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A bear and a clockmaker: on origins of “Russian bear” stereotype in Switzerland in the second half of the 19th century**

Summary: The article analyses the specific attitudes of the ‘Russian Bear’ metaphor in the German-language Swiss press in the second half of the 19th century: in the all-European context as well as in the context of its role in building the Swiss national identity. The author has proven that there exists a connection between the Swiss image of Russia and the ‘colonial discourse’ (described by Edward Said) in that period. The article indicates the great role of the ‘bear’ metaphor within the key binary oppositions, distinctive for that discourse: West – East, culture – nature, civilization – barbarity, democracy – despotism. It analyses as well the typical Swiss way of perceiving Russia – through the prism of the ethical discourse, which had enabled the 19th century Helvetians to play the role of ‘Europe’s conscience.’ The author indicates that – while using the ‘Russian Bear’ met-

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aphor – the 19th century Swiss press used to categorize Russia as an antithesis of the countries that personified the main attributes of the culture of the West. While making oppositions between the Russianness and the Germanness the Swiss press was building such oppositions as: order – chaos, creation – destruction, reason – irrationality, self-control – irritability. The ‘Russian Bear’ as a partner of the French Marianne used to personify an antithesis of the French refinement. The ‘Russian Bear’ metaphor compared with the symbol of Helvetia used to serve to build oppositions between the liberal, wealthy, democratic Switzerland and Russia, which was perceived as a severe ‘Eastern despotism’.

Keywords: social history, Russia in 19th century, press in Switzerland

Im Bärengaben zu Bern,
Da sind zwei Bären gestorben,
Da hat man als Leckerbissen
Acht schöne Schinken erworben.

Ach, würde dem russischen Bären
der Himmel den Tod verleihen,
An diesem Bärenschinken
Würd‘ ganz Europa sich freuen.¹
no author, Bärenschinken, “Nebelspalter” 1890, issue 5

My objective is to trace the specificity of a “Russian bear” metaphor in Switzerland in the second half of the nineteenth century. It will serve as an example that in the Helvetian country in the discussed period Russia was perceived as an antithesis of states that were embodiments of (Western) European culture. Thereby, I will attempt to demonstrate the relation between the Swiss imagery of Russia at that time and the “colonial discourse”² in terms of which Europeans are to traditionally perceive the Orient – described by an American³ literary scholar Edward Said.⁴

¹ “In Bärengaben by Bern / two bears died. / They were made into a delicacy / Eight magnificent hams. // Ah, if only the Russian bears / died and were sent to heaven / on the ham from those bears / the whole Europe would feast”.

² Also called “oriental”.

³ Of Palestinian descent.

⁴ E. W. Said, *Orientalism*, trans M. Wyrwas-Wisniewska, Poznań 2005, cf. e.g. E. W. Said, *Nationalism, colonialism and literature. Yeats and colonization*, “A Field Day

One of the main premises of his "oriental" theory is that Westerners, consciously and unconsciously, use a discourse in which the West constitutes the main reference point in deliberations concerning universal models of civilisation and so-called human values, while the East impersonates all that is traditionally associated with lack of culture and backwardness. The West is perceived as rational, creative, imperious and masculine, and the East – as "thinking with heart", non-creative, compliant, feminine. The European discourse on the East reflects thinking with categories of West – East, culture – nature, civilisation – barbarity, advancement – backwardness, democracy – despotism.⁵ This framework of perceiving the world, born in the West, was to be internalised by the inhabitants of "Orient" as well.⁶

Pamphlet" 1988, vol. 15, p. 7. The western discourse "orientalising" Russia was described, among others, by M. Janion, *Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna. Fantazmaty literatury*, Kraków 2006. The issue of the discourse alienating Russia from the European civilisation was undertaken, among others, by: I. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe: A Study in Identity and International Relations*, London–New York 1996; M. Malia, *Russia under Western Eyes: From the Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum*, Cambridge–London 1999; L. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford 1994.

⁵ Nota bene, the principle of dichotomy underpins the process of stereotype forging. The term "stereotype" is understood here as a belief that is susceptible to changes, generalised, shared by a given group, and pertains to events, institutions or groups of individuals, including their character traits, appearance, a role played in history and specifics of their behaviour. The prevailing opinion in sociology is that the stereotypes not only raise awareness to potential vices of a group that the person belongs to, but also incorporate these shortcomings into negative stereotypes pertaining to other groups. The stereotypes of foreign groups most often emerge as negative mirror reflections of self-stereotypes. As such, they refer not to those they describe, but to those that created them and swear by them. The issue of stereotypes, including national ones, was undertaken by many authors, both Polish and foreign. Among the most inspiring for the author are: M. Kofta, A. Jasińska-Kania (eds), *Stereotypy i uprzedzenia*, Warszawa 2001; T. Walas (ed.), *Narody i stereotypy*, Kraków 1995; T. Szarota, *Niemcy i Polacy. Wzajemne postrzeganie i stereotypy*, Warszawa 1996; O. Rösch (ed.) *Stereotypisierung des Fremden. Auswirkungen in der Kommunikation*, Berlin 2000; T. D. Nelson, *Psychologia uprzedzeń*, trans A. Nowak, Gdańsk 2003.

⁶ Cf. *Bear in the European Salons: Russia in German Caricatures, 1848–1914*, in: *Images of the Other in Ethnic Caricatures of Central and Eastern Europe*, eds D. Demski, K. Baraniecka-Olszewska, Warsaw 2010, pp. 338–361.

My objective is also to analyse the way of perceiving Russia characteristic to the Swiss – in terms of moralising discourse that, in the nineteenth century, helped the Helvetian nation which had developed the most democratic state in the world to aspire to the role of the “conscience of Europe”. My investigation of the “bear” metaphor of Russia in Switzerland is based on the source material from satirical magazines as well as daily newspapers in German published in this country. I conducted research of all the issues of two satirical weeklies: “Der Gukkasten”⁷ and “Nebelspalter”⁸ (the latter to the year 1900) and all – archived as an electronic browser – annuals of the oldest and most opinion-forming Swiss daily newspaper “Neue Zürcher Zeitung”⁹ from years 1800-1900, as well as all of the issues of satirical weekly “Postheiri” preserved in the archives.¹⁰ An outcome was 37 metaphors of the “Russian bear”, 10 of which were found in the “NZZ”, 24 – in “Nebelspalter”, two – in “Postheiri” and one – in “Der Gukkasten”. The oldest found mention of the metaphor comes from 1849 and was published in the last of the aforementioned magazines. In the next decades, this metaphor appeared in the press sporadically, but it became more frequently used in late 80s and in the 90s of the nineteenth century. In “NZZ”, which represented the mainstream of daily press of that time, the expression “Russian bear”, understood as a synonym of Russia or the idea of being Russian, appeared relatively rarely.¹¹ It had, nonetheless, occurred quite frequently in the satirical magazines of the last thirty years

⁷ Published in Bern in 1840–1850.

⁸ Published in Zurich since 1875. This weekly, existing to this day, is the oldest and the first professional satirical magazine in Switzerland. At the end of the nineteenth century, its mission was not only to gain an international renown, which lasted until the modern times, but also, while keeping a hand on the pulse of political events and trends in European art, to familiarise the Swiss reader with popular animal alter egos of the main protagonists of the world politics.

⁹ Published in Zurich since 1790.

¹⁰ Published in Solothurn in 1845–1875. The volumes from 1856–1875 are not available in Swiss libraries.

¹¹ The metaphor of the Russian bear consisted of only a small percent of terms which were used by the nineteenth century German-speaking Swiss press to describe the Russian state and the Russians. The data from “NZZ” can be taken as fully representative. In the years 1800–1900 the term “Russian bear” (or, in one case, “Moscow bear”) in popularity

of the nineteenth century, represented predominantly by the "Nebelspalter". In this work, I will address the majority of the gathered written materials¹² pertaining to the metaphor of the "Russian bear" as well as about a half of iconographic sources.¹³

The majority of the "bear" metaphors refer to Russia's performance on the international stage. In three quarters of cases, the figure of a bear served to show the Russian state and its representatives, occasionally– the Russian nation, Russian emigrants or actual bears from this country. The "Russian bear" was depicted neutrally in about half of the cases, but the distinctly negative perspective occurred almost as frequently. Every third instance of the "Russian Bear" metaphor was a negative commentary on the Russian state's activity on the international stage.

ranking failed to compete with other expressions that were associated with Russia and Russian, such as:

- "Russland"/"russisch" – 1000 records,
- "Kosak"/"kosakisch"/"Kosaken" – 915 (in phrases such as: "Kosakenpeitsche", "Kosakenpolitik"),
- "Czar" – 622,
- "Iwan" – 445,
- "Knuten"/"Knuten*" – 431 (in phrases such as "Knutenhiebe", "Knutenreich", "Knutenwirtschaft", "verknutete Russland", "Knutendespotismus", "Knutenpolitik"),
- "Moskowien"/"Moskowiten"/"moskowitisch" – 199 (e.g. "moskowiter": Absolutismus, Barbarei, Joch, Humanismus, Tyrannei, Fanatismus, Zivilisation, Cäsarismus),
- "Väterchen" – 102,
- and even "Matuschka" – 12.

On the other hand, this term topped in popularity such artefacts associated with Russia as:

- "Wodka"/"Wutki" – 7,
- "russische/moskowitische Barbarei" – 4,
- "blutige Herrschaft" – 1;

source: self study, conducted using digital database comprising all the archived issues of the daily since 1790, shared online by the editorial office of "NZZ".

¹² 14 altogether.

¹³ 23 altogether; in the given period, the caricatures were published only by the satirical magazines.

The Russian bear and the “sick man” of the Balkans

“The United States tell the Russian bear: do not meddle in another’s affairs”, “Long live the freedom of speech!”. “NZZ”, in its coverage of the welcoming ceremony for Lajos Kossuth in New York in December 1851, quotes the American newspapers, showing that it shares the Americans’ enthusiasm for the leader of the Hungarian Uprising of 1848,¹⁴ banished from his homeland. The aforementioned “bear” headline is the first documented example of using the “Russian bear” metaphor in this daily.

The Hungarian Uprising was significant not only as an event which engaged the general public across the entire Europe, but also as a tragedy, which in a country such as Switzerland prompted the sense of solidarity and self-identification with the fighters in the name of democracy and self-determination of nations. It was also an event bearing consequences for Switzerland itself in the form of a wave of political refugees from the Holy Alliance countries, including Russia, and from the lands of Hungary affected by the Russian intervention. Eventually, the Swiss authorities had to confront the governments of those powers, which demanded to revoke the asylum granted to their subjects. When writing about “bringing the Russian bear down a peg”, the Swiss press articulated a clear message for the authorities responsible for resolving the asylum matters.

In the years to come, the “bear” theme appeared as a commentary to the subsequent military interventions in which Russia participated. In the period that interests us,¹⁵ the Tsarist Empire waged war solely on the militarily weaker countries which were subjects to colonial expansion. A commentary to its diplomacy, supported by the military strength, can be expressed by the concept of the “Russian bear” – Big Brother.¹⁶ In the

¹⁴ „Die Vereinigten Staaten erklären dem russischen Bären: mische dich nicht in fremde Dinge”, “Es lebe das freie Wort”; anon., no title, “NZZ” 1851, 27.12.

¹⁵ Which concludes in 1900.

¹⁶ Contrary to appearances, origins of this phrase can be traced to the nineteenth century. For example, a caricature *Bomba’s Big Brother*, published in the British magazine “Punch” 11 October 1856, depicts the “Russian bear” as an ally- as a “Big Brother” of Ferdinand II, nicknamed “Bomba”, the despotic king of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

Swiss press, it is mainly reflected in the manner the Russian military interventions in the Balkans are depicted: usually against Turkey – the then “sick man” of Europe.

The first confrontation with the “sick man” was the Crimean War (1853–1856), waged by Russia as an attempt – a failed one – to gain access to the Black Sea straits. The powers of Western Europe took the side of the Ottoman Empire; Great Britain, France and Sardinia even provided military support. The satirical press in Switzerland, still fledgling then, published a commentary of the events on the “eastern” front. The “bear” metaphor appeared in “Der Postheiri” twice. The first occurrence, published in 1854, was a picture called *How the Russian Bear in Wallachia tries to secure the stolen honey*. The great Russian bear, using a sabre, awkwardly tries to ward off the Turkish bees and the French-Italian-British flotilla that harass him. It can be assumed that this picture alludes to the siege of Sevastopol by the allied countries.¹⁷ The second illustration shows a bear in a pointed cap, sitting on a pile of fighting bodies and whipping the Turkish sultan, who is supported by a British lion, a French rooster, and an Italian unicorn.¹⁸

Next occurrence of the “Russian bear” is related to the so-called Bulgarian War (1876 – 1877), waged in the name of liberation of the Balkan nations from the “Turkish yoke”. The Western powers limited their role in the conflict to observation. Nonetheless, after the victory of Russia, they enforced the convening of the peace conference in Berlin, which served to divide the influence zones in the region more “fairly”. The commentary on the outbreak of war in the Swiss press depicts Russia as a great manipulator. In early September 1876, “NZZ” informs that “Glas Czernogorca” reports Serbia and Montenegro want to continue the fight with Turkey until they liberate themselves from the Turkish reign. As a commentary to this news, the correspondent notes that, in fact, the Russian government uses Montenegrin newspapers as a propaganda medium to ensure the continuation

¹⁷ Anon., *Wie der russische Bär den in der Walachei gestohlenen Honig in Sicherheit zu bringen sucht* [*The Russian bear, carrying the stolen honey, seeks shelter in Wallachia*], “Der Postheiri” 1854, issue 29 [disclosed by Stadtarchiv Zürich].

¹⁸ P. Weber, *Gegenwärtiger Stand der orientalischen Frage* [*The current state of the eastern matters*], “Der Postheiri” 1854, issue 6.

of the war. “Will both provinces bleed themselves dry in the process [...] is not a concern for the *Russian bear*”.¹⁹



Figure 1 Anon, *Wie der russischer Bär den in der Walachei gestohlenen Honig in Sicherheit zu bringen sucht*, “Der Postheiri” 1854, issue 29, by courtesy of Stadtarchiv Zürich

Wie der russische Bär den in der Walachei gestohlenen Honig in Sicherheit zu bringen sucht.



Figure 2 P. Weber, *Gegenwärtiger Stand der orientalischen Frage*, “Der Postheiri” 1854, issue 6, by courtesy of Stadtarchiv Zürich

¹⁹ “Ob dabei die beiden Provinzen sich verbluten [...] kümmert den russischen Bären nicht”; anon., no title, “NZZ” 1876, 1.09.

Those activities served to weaken Turkey as an effect of the internal fighting, to the point when Russia could overcome it easily. A caricature published in the magazine “Nebelspalter” after the Tsarist Empire joined the war expresses the view about hypocrisy and criminal intentions of Russia more bluntly. It depicts Serbia and Romania, countries on whose side Russia entered the fight with Turkey, crushed by a giant bear’s claw.²⁰



Figure 3 Anon., *Serbien und Rumänien*, “Nebelspalter” 1877, issue 28, by courtesy of Kantonsbibliothek Vadana St. Gallen

The “Russian bear” entered the Turkish area of influence for the third time in the 80s of the nineteenth century, in relation to the so called Bulgarian issue. After the death of Tsar Alexander II, the relations between Alexander of Battenberg, the prince of Bulgaria he had appointed, and the new monarch of Russia, Alexander III, took an unfortunate turn. In 1883, “NZZ” eagerly notes that “Prince Alexander [...] recognizes the necessity to escape from *the Russian bear’s friendly hug* and to embrace the German – Austrian alliance”.²¹ However, in 1886 the prince was dethroned as a result

²⁰ Anon., *Serbien und Rumänien* [*Serbia and Romania*], “Nebelspalter” 1877, issue 28 [disclosed by Kantonsbibliothek Vadana St. Gallen].

²¹ “Fürst Alexander, der die Nothwendigkeit einsieht, sich von der freundschaftlichen Umarmung des russischen Bären loszumachen und sich der deutsch-österreichischen Allianz zuzuwenden, muß sich zu diesem Zwecke auf eine nichtrussische Partei im Lande stützen”; anon., no title., “NZZ” 1883, 5 X.

of a palace coup by the “Russian party”. It elicited a strong media reaction, similar to the one caused by the Crimean war. As a commentary to those events published 5 years later, “NZZ” states:

As long as the nations in the East [...] will be thrown around, like a ball, between Russia, which burns with a lust for plunder, powerless Turkey and the European powers, which continually change their interests, [...] as long as the *ravenous Russian bear* will not be forced to silence one way or another, and Europe will still fear for its peace, the brushwood under the Balkans cauldron will blaze with a high flame.²²

The aforementioned examples allow for an observation that the bear metaphor in the Swiss press evolved, the described symbol gradually becoming more barbaric and demonic. From the neutral impact it had in the first half of the nineteenth century (the Russian Bear as one of many animals in the flock), it abruptly switched to a clearly “negative” depiction toward the end of the century (the Russian Bear as the only predator, threatening the peace in Europe).

It can be assumed that the process was a result of the growing popularity and, consequently, universalisation of the bear metaphor. Over several decades, it had probably absorbed the odium of many negative concepts by means of which the Swiss press, following in the footsteps of its western counterparts, criticised the Tsarist state.

The demonic image of Russia was traditionally smuggled in the epithets used to depict the ruling Tsars. In a ranking of Russian despots created in the nineteenth century, the most likeable one was... Peter I, as a person who civilised Russia, and Alexander I, who defeated Napoleon. In contrast, the four last Tsars from the Romanov dynasty appeared in the Swiss press as a monolith of evil. Nicholas I, the despot with an

²² “So lange die Völker im Osten [...] zwischen der brutalen Ländergier Rußlands, der ohnmächtigen Türkenherrschaft und den wechselnden Interessen europäischer Großmächte wie ein Spielball hin und her geworfen werden, [...] so lange der Heißhunger des russischen Bären auf die eine oder andere Art nicht zum Schweigen gebracht sein wird, mag Europa immer wieder für seine Ruhe und seinen Frieden bangen, so oft das „orientalische Zündhölzchen“ wieder ins Glimmen geräth”, anon., *Ein Jahrzehnt. IV*, “NZZ” 1891, 9 I.

"iron stomach"²³ and *blutriesender Polen würger*²⁴ found a worthy successor in Alexander II, described as *menschenscheu Rabenvater* and *Sklavenzüchter*, and he – in Alexander III, a militarist, chauvinist, and admirer of reaction, and then in Nicholas II, a fiendish hypocrite, who, after initiating a common disarmament, earned himself an ironic nickname of the "angel of peace".

The barbarian image of Russia was furthermore reflected in a widely popular symbol of a Cossack, the stereotype of which related to the vision of the "brutish" Russian soldiers, who marched West after defeating the Napoleonic army. The more years had passed since those events, the less the continent's inhabitants remembered the appreciation for the Russian soldiers, allied with the anti-French coalition, and the more in their awareness the Russian Cossack became a rapist, robber and a savage. The Cossack figure epitomised the aggression, the vulgarity and the ugliness. His barbarity was symbolised by the costume, comprised of a uniform and a fur cap with a vertex, resembling a nightcap, as well as a knout held in the hand and by their wide "Mongolian" faces, covered with black bristle. This stereotype found a complement in the other epithets, serving as a description of Russia's operations on an international stage, such as the "ravenous hunger", *Prügel, Mord und Brand und Pest*, and the "holy war" or "civilizational mission" always used ironically and in quotation marks. The bear metaphor, with its popularisation, took on itself the burden of embodying the aforementioned "dark sides" of Russia.

The Swiss satirists were not innovators in the field. They imitated the canonical satires developed in the half of the eighteenth century in Great Britain.²⁵ Following its example, the world presented in European satirical magazines resembled a menagerie of nations, including the confrontation of bestial with human elements. A peculiarity of this type

²³ Qtd. in. anon., no title, "Der neue Guckkasten" 1850, issue 20.

²⁴ Qtd. in. anon., no title, *Erbärmliches*, "Der neue Guckkasten" 1850, issue 51.

²⁵ Cf. e.g. D. Donald, *The Age of Caricature. Satirical Prints in the Reign of George III*, New Haven 1996; F. G. Stephens, E. Hawkins, *Catalogue of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum. Division I. Political and Personal Satires*, vol. 3, part 1, London 1877.

of narration was not only the stigmatisation of the world of beasts, but also a recipe for the only proper way it should be handled. The caricaturists left no delusions, sketching visions of hunts and trophies, animal dirt and cages in the Zoo. The “Russian bear” theme was symptomatic as, differently from the symbols of other countries – such as the Gallic rooster or the British lion, it was not an element of self-definition for the Russians themselves.²⁶

Nevertheless, some features of the Swiss press discourse discerned it from the European journalism. Most importantly, the way in which the Balkan nations were presented – as victims of the Russian Big Brother – had, above all, a moralising character. The idea behind it is clear: the ethical standards should be a decisive criterion in the assessment of events. The world powers’ manipulation of the Balkan nations, as well as inhabitants of any other region, was stigmatised as reprehensible. There was, however, the other side to the coin. With the same passion, the Swiss denounced the dirty politics of the territorial expansion which, disguised as a “White Man’s Burden”, was implemented by the western powers: Great Britain, France, Austro-Hungary, USA. The strength of the stigmatising commentaries about Russia was therefore relativized.

The establishment of the Swiss Confederation as a federal state with a liberalising internal policies in 1848 marks the emergence of the self-stereotype of the Swiss as a nation devoted to democratic ideas, granting asylum to the freedom fighters exiled by the European despots. Switzerland began transforming from the country expressing disinterest with the history happening beyond its borders to a country that, even though still preserving its neutrality, kept its hand on the pulse of the European events.²⁷ It can be assumed that it was due to those circumstances that

²⁶ A. Moser, *Land der unbegrenzten Unmöglichkeiten. Das schweizerische Russland- und Russenbild vor der Oktoberrevolution*, Zürich 2006, p. 312.

²⁷ Since the Spring of Nations, the Swiss satirists had started to not only take interest in events happening beyond the country borders, but actually to grant them prominent space in their journals. It pertained, in the first place, to the events in neighbouring countries, particularly the German Confederation/Germany and France, further – to the world powers, such as Great Britain and Russia. The latter can be considered especially

the particular characteristics of the Swiss press discourse in the second half of the 19th century emphasized an idea of "law before strength"²⁸ and humanisation of the international relations. It is all the more important since this discourse existed concurrently with the attitude dominant in the European press that sympathised, more or less, with the cynical presumptions of *Realpolitik*.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that some false tones appeared in the moralising discourse of the Swiss. For instance, while describing the paternalistic attitude of the Triple Alliance countries towards the Balkan "victims" of the Russian politics, the latter were described as similar to Russia. Both the Tsarist country and the Balkans were depicted as Asia's foreground: "worse", "backward", "exotic" part of the world, the stereotype of which functioned analogically to the "Orient" one. The only difference was that in the Swiss (and European) press discourse Russia was "masculinised" while the Balkan countries were "infantilised" and "objectified". It is apparent in the metaphors most frequently used for this region: dwarves, playing children, livestock, even the inanimate matter. One of the leading motifs, related to the way the Balkans were depicted, was showing them as a cauldron in which the devil stirs, or as a swamp that drags into its muddy depths.

The Bear and the Clockmaker

In confrontation with other powers, the "Russian bear's" reputation as the Big Brother became less meaningful. The caricaturists showed him in a different light – as a furry animal aspiring to join high society. The

interesting because Russia, as a country that played a vital role in the international politics of France and Prussia/Germany and being the main competitor of Western European powers, although it did not appear in the press as a leading protagonist, it was often used as a key point of reference; P. Collmer, *Die Schweiz und das Russische Reich 1848–1919. Geschichte einer europäischen Verflechtung*, Chronos Verlag, Zürich 2004, p. 296.

²⁸ This idea was a reverse of the motto "Strength before law", which in the deliberated period underpinned the policy of the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck.

contrast between it and the representatives of civilised Europe was expressed most suggestively with a comparison between the grumbling beast and the masters of diplomacy, such as Otto von Bismarck.

The key point of reference in the commentary about the bear's activities was its influence on the character of the relations between Russia and Prussia/the united Reich. The state of friendly neutrality in relations between those countries was regarded in the nineteenth century as a foundation of stability on the European continent, honoured with tradition. As long as it lasted, it was treated as an element of the natural *status quo*. It was also not criticised in the German-speaking Swiss press, which, after 1849, clearly represented the pro-Prussian option. Indeed, it seems it was not even noticed. Conversely, an important topic of analyses became the fact of worsening of the Russian–German relations after the proclamation of the united Reich (1871). The Swiss press, following its German counterpart, subsequently praised the genius of chancellor Bismarck in the art of taming the “Russian bear’s” impulses, mocked the bear’s “love” towards Germany, expressed concerns with the Germanophobia building up in the Tsarist state, and even started to accuse the world powers of a conspiracy aimed at playing the two countries against each other.

This tendency is clearly seen in the example of the evolution of the “Russian bear” depicted as a participant of the aforementioned events. A picture from 1878 shows it as a docile animal, dancing to the music of piper-Bismarck along with other members of the Berlin Conference.²⁹

The bear metaphors from the subsequent decades, however, show signs of getting some perspective. An “NZZ” correspondent, describing the Germanophobia spreading in the Russian press in 1887, expresses scepticism about the possibilities of counteracting the nationalist Russian politics, inspired by Mikhail Katkov:³⁰ “it is not advised to try to pull the

²⁹ Anon., *Friedens-Konferenz in Berlin* [*Peace conference in Berlin*], “Nebelspalter” 1878, issue 11 [disclosed by Kantonsbibliothek Vadiana St. Gallen].

³⁰ Mikhail Katkov (1818–1887) – Russian publisher and political activist, considered the most influential Russian journalist of the second half of the nineteenth century, an initiator and creator of the modern Russian nationalism.

angry Russian bear to its lair, so it will be allowed to gnarl and flaunt its hatred for Germany unreprimanded”.³¹ A commentary to the meeting of emperors of Germany and Russia in Stettin in September 1887, which had not come to pass, sounds even more alarming. Quoting “Kölnische Zeitung”, “NZZ” warned that even if the meeting had actually been held, it would not have had any real meaning.



Figure 4 Anon., *Friedens-Konferenz in Berlin*, “Nebelspalter” 1878, issue 11, by courtesy of Kantonsbibliothek Vadiana St. Gallen

It should not be assumed – concludes the author – that it is in the best interest of Germany to [...] be at the forefront of the mighty union of Central European countries and point their blade towards the *predatory Russian Bear* [...] Undeniably, the general public would react enthusiastically to this policy; at the same time it is obvious

³¹ “Alles ausgebaut wird den grimmigen russischen Bären in seine Höhle zu verweisen. Er wird also die Erlaubniß haben, weiter zu brummen, und seinen Deutschenhaß rücksichtslos zu äußern”, anon., no title., “NZZ” 1887, 7 IV.

that a statesman who would decide to pursue it would have to take responsibility for causing a cruel war.³²

A caricature from 1889, which depicts a big Russian Bear forcing its way to the orderly cabinet of Bismarck the clockmaker is, then, highly symbolic.³³ The craftsman skilfully winds subsequent clocks symbolising the countries of the world and worries about the “fallen” countries-clocks, such as Bulgaria and Serbia. The bear opens his jaw, throws some roubles around and holds in an iron grip the monarchs of Balkan countries: 13 year old Alexander Obrenović, the king of Serbia, and his mother the regent, Natalija. Milan, Alexander’s father, escapes from its claws, losing his crown in the process. The caricaturist’s intention is clear. Russian conspiracies led to another turmoil in Balkan countries, abdication of a monarch who was too independent and replacing him with a child, in whose name the authority is to be held by a Russian woman controlled by the Big Brother.³⁴ The old Chancellor calls himself “a pilgrim in St. Just”, alluding to the emperor Charles V who spent the last years of his life in the silence of the monastery.³⁵ Quite aptly so, since he would be forced to resign the subsequent year. Even then, though, he had to witness the downfall of the order he had created brought by the advancing forces of chaos offering a foretaste of the new politics.

³² “Man soll also nicht denken, daß es sich für Deutschland empfehle, [...] an der Spitze des machtvollen mitteleuropäischen Bundes dem raubgierigen russischen Bären wacker auf den Leib zu gehen. Es ist zweifellos, daß eine solche Politik einem volksthümlichen Gefühle entspräche; es ist aber ebenso zweifellos, daß der Staatsmann, der muthwillig in diese Bahn einlenken wollte, die Verantwortung eines furchtbaren Weltkrieges auf sich laden würde”; anon., no title., “NZZ” 1887, 23 IX.

³³ H. Jenny, *Der Uhrmacher* [Clockmaker], “Nebelspalter” 1889, issue 12 [disclosed by Kantonsbibliothek Vadiana St. Gallen].

³⁴ Natalija Obrenović was a daughter of Moldovan boyar, member of the Keschko family, closely connected to Russia.

³⁵ In the Monastery of Yuste; this event was immortalised in the poem of August von Platen-Hallermünde *Der Pilgrim von St. Just*.



Figure 5 H. Jenny, *Der Uhrmacher*, “Nebelspalter” 1889, issue 12, by courtesy of Kantonsbibliothek Vadana St. Gallen

The “Russian Bear” image shown above fits quite well into the stereotype dominant in the minds of the nineteenth century Europeans: Russia as not-Europe, the demon of destruction. With such a way to define Russia, the nation most predestined to represent traits that were the antitheses of all things Russian was Germany:

Du bist, mein Deutschland, groß in deinem Volke,
Doch wachsend nur gehört die Zukunft Dein,
Du kannst den Völkern eine Feuerwolke
Zur Führung in den Kampf zur Freiheit sein.
Doch ruf’ die großen Todten Alle wieder,
Dass sie im Geiste dir zur Seite steh’n,
Dass du, das Land der Denker und der Lieder,
An den Lebend’gen nicht mög’st untergeh’n.³⁶

³⁶ “O Germany, you’re great for your state/ You grow constantly and the future belongs to you. / You can give to other nations a torch / Of freedom, if they want to go that way. / Just summon shadows of your great deceased / Who keep a watchful eye over your pure souls, / So that you, a land of philosophers, a country of divine songs, / Won’t fall, due to the living, into oblivion” [translation from Polish], anon., *Deutsche Kultur*, “Nebelspalter” 1881, issue 49.

In words praising German culture, published in “Nebelspalter”, an anonymous author enumerates all the attributes that, in the opinion of Europeans themselves, Russian culture could not have *per se*: love for beauty, ethical principles, intellectual depth. Contrasting what is German (European) with what is Russian, the Swiss press created a distinct network of binary oppositions: order – chaos, creation – destruction, reason – irrationality, self-control – impulsiveness, brutality.

In bed with Marianne

Towards the end of the century, “Russian bear’s” image in Swiss (and European) press obtained some new traits, which made it into... the symbol of decadence.

The upheaval of alliances caused by the Russian-French coalition, forged in years 1891–1893, prompted an avalanche of biting comments on the absurdity of the union of a European republic with a despotic monarchy – sublime Marianne with a polar bear. The German press was on the forefront of this issue, but the Swiss press matched it in its venom.

As the “Russian Bear” became a partner of the alluring Marianne, it itself started to be depicted as an object of desire. A caricature published in “Nebelspalter” in 1891 shows the Gallic rooster and a bear, confessing their love to each other “as equals”, surrounded by bones and skulls.³⁷ An illustration, published in the same magazine two years later, showing a bear drooling over a bottle of vodka and holding half-naked Marianne, who tenderly embraces him.³⁸

³⁷ H. M., *Gleich und gleich [As equals]*, “Nebelspalter” 1891, issue 33 [disclosed by Kantonsbibliothek Vadiana St. Gallen].

³⁸ Anon., *Der neue Sommernachtstraum [New Midsummer Night’s Dream]*, “Nebelspalter” 1893, issue 42 [disclosed by Kantonsbibliothek Vadiana St. Gallen].



Figure 6 H.M., *Gleich und gleich*, “Nebelspalter” 1891, issue 33,
by courtesy of Kantonsbibliothek Vadiana St. Gallen



Figure 7 B.a., *Der neue Sommernachtstraum*, “Nebelspalter” 1893, issue 42,
shared by Kantonsbibliothek Vadiana St. Gallen

The abnormality and unfavourable character of the union for France was also, among others, expressed by a poem, published in 1895:

Pecking out of bear's fur the fleas
that bite its reason
the stupid Gallic rooster
holds this office with pride.³⁹

Every signal which could be indicative of worsening the relations between the allies was noted with *schadenfreude*. Such situations are illustrated, among others, by a caricature that shows the “Russian Bear” enjoying a pristine landscape, and brushing off Marianne’s attempts to direct its attention to Alsace, recently lost by France.⁴⁰ Another picture, from 1894, depicts the bear going for a stroll hand in hand with beautiful and staid Germania, holding under his arm a trade agreement they had signed. Scantly-clad Marianne laments in the background, crying: “Oh, how lucky you are to finally ensnare this traitor”.⁴¹

The “Russian Bear’s” image as an object of desire appears to be a by-product of the journalists’ attempts to create an image of France as a “political prostitute”. The more the perversion, degeneration and the moral corruption discernible in French politics were emphasized, the more erotic connotations were ascribed to her partner, the bear. Nevertheless, when the latter seemed to dump its lover for the “legally married” Germania, its image acquired some more proper, middle-class attributes.

³⁹ “Pickt dem Zottenbär, der schmunzelt, / Alle Flöhe aus dem Schwanze / Dienstbereit, und schätzt sich glücklich / Ob dem noblen Ehrenamt!”; translation from Polish; anon, *Edle Seelen finden sich* [*Noble souls will find each other*], “Nebelspalter” 1895, issue 26.

⁴⁰ W. Lehmann, *Sie hätte Lust* [*She would be willing*], “Nebelspalter” 1895, issue 28 [disclosed by Kantonsbibliothek Vadana St. Gallen].

⁴¹ “Oh, Dir mag ich es gönnen, dass Du endlich an den Treulosengerathenbist”, F. Boscovits, *Sie denktimmernur an Revanche* [*She still only think about revenge*], “Nebelspalter” 1894, issue 14 [disclosed by Kantonsbibliothek Vadana St. Gallen].



Figure 8 F. Boscovits, *Sie denktimmernur an Revanche*, “Nebelspalter” 1894, issue 14, by courtesy of Kantonsbibliothek Vadiana St. Gallen

It can be assumed that the image of perverse France, showed in Swiss caricatures from the end of the nineteenth century, was linked to the motif of degeneration and corruption of the fin de siècle European – notably, French – culture. In this context, the “Russian bear” accompanying Marianne can be recognised as a metaphor of the Russian “crudeness”, as both complement and antithesis of the French sophistication. Vulgarity, crass, and the propensity to drunkenness, that were supposed to be the features distinguishing Russian culture, became a fine counterpoint for the stereotypical image of French culture, often shown as an embodiment of the perfected art of practising sin. Both seemed to be reflections of an idea of decadence, except that the French decadence was supposed to come from the declining character of its ageing culture, while Russian – from the youthfulness of its culture that had not yet broken its bond with nature, pristine in its wildness.

The Bear and Helvetia

The figure of the “Russian Bear” in the Swiss press appeared also, although in a less representative way, in the context of relations between Russia and the Helvetian country. In 1856 – 1857, “NZZ” twice writes about Russian bears... living in Bärengaben in Bern. The first note informs that “out of joy about the peaceful atmosphere in their homeland” – related to the prospect of concluding the Crimean war – “they gave birth to cubs”;⁴² the second mentions that Russian bears were included, along with 40 horses, in the retinue of duke Konstantin’s ex-wife, Anna Feodorovna,⁴³ who rode from Bern to Solothurn.⁴⁴

The tamed bears from Bärengaben were in the nineteenth century a symbol of Bern, and were regarded warmly not only by Bernesians. They believed that the fate of the bears is closely connected to the fate of the town: their health and fertility were supposed to bring citizens prosperity, while their illness and death – misfortune.⁴⁵ Thus, the bears were taken care of – fed with delicacies, given affectionate names, and their relocation in May 1857 to a new, spacious enclosure on the other side of the river Aare became a boisterously celebrated ceremony.⁴⁶ The inhabitants of Bern were also described by the Swiss as having bear-like attributes: strength, stocky build, a tendency to keep their feet firmly on the ground, restraint and persistence.⁴⁷ This stereotype found reflection in the satirical image

⁴² “Aus Freude über die friedliche Stimmung ihres Heimatlandes haben [...] die russischen Bären im hiesigen Bärengaben zwei muntere Nachfolger geworfen”, anon., no title, “NZZ” 1856, 19.01.

⁴³ Juliane Henriette Ulrike of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld (1781–1860) was a princess from the Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld family and, through the marriage with Grand Duke Konstantin, Grand Duchess of Russia, known under the name Anna Feodorovna. In 1801 she left Russia and spent most of her life in her estates in Switzerland, such as Elfenau by Bern.

⁴⁴ Anon., no title, “NZZ” 1857, 3 VI.

⁴⁵ B. Brunner, *Eine kurze Geschichte der Bären*, Berlin 2005, pp. 86–87.

⁴⁶ W. D. Storl, *Der Bär. Krafttier der Schamanen und Heiler*, Baden, München 2005, s. 235.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, pp. 229–230.

of authorities and citizens of Bern as a burly, but not necessarily unpleasant, bear – Mutz.⁴⁸

It can be thus assumed that the attitude of the Swiss press toward the Russian bears in Bärengaben was positive, or at least neutral. The "proper" bear metaphors of Russia, however, had much more adverse publicity among the Swiss. They appeared mostly in two contexts: first, with relation to the Swiss asylum politics, and second, in the comparisons made by the Swiss between the social order abroad and in their own state.

A satirical magazine "Der Gukkasten" published in 1849 *A letter from the Negro emperor (...) to his black subjects*, in which he informs that, in return for expelling political refugees from Russia, France and Austria, "the autocrat of all bears intends to honour [minister Uh-Uh] with the knout medal, to wear on his neck".⁴⁹ Under the disguise of the "Negro emperor" and his factotums, such as the aforementioned "minister Uh-Uh", an anonymous author of the epistle understood the authorities of the Swiss Confederation – not quite enlightened, but slavishly at the foreign powers' command.

Over three decades later, the press discourse in the Helvetian country, which in the meantime became a favourite place of emigration for the Russian dissidents, assumed a much less lofty form. In 1881, "Nebelspalter" rhetorically asked "Who will drink this beer?" On the caricature it published, the Russian bear, bitten by wasps-nihilists, threatened the Swiss eagle, standing on a high rock: "Just wait, you bumptious bird, until I scramble up there! You will pay for the damned wasps, which relentlessly abuse me! Who are you that the insects let you be?"⁵⁰ A caricature published in the same magazine three years later sings a similar tune. It depicts the Russian

⁴⁸ See caricature: anon., *Es lebe die Eidgenossenschaft. Bern ist Bundesstadt*, „Der Gukkasten" 1848, issue 49 [disclosed by Zentral- und Hochschulbibliothek Luzern].

⁴⁹ "[dem Minister Uh-Uh] will der Selbstherrscher aller Bären den Knutenorden, am Halse zu tragen [...] verehren"; Schreiben des Negerkaisers [...] an seine schwarzen Eidgenossen [A letter from the Negro emperor (...) to his black subjects], "Der Gukkasten" 1849, issue 47.

⁵⁰ "Wart' nur, du übermüthiger Vogel dort oben bis ich hinauf komme! Du sollst mir's büßen, daß mich diese verdammten Wespen in einemfort plagen! Für was seid ihr denn da, wenn ihr unser Ungeziefer nicht fressen wollt?"; anon., *Wer isst die Suppe aus?*

bear along with a pack of other animals, which embody political refugees from all over Europe, looking for a safe shelter on the farm belonging to Helvetia. The latter responds with anger toward the governments of the countries, which accuse it of granting asylum to criminals: “First they drive all their game to my garden, then they make me responsible for the damages caused! Realise it at last, gentlemen Nimrods!”⁵¹



Figure 9 B.a., *Es lebe die Eidgenossenschaft. Bern ist Bundesstadt*, “Der Gukkasten” 1848, issue 49, by courtesy of Zentral- und Hochschulbibliothek Luzern

[*Who will drink this beer?*], “Nebelspalter” 1881, issue 13 [disclosed by Zentralbibliothek Zürich].

⁵¹ “Da jagen sie mir dein Wild von allen Seiten in meinen Garten und dann soll ich verantwortlich sein für den Lärm! Macht euch das doch ein Bischen klar, Ihr unverträglichen Herren Nimrode”; anon., no title, “Nebelspalter” 1884, issue 8; Nimrod – a character appearing in the Jewish and Islam traditions, mentioned in the Bible; a legendary hunter and the ruler of Mesopotamia.

The journalists also used the figure of the Russian bear to demonstrate the superiority of the Swiss legislation over the countries'. A caricature “Regarding death penalty in Bern” published in 1881 can serve as an example. It depicts a “foreign [Russian?] bear”, which, holding his claw on a dead sheep, say to his Bernese counterpart Manny: “Look, dear colleague, with our lifestyle I could not support the abolition of the death penalty!” The latter, sitting by a plate filled with delicacies such as “interpellation”, “bail”, “permission” etc., states that he would be more disposed to it: “your dishes/courts are served raw, but I get them well done”.⁵²



Figure 10 Anon., *Werisst die Suppe aus?*, “Nebelspalter” 1881, issue 13, by courtesy of Zentralbibliothek Zürich

⁵² “Fremder Bär: Sieh’, lieber Kollege, bei unsrer Lebensweise könnte ich nicht für Abschaffung der Todesstrafe sein! – Mani: Aber ich; den du verzehrst deine Gerichte roh und meine bringt man mir gekocht!”; anon., *Zur Berner Todesstrafe* [Considering death penalty in Bern], “Nebelspalter” 1881, issue 47 [disclosed by Zentralbibliothek Zürich].



Figure 11 Anon., *Zur Berner Todesstrafe* [About the death penalty in Bern], “Nebelspalter” 1881, issue 47 [by courtesy of Zentralbibliothek Zürich]

The examples above indicate that the metaphor of the “Russian Bear” served the purpose of building a binary opposition between the free, prosperous, democratically governed Helvetia, and Russia, understood as an “Eastern despotism”, a prison of nations, a kingdom of lawlessness. The press discourse brought to light the facts endorsing the thesis about the institutional immutability of Russia and passed over or discredited the evidence for its Europeanisation. It condemned the autocratic political system based on militarism, slavery, religious fanaticism and lawlessness. It also deplored the repression of ethnic minorities and the ineptitude of authorities to combat the starvation and epidemics, such as cholera, haunting the country. The Swiss sympathised en masse with the Russian critics of the existing system.

It can be assumed that a part of the reason that compelled the satirists – starting from the end of 1870s – to replicate the negative image of Tsarist state was a need to create a bright vision of their own country. Alongside the fully justified reflections concerning the socio-political system in Russia, the Swiss press published some misstatements. The aforementioned caricature dedicated to death penalty can serve as an example.

Its author did not think it necessary to add that the Russian justice system allowed death penalty in very few cases and could be regarded as one of the most lenient in Europe.⁵³ The discourse was also not entirely consistent. On the one hand, the Swiss press sympathised both with the intellectuals criticizing the political system persecuted in Russia, and with conspirators, who desired to take the country over with a military coup. On the other hand, it was easier for the journalists to praise anarchists and nihilists when they sewed terror in their own homeland than when they continued their operations in Switzerland.

The Russian Bear and the Russian Soul

The figure of the bear sometimes symbolised also the Russian nation. Then, the animal appeared nearly in only one context – as a “chained dog” of subsequent Tsars presented as Russian rulers, “fathers of the nation” (in Russian exemplified by the archetype of “batyushka”). For example, a caricature from the period of the “Bulgarian war” depicts Alexander II siccing the Russian bear on a Turkish bulldog⁵⁴, and an image illustrating the events related to the world powers’ intervention in China shows Nicholas II ordering the bear to get out of his lair and attack the “Chinese dragon”.⁵⁵

⁵³ J. Daly, *Russian Punishments in the European Mirror*, in: *Russia in the European Context 1789–1914. A Member of the Family*, eds S. P. McCaff Ray, M. Melancon, New York 2005, pp. 161–188.

⁵⁴ Anon., *Vorläufiges vom Kriegschauplatz* [*News from the theatre of war*], “Nebelspalter” 1877, issue 17 [disclosed by Kantonsbibliothek Vadana St. Gallen].

⁵⁵ F. Boscovits, *Der „europäische“ Friede* [*European peace*], “Nebelspalter” 1900, issue 27 [disclosed by Kantonsbibliothek Vadana St. Gallen].



Figure 12 Anon., *Vorläufiges vom Kriegsschauplatz*, “Nebelspalter” 1877, issue 17 (excerpt), shared by Kantonsbibliothek Vadiana St. Gallen

The “Russian Bear” portrayed in this way appeared as a passive, obedient tool in the hands of the Russian rulers and at the same time as a victim of “grand politics”. Even if this time the bear was spared a stigma of aggression and brutality, the caricaturists found other ways to depict a whole gamut of attributes ascribed to the Russian nation. The animal-like barbarity of Russians was most often depicted with another metaphor – the Cossack, already mentioned above. The Cossack spirit is also present in a song published after the Bulgarian war, entitled “Russian Culture”, in which the Russian soldiers are compared to the riders of the Apocalypse:

What is the impure force that
Endangers us from the East?
It is Russian culture:
Murder, plunder and pest.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ “Düster über Wald und Flur/ Zieht’s von Ost nach West; – / Das ist russische Kultur:/ Mord und Brand und Pest”; translation from Polish; anon., *Russische Kultur*, “Nebelspalter” 1879, issue 4.

A list of attributes ascribed to Russians was longer. Satirists liked to compile it in multiple ways. Among the constantly repeated phrases were "dirt", "lice", "vodka" and savage behaviours prompted by it.⁵⁷

The image of Russian culture in the nineteenth century Switzerland had, however, also a second face: the "Russian soul". It was popularised by the Russian writers in the second half of the nineteenth century and found its fullest reflection, as it seems, in the motif of the "Russian beauty". In the Swiss press the aforementioned metaphor appears in the 1880s and 1890s, usually surrounded by other good-looking women embodying different world powers. A black-haired and black-eyed beauty with sensual lips, wearing a fur that emphasize her curves and holding a whip in her hand,⁵⁸ contrary to her British or French counterparts was never disfigured in her depictions published by the press. One can guess that the source of inspiration for that image was a figure of a sensitive and strong Russian woman, present in the works of the Russian novelists famous across Europe. However, it may have also been created "from nature" as numerous female Russian aristocrats, revolutionaries and students were present in Switzerland of that time.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ "Läuse! – Fusel! – Schmutz und Prügel!"; Anon., *Neue russische Nationalhymne*, "Nebelspalter" 1882, issue 8.

⁵⁸ Cf. caricatures: F. Boscovits, *Zur Flottendemonstration*, "Nebelspalter" 1880, issue 32 [disclosed by Kantonsbibliothek Vadana St. Gallen]; F. Boscovits, *Europäische Frühjahrsmoden*, "Nebelspalter" 1900, issue 14 [disclosed by Kantonsbibliothek Vadana St. Gallen].

⁵⁹ Students from Russia comprised a high general percent of women studying on Swiss universities (e.g. in 1906–1914 on Swiss universities studied, alongside 200 Swiss women, 1400 female Russians); L. Brügger, *Russische Studentinnen in Zürich*, in: *Bild und Begegnung. Kulturelle Wechselseitigkeit zwischen der Schweiz und Osteuropa im Wandel der Zeit*, eds P. Brang, C. Goehrke, R. Kemball, H. Riggenbach, Basel, Frankfurt am Main 1996, p. 488.



Figure 13 F. Boscovits, *Europäische Frühjahrsmoden*, “Nebelspalter” 1900, issue 14 (excerpt), by courtesy of Kantonsbibliothek Vadiana St. Gallen

The “Russian soul”, hidden in the Russian beauty’s body, symbolised – as one can assume – positively valorised, exuberant exotic of the East. Its presence could serve to show the second face of the Orient to the people of West. Aggression and barbarism that were supposed to characterise the culture of the East were condemned; “eastern” sensuality and sensitivity – evoked fascination with Orient.

Was this fascination enough to outweigh the discourse ingrained in the Europeans’ minds that excluded Russia from the group of civilised countries as a non-European Alien? Unfortunately, this hypothesis seems dubious.



Figure 14 F. Boscovits, *Zur Flottendemonstration*, “Nebelspalter” 1880, issue 32 (excerpt), by courtesy of Kantonsbibliothek Vadiana St. Gallen

Writing that the beauty will save the world, Fyodor Dostoyevsky meant the power existing within the Russian soul and in the true faith – Eastern Orthodox Church. His works fascinate invariably, yet they did not convince western Europeans that Russia represented the “true” Europe. Theses about the spiritual beauty of this country not only failed to negate, but even escalated the European discourse that emphasized its civilisational “ugliness”. Contrasting the “virtues” of the Russia’s inhabitants with the “demonic” state that ruled them only allowed for emphasizing its barbarity and despotism. Even the theses about the beauty enclosed in the “true faith” fuelled the European discourse, in which “anachronic” Russian culture does not befit “rational” and “civilisationally mature” European standards.

To show the “Russian Bear” in the aforementioned network of binary oppositions I would like to refer to a table summarising the discussion so far:

Associations with the East stereotype/ Oriental discourse	Associations with the “Russian bear”	Associations with its adversaries	Adversaries of the “Russian bear”	Associations with the stereotype of West
Barbarism / Nature	Aggression	Submission	Balkan countries	
	Chaos	Order	Germany	Civilisation / Culture
	Primitivism	Sophistication	France	
	Despotism	Democracy / Humanitarianism	Switzerland	
	Object of condemnation	Source of fascination	“Russian soul”	

It demonstrates, in my view, the thesis stated at the beginning of the paper that the press discourse in the nineteenth century Switzerland categorised Russia as an antithesis of countries which embodied main attributes of western culture.