goal—to establish an absolutist system throughout the entire territory of the state. In order to do this, he had to eliminate Napoleon III since Bismarck had become a second Napoleon, and Europe was too small for two such power-hungry people. Discussing the famous politician's contribution to the unification of Germany, Zhordania wrote: "Even if Bismarck's considerations were unoriginal, he undoubtedly carried them out and brought them to life in an original way. First of all, we should remember that

Bismarck acted as a fighter for the strengthening of Prussia, for broadening its reaches.” (N.N., 1907, p. 58)

Polish politician Roman Dmowski (1864-1939) thought that the German chancellor often resorted to cunning tricks, scaring his disaffected political opponents with the Polish threat in the eastern provinces of Prussia, while dramatically distorting statistical data. It is precisely with the personality of the “Iron Chancellor” that Dmowski connects the German Empire’s rise to its leading role in Europe. The Polish publicist thought that “one of Bismarck’s undeniable strengths was his fairly thorough knowledge of Russia and the resulting well-known ability to determine the influence of internal factors on its policy. Already as an ambassador in Petersburg, he learned to fear liberal foolishness and pan-Slavism on the part of Russian society.” (Dmowski, 1909, p. 69)

In Dmowski’s opinion, the German politician had foreseen that Russian society would, with time, develop anti-German sentiments, largely fuelled by the activity of the Russian chancellor A.M. Gorchakov. This was why there was nothing surprising about Bismarck’s policies consistently opposing Russian plans on the eastern question, which culminated in the Congress of Berlin in 1878. Touching on the German Empire’s colonial policy of the time, Dmowski remarked that “for a long time Bismarck pretended to be indifferent to colonial politics, in view of Prussia’s goals in Europe.” (Dmowski, 1909, p. 69) However, pressured by financial and industrial circles, he finally had to begin seizing overseas territories, but he always acted cautiously and did not wish to expend large forces on colonial conquests.

One of the Russian envoys to the Congress of Berlin, D.G. Anuchin, pointed out that the “honest broker” offered to solve the most contentious issues before the beginning of the conference by way of talks between interested parties, which would have significantly lightened the burden placed on the congress, and therefore less time would have been wasted on arguments. Unfortunately, Anuchin did not report any preference given by the president of the congress to one country or another; this is why it is impossible to discern whether he believed that the German chancellor had betrayed Russia or not. He only alludes to Shuvalov, who declared that Bismarck became furious when he found out about the Balkan borders proposed by the English, and cites several examples that clearly demonstrate inconsistency of action among the members of the Russian delegation in Berlin.

State Secretary A.A. Polovtsov noted that after the Congress of Berlin, Shuvalov often told him that the elderly Gorchakov in a pitiful and comical state tried to impede him in conducting his work at the congress; supposedly, several days before his departure for the congress, he had dined in Tsarskoe Selo and “heard from the sovereign heartfelt apprehensions about the congress not succeeding because the English would deceive him, Shuvalov, and War Minister Milyutin added that it would be better to lose all the gains of the war than to be subject to the risk of its renewal.” (PolovtsovAA, 1966, p. 191) Nevertheless, even after the Congress of Berlin, the germanophile Shuvalov continued to believe that his personal friendship with Bismarck would help in the solution of international problems. He would say to Polovtsev that all that remains for the Russian political government to do is to wait for the death of the “Iron Chancellor,” following which the internal discord within Germany would give Russia the chance to grow closer to France and reclaim the positions it had lost in Europe.

Polovtsov criticized the German chancellor for his ill-advised colonial policy and wrote about the way Shuvalov, on his return from Berlin, told Alexander III about the

existence of a secret Austro-German agreement (the constitutive part of the documents on the Triple Alliance); however, the emperor did not believe this and did not even deem it necessary to discuss this problem with the minister of foreign affairs, Girs. It seems that Polovtsov did not completely understand the real state of affairs since he often too easily trusted the words of Shuvalov, whom Bismarck used to advance his own interests.

War Minister D.A. Milyutin wrote about the way the Prussian Minister President skilfully outwitted the French emperor Napoleon III, having promised him significant territorial accretion in exchange for neutrality during wars with Prussia and Austria. In Milyutin's opinion, the German politician "admitted, not without cynicism, that he intentionally dragged out the talks with Napoleon, keeping his propositions secret so as not to dispel the French emperor's fanciful dreams all at once; that thanks to this policy, Prussia managed to successfully dispatch first Denmark, then Austria, avoiding the war that Napoleon had already threatened at that time." The war minister added that the unifier of Germany feared Russia more than the others, and that was why he did not run the risk of playing such games with it as he did with France.

The Russian war minister, known for his antipathy towards the Germans, criticized both Gorchakov and Shuvalov for their inability to play the diplomatic game with the German chancellor. Moreover, the Russian chancellor did not know how to do this due to old age, as well as excessive vanity, while Shuvalov was impeded by his political naivete and incomprehension that his German "friend" skillfully used his limitless trust. Milyutin also pointed out that the Russian ambassador in Berlin became an unintentional victim of the opposition between Gorchakov and Shuvalov: "Ubri wrote to Gorchakov that he feels insulted since Bismarck almost never honors him with direct explanations of matters, whereas he spends entire evenings in confidential talks with Count Shuvalov on questions of modern politics." (Milyutin D.A. Dnevnik, 1949, p. 46)

Milyutin remarked that dislike gave way to excessive and suspicious courtesy during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. In his opinion, the "Iron Chancellor" "deliberately pushed Russia towards more dynamic actions in the Balkans, wishing to pit the interests of Vienna and Petersburg against each other. Milyutin believed that Russian diplomacy was too late in discerning the German politician's intentions: "Those friendly pieces of advice always seemed suspicious to me, but our chancellor only now [by the end of 1877] begins to doubt the sincerity of our friends and for the first time ventured to speak of this to the sovereign, who listened to him without objection." (Milyutin D.A. Dnevnik, 1949, p. 130) It is quite possible that Milyutin could have deliberately shown himself to be a far-sighted politician who knew everything in advance but was underestimated by the tsar, who preferred to listen to others.

Milyutin wrote that with the replacement of Ubri by Saburov as Russian ambassador in Berlin, nothing had changed much, and Bismarck continued to successfully mislead Russian diplomats, making them promises that he did not fulfil. The war minister provided an example: "The benevolence of the German Chancellor extends so far that Saburov even dares to raise with him delicate questions about the future of the Balkan Peninsula in the event of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Bismarck agreed to head the new diplomatic coalition, while England lost her nerve." (Milyutin D.A. Dnevnik, 1949, pp. 21-22) Thus, in Milyutin's opinion, Russian diplomacy continued to make the same mistakes in their interactions with the highly experienced German politician.

Naturally, Bismarck's foreign policy was seen differently by those in Russia, compared to those in Germany, which is why the dispatches of Russian ambassadors in Berlin allow us to analyze his actions from a slightly different angle. For instance, P. Uбри in his 1875 dispatches highlighted his conversations with the chancellor, who explained that all the rumors about a war between Germany and France originated from the journalists, while he is quite calm since the French lack about 30 thousand horses for the waging of war; therefore, they are hardly likely to declare war on Germany. Aside from this, the Russian ambassador cites the words of the English envoy in Berlin, Odo Russell, who observed with bewilderment all of Bismarck's assertions about poor Russian-German relations. In this case, Uбри supported the German chancellor's point of view. In a letter to Gorchakov dated April 8, 1875, the Russian ambassador wrote about the inconvenient location of the residence of the unifier of Germany; after all, "the isolation in which the German Chancellor resides relieves him of any diplomatic exchange of thoughts and makes him perhaps too receptive to the reports he receives, the value of which he thus cannot always confirm." (AVPRI, pp. F. 138 O. 467. Delo 18, 50-51.)

Uбри reported in a letter to Gorchakov dated April 23, 1875 that Shuvalov told him that Bismarck, despite his peaceful declarations, did not rule out the possibility of a war with France since together with Moltke he carefully watched France's preparations, which supposedly resembled military mobilization. The German chancellor expressed his dissatisfaction with Italy for its excessive patronage of the Pope, as well as with Belgium for its ineffective slander, which conveyed the idea that the German Empire was the main aggressor in Europe. Among other things, "Prince Bismarck complained about the Russian press too—about *Novoye Vremya* (New Time) and about *Birzhevye Vedomosti* (Stock Exchange News)." (AVPRI, pp. F. 138 O. 467. Delo 18, 72.) He was not assuaged even by Shuvalov's assurances that in Russia only *Moskovskie Vedomosti* (Moscow News), *Golos* (The Voice), and *Journal de St. Petersburg* (The St. Petersburg Journal) should be taken seriously. Undoubtedly, the fears of the German politician were fully justified, especially considering that he knew perfectly well what role the press plays in the life of the state. The actions of Prince A. I. Baryatinsky, who advocated for strengthening the army and navy, also caused some concern for Bismarck. The chancellor feared that the realization of this programme, as well as the emerging rapprochement between Vienna and Petersburg, could overshadow the Russian-German friendship.

Later, in a conversation with Uбри, Bismarck repeatedly declared "that to attribute to him aggressive intentions towards France means to accuse him of idiocy and complete contempt of intelligence." (AVPRI, pp. F. 138 O. 467. Delo 18, 89.) It was with indignation, according to the words of the Russian ambassador, that the chief German minister reacted to the words of the British Lord Derby, who claimed that war was quite likely to break out soon between Germany and France. Bismarck believed that with this speech the British politician was attempting to set German and Russian diplomats against each other, but he would not succeed of equal interest are the letters of N.K. Girs, who spent several months of 1883 receiving treatment in Switzerland, but nevertheless continued to work. In one of these, he wrote about the German chancellor: "Then he began to tell me that throughout his entire career, he had always stood for an alliance with Russia, although we have not always understood it to be thus." (AVPRI, pp. F. 138 O. 467. Delo 83, 15.) The "Iron Chancellor" tried to prove to N.K. Girs the benefits of a rapprochement between Austria-Hungary,

Germany, and Russia; moreover, for his part, he promised to limit the Hapsburgs' immoderate appetite regarding issues where marked tensions were observed between Petersburg and Vienna. The Russian politician trusted the words of his German colleague and wrote in his turn that this rapprochement "is beneficial to us too, and even necessary under the current circumstances, it seems to me there can be no doubt about this." (AVPRI, pp. F. 138 O. 467. Delo 83, 20.)

The well-known diplomat Nikolai Pavlovich Ignatiev cites some lines in his *Travel Letters of 1877* that unambiguously characterize the author as a vain person: he easily believed Andrásy's flattery, which had been passed down to him through several people. The Austrian chancellor supposedly stated: "I have fully abandoned my prejudice against General Ignatiev. He is the only person Russia can confidently put forward as a match for Bismarck. (Ignatiev, 1999, p. 163)" It seems the Russian politician overestimated his own potential and was too trusting of his counterparts' flattery.

Lieutenant-General of the Special Corps of Gendarmes Vasily Dementievich Novitsky (1837-1907) discussed the different political weight of Russian and international diplomats using the example of Pyotr Andreevich Shuvalov and Bismarck. He believed that Shuvalov's unpopularity in Russia following his diplomatic fiasco at the Congress of Berlin was not completely just, but the fact remained that the Russian politician was inferior to Beaconsfield and Bismarck in his level of education and talent, and that was why he could not get the better of them. Novitsky stated: "Count Shuvalov had a great deal of innate intelligence, doubtless, but these gifts were not supported and anchored by higher education." (Novitsky, 2001, p. 281) Thereby, Novitsky believed that one of the main reasons for Russia's defeat at the Congress of Berlin was not the machinations of Bismarck the "honest broker", but rather the poor preparedness of the Russian representatives, and more specifically that of the leading envoy, Pyotr Andreevich Shuvalov. His lack of foresight would later be noted by the Soviet scholar V.M. Khvostov, who published Shuvalov's report on the events of the 1878 congress. According to the researcher, "this was an attempt at self-justification, addressed not to Shuvalov's official superiors, but to Peterburg's highest 'society'." (Khvostov, 1878, p. 85)

Senator F.G. Ternier was aware that the "Iron Chancellor" claimed that his motivation for his alliance with Austria in 1879 and the "war" against Russian securities, instigated shortly beforehand, was that the Russian Empire undeservedly made him the only culprit for their failures at the Berlin congress, instead of placing the blame on their own diplomats. At the same time, Ternier did not provide his assessment of these actions by the German politician but only noted that his measures achieved their goals. Aside from this, the Russian senator wrote in 1889: "At the beginning of this year, the Sovereign met with Bismarck abroad and had a prolonged conversation with him, which ended in reconciliation between them. Bismarck evidently stated his policy to the Sovereign quite frankly." (Ternier F.G. *Vospominaniyazhizni F.G. Ternera*. Tom 1, 215)

The Russian Ambassador in Berlin P.A. Saburov, in conversations with the editor of *Moskovskie Vedmosti*, asked him several times to reveal the secrets of Russian-German relations to which he was privy as someone who was accepted in government circles. The Russian diplomat claimed that his motivation for this was that sometimes he had nothing at all to say in response to the German chancellor's inquiries. Saburov wrote to Pobedonostsev regarding the rumors of his quarrel with Minister of Foreign Affairs N.K. Girs: "According to Nikolai Karlovich's assurance, this is the first time he hears about my supposedly wishing to

make him quarrel with Prince Bismarck and to thwart their meetings.” (Pobedonostsevi, 2003)

The minister of national education of the Russian Empire, Ivan Davidovich Delyanov (1818-1897), noted what an impression the possible appointment of I.F. Tsion as the new editor of *Moskovskie Vedomosti* made on the “Iron Chancellor,” considering Tsion was known for his hostile attitude towards the unifier of Germany. Delyanov believed that “Bismarck wants to recruit Tsion into his army any way he can, fearing that Tsion might get his hands on *Moskovskie Vedomosi*.” (Pobedonostsevi, 2003) Despite the wiles of the German chancellor, the minister of national education was enthused about his ability to keep a close eye on all the important European events.

Lady-in-waiting A.F. Tyutcheva indignantly pointed out that the “Iron Chancellor” dreamed of making Austria not a separate country but an eastern province of the German Empire in 1870, and including the East Slavic lands into its population. She was provoked to even greater fury by Bismarck’s position on the issue of revoking the neutrality of the Black Sea, prescribed by the Russian Empire at the Paris peace conference of 1856: “We let ourselves be flattered by Bismarck’s assurance that we could get away with this trick, while the Prussians only wanted to embroil us in a fine mess.” (Tyutcheva, 2004, p. 502) As time has shown, A.F. Tyutcheva’s apprehensions regarding this issue was not justified.

Chief Prosecutor of the Holy Synod K. P. Pobedonostsev in one of his diary entries remarked that “Bismarck is completely right in saying that he has not only earned ‘the biggest Russian medal’, but also Russia’s eternal gratitude.” (Pobedonostsevi, 2003, p. 492) The sarcasm of these words is fully clarified when Pobedonostsev reveals the reason for this very gratitude, which was the fact that the German chancellor finally decided to announce the existence of the German-Austrian union treaty, signed in 1879 and directed partially against Russia. The chief prosecutor of the synod declared that if anyone by that time still harbored any illusions regarding the “Iron Chancellor’s” “friendly” attitude towards Russia, then they could either be considered idiots or associates of Pyotr Shuvalov, whose name Pobedonostsev prefers not to mention, finding it sufficient to compare the Russian politician to Mazepa.

P.A. Shuvalov, trying to absolve himself of the blame for Russia’s diplomatic defeat at the Berlin congress, asserted that he had not been a supporter of the convention signed with England in May of 1878, and declared that only the German chancellor could have forced the English to scale down their military preparations. The Russian politician wrote: “In all modesty, I can say that at that time I was the only statesman in Russia who could have brought this matter [the Congress of Berlin] to a successful outcome, thanks to the friendly relations that existed between Prince Bismarck and me, and thanks to the trust I was shown in London and Vienna.” (Khvostov, 1878, p. 99)

The leading Russian representative in Berlin, speaking out against the accusations that were heaped on the “Iron Chancellor” in Russia immediately after the conclusion of the congress, declared that Alexander II and his entourage were the ones who offended Bismarck by sending Gorchakov to the German capital at the last moment. Another important variable was that Russian diplomats constantly reminded the German chancellor that he must repay Russia for its neutrality during the wars for the unification of Germany. Shuvalov wrote in regards to this: “In a word, we turned to him much too often. I also think we could have gained greater benefit from our good relations with Germany if Prince Gorchakov had not

been credited, justly or not, with making overtures to France in order to keep Prince Bismarck out of action.” (Khvostov, 1878)

One of the Russian representatives at the congress, G. Bobrikov asserted that by accusing the authors of the Berlin treatise of belittling the benefits of Russia’s victory over the Ottoman Empire and the liberation of the Balkan peoples from the Turkish yoke, the Russian press was forgetting that this international action was only a product of its time. Thus, he does not openly express his opinion; however, his next sentence effectively demonstrates that he placed the blame, first and foremost, on the Russian delegates, including himself: “There is no doubt that in Berlin we were generally compliant. To escape a tense situation as soon as possible and avoid the possibility of new international complications, we perhaps made concessions too easily, not discerning the intentions of the competing powers, whether the intention to go to war really stood behind their demands or it was a cleverly disguised empty threat.” (BobrikovG, 1989).

In her October entries for the same year, one can read that Veselitsky-Bozhidarovich, the Vienna correspondent of *Novoevremya*, argued that Bismarck, having reprimanded his son Herbert for his trip to Italy, directs all of German politics. A.V. Bogdanovich came to the following conclusion: “In general, it is clear that Bismarck still has to correct the mistakes of his sovereign.” (Bogdanovich, 1990, p. 101) The diary also mentions that the “Iron Chancellor,” displeased with the appointment of Pavel Shuvalov, the younger brother of his “friend” Pyotr Andreevich, to the post of Russian ambassador in Berlin, tried to “remove” him from the German capital. A.V. Bogdanovich mentioned Bismarck’s name several times in relation to all kinds of rumors; for instance, the German chancellor supposedly gave M.N. Katkov a million marks to write positively about the Triple Alliance. We should remark that such gossip evoked nothing but light irony from the author of the diary.

The governor of Ryazan and member of the Board of the General Directorate of the Press, Pyotr Dmitrievich Stremoukhov (1828-date of death unknown), mentioned an encounter with Bismarck at the Baden resort, remarking that his arrival no longer caused a stir in the local community. We should note that Stremoukhov had a mixed perception of the chancellor: on the one hand, he thought of Bismarck as “a great statesman,” (1898, pp. 96,66)and on the other, he distrusted Bismarck’s statements about striving to maintain friendship with Russia. The author writes about discovering that Andrassy visited Gastein to conduct talks with Bismarck, which subsequently prompted Stremoukhov to reflect: “Could the respective accord between Germany and Austria been already planned, or even signed, during Count Andrassy’s stay, and did the meeting that took place shortly after between Emperor Wilhelm and our sovereign Alexander Nikolevich in Alexandrov circumvent the direct wishes of Prince Bismarck?” (p. 68) The Russian governor did not believe in the sincerity of the “Iron Chancellor’s” words when the latter, in a conversation with Stremoukhov, very vividly described to him all the advantages of a Russian-German alliance and the disastrousness of a rapprochement between Paris and Petersburg.

The Ryazan governor also noted the fact that the German politician thoroughly reprimanded the Russian press for their denunciation of Germany, as well as the Russian government for such leniency in relation to the press. Bismarck was not pacified even by assurances that the official Russian position was expressed in *Pravitel’stvennyi Vestnik*(Government Herald), where there was not even a hint of criticism in regards to Germany, its emperor, or its government.

Thus, the analysis of the way members of the imperial House of Romanov and politicians of the Russian empire perceived the personality and actions of Otto von Bismarck allows us to draw a series of conclusions. First of all, member of Russia's political elite remarked on the complex and enigmatic personality of this politician, who, in their opinion, was a great man. In terms of Bismarck's inherent positive traits, they remarked most frequently on his intelligence, courtesy, knowledge of several foreign languages, persistence and sense of purpose, as well as his love for his native land. However, these personality traits often could not obscure his excessive pride, contempt for other people, cruelty towards his enemies, deceit and treachery, which were also, according to the Russian politicians, inherent in the "Iron Chancellor's" personality.

Many of Bismarck's Russian contemporaries, including a number of political figures, drew attention to the German chancellor's imposing height since he was a head taller than everyone around him. Also, due to the difference in political culture between Germany and Russia, many Russian leaders and politicians had a critical attitude towards certain convictions of the "Iron Chancellor," who preferred to function in line with *Realpolitik*, while for the majority of his Russian colleagues the moral side of the problems being solved was also important.

On Bismarck's domestic and foreign policy, there was no consensus among the Romanov dynasty and Russian statesmen, largely due to differences in the political views of each representative of the dynasty. However, nearly everyone saw the German chancellor's domestic policy as less successful than his foreign policy. *Kulturkampf* and the struggle against the socialist peril were considered the most contentious issues. Some politician's believed that the German chancellor's defeat in the fight against the socialists was one of the reasons for his dismissal.

Bismarck saw relations with Russia as one of the most important aspects of his foreign policy. On this matter, opinions were divided: one half considered the German diplomat a loyal and grateful politician in relation to Russia, while the other noted that he was a double dealer, caring only for the interests of his own state. This fact inspired the respect of Alexander III, who considered taking care of the interests of one's native land to be the sacred duty of every politician. However, other proponents of the given point of view did not always have a positive assessment of this position.

On the whole, the analysis of Bismarck's image, as seen in the milieu of Russian political figures, demonstrates conclusively that the German politician was very popular among his Russian colleagues even though he provoked an extremely wide range of emotions.

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