

62. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, ed., *Osmanlı Belgeler*, 54, Interior Ministry to Erzurum, 27 June 1915.
63. Ibid., 32–33, Interior Ministry to Erzurum, 18 May 1915.
64. Ibid., 33–34, Interior Ministry to Erzurum, Van and Bitlis, 23 May 1915.
65. Bloxham, “The Armenian Genocide of 1915–16.”
66. *Les ‘Telegrammes’ de Talât Pacha*, 115, Talât to Mosul, Urfa, and Der Zor, 23 May 1915.
67. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, ed., *Osmanlı Belgeler*, 30–32, 30 May 1915; Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide* (Providence, RI, 1995), 221.
68. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, ed., *Osmanlı Belgeler*, 62, Interior Ministry to provincial leaderships, 5 July 1915.
69. Dündar, *İttihat ve Terakki*, 126–27.
70. Raymond H. Kévorkian, “Le sort des déportés arméniens ottomans dans les camps de concentration de Syrie-Mésopotamie,” in *L’Extermination des déportés arméniens ottomans dans les camps de concentration de Syrie-Mésopotamie (1915–1916)*, ed. Raymond H. Kévorkian (Paris, 1998), 11–12, 16; Hilmar Kaiser, *At the Crossroads of Der Zor* (Princeton, NJ, 2001), 10.
71. Taner Akçam, “Rethinking the Ottoman Archival Material: Debunking Existing Myths/General Overview of the Ottoman Documents,” unpublished paper.
72. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, ed., *Osmanlı Belgeler*, 58, Interior Ministry to provincial leaderships, 1 July 1915.
73. Ara Sarafian, “The Absorption of Armenian Women and Children into Muslim Households as a Structural Component of the Armenian Genocide,” in *In God’s Name: Genocide and Religion in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Omer Bartov and Phyllis Mack (New York, 2001), 209–21.
74. *Les ‘Telegrammes’ de Talât Pacha*, 117, Interior Ministry to Erzurum, 9 June 1915; more generally on the theft and appropriation of Armenian property, “Confiscation des biens des réfugiés arméniens par le Gouvernement turc” (Paris, 1929).
75. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti, ed., *Osmanlı Belgeler*, 118, Interior Ministry to Urfa, 27 October 1915.
76. In the case of Zeytun and other settlements in Cilicia, Bloxham, “The Armenian Genocide of 1915–16,” 174; for other examples of installation of *muhajirs* in formerly Christian settlements, Dündar, *İttihat ve Terakki*, 156–58.

– Chapter 15 –

GENOCIDAL IMPULSES AND FANTASIES IN IMPERIAL RUSSIA

Robert Geraci

Raphael Lemkin, who coined the word genocide, defined it as follows in his 1944 book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*: “Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killing of all the members of the nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aimed at destruction of the essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.” Component actions of such a plan, Lemkin wrote, would be those that pursue “the disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and the lives of individuals belonging to such groups.”¹ This formulation is spacious and inclusive in at least three notable ways, belying the frequently held notion that the label is only for the most dramatic crimes resembling the Nazi Holocaust: 1) genocide includes not just the physical murder of peoples, but also their cultural and/or moral destruction as well; 2) such destruction may be undertaken or aimed for immediately, or it can be caused to occur gradually over a long period; and 3) genocide is defined by intentions, aims, and objectives as much as (if not more than) by results.

Such a definition undermines the common notion that any investigation of possible genocide in Russian history need be concerned only with the Soviet era. In the tsarist era as well, the list of hardships imposed by the Russian Empire on its constituent peoples contains much that would seem to fall into one or more of Lemkin’s categories. It is hardly surprising that the geopolitical, military, and economic challenges of forging and settling an empire that at its apogee would cover one-sixth of the Earth’s land

would lead to willful actions toward the physical destruction of some peoples and communities. Such actions included outright massacres (usually in border regions being annexed); the serfdom (slavery) of the vast majority of the population, and the low status and extreme poverty of peasants even after its abolition; Slavic encroachment and settlement on the lands of pastoral/nomadic peoples (such as the Bashkirs and Kazakhs); residence, property, and occupational restrictions on certain minority peoples (most consistently on Jews) with repercussions for subsistence; failure to discourage (or even active encouragement of) violent pogroms against minorities; and large-scale, forced relocations from border regions (primarily during wars).

Likewise, the challenge of managing such an enormous multiethnic empire (particularly one connected by land, with no clear distinction between "metropolis" and "colony") all but inevitably gave rise to the pursuit of cultural homogeneity at the expense of minority identities, in the interest of both governability and insurance against national separatism that would threaten the empire's existence. Actions threatening possible cultural or moral destruction of peoples included prohibitions or restrictions on the use of minority languages in schools (most notably Polish) or in the press (the Turkic languages); denial of the very existence of the Ukrainian language; sustained efforts at converting religious minorities to Russian Orthodoxy (by force, by material incentive, or by persuasion); the complete outlawing of some religions (Old Belief, sectarianism, Uniatism); bureaucratic control over all legal minority religions, and the weakening of their institutions through confiscation of property (in the case of the Catholic and Armenian churches); disenfranchisement of most non-Christian peoples in imperial and local administration, and ascription of lower status to them; and the punishment of expressions of minority identity as political crimes.

Close scrutiny of almost any one of these policies or events, however, quickly reveals difficulties in applying Lemkin's definition. Can we always discern when an action truly aims for the "destruction" or "disintegration" of a people or culture, one might ask, as opposed to simply its weakening or (more neutrally) its adaptation to new circumstances? Do we need actual proof of such destructive intentions, or are they self-evident in certain actions and policies?² What exactly constitutes a "coordinated plan"—of how many different actions must it consist, and how well must it be organized (are poorly coordinated regimes like tsarist Russia incapable of genocide)? In the absence of documentation, can the genocidal "coordination" of actions be inferred from circumstantial evidence? Are there not single actions (besides actual murder) that seem sufficiently destructive in themselves to constitute genocide? What about actions in which destruction is not exactly intended but is more the result of negligence?

In light of these difficulties (which are not particular to the Russian case), I propose that the study of genocidal impulses and fantasies can be a useful bridge between intentionalist and structuralist approaches to genocide, and a way of rescuing the historical study of genocide from its preoccupation with labeling and moving it further toward meaningful analysis.³ As expressions of genocidal imagination and desire that might never be acted upon, genocidal impulses or fantasies are certainly not tantamount to crimes. Often, in the psyches of those who express them, they never even rise to the status of intentions. We may think of them, rather, as motivations without immediate intent—in other words, "potential intentions." Usually they are not acted upon directly—often for lack of opportunity (they are usually the expressions of individuals, whereas genocidal actions are normally the work of large groups or institutions, if not a state)—but they can help us to explain why people allow genocidal events to happen, either by "structural" processes or by the actions of *other* people.

This chapter is devoted to describing impulses of this sort that I have come across in my study of tsarist Russia as a multiethnic empire, and some patterns that might be discerned in them. It focuses on the *conceptualization* of genocide more than its realization, by examining three different kinds of expressions: proposals for genocidal or protogenocidal actions that were not acted upon by those who proposed them, the figurative (even subconscious) genocide enacted by linguistic practices, and fantasies about the disappearance of minority peoples through cultural change. Insofar as the Russian state did engage in behavior that can be described as genocidal (by either structuralist or intentionalist definitions, or both), these expressions can be seen as part of an overall landscape or climate contributing to the possibility of genocide during the era of imperialism.

The Imperial Origins of Ethnic Cleansing

One of the most common methods of genocide is the forced physical displacement of peoples. Often designed to rid one ethnically defined community of another's presence, such relocations threaten fundamentally the moral, cultural, and physical well-being of the group displaced. "Even when forced deportation is not genocidal in its intent," writes Norman Naimark, "it is often genocidal in its effects."⁴ People are killed when they resist leaving their homes and homelands; those in charge of transporting them in large numbers to a new destination typically have little concern for their welfare. Hunger, disease, cold, and inadequate sanitation may take a significant number of lives. Rare is the case of forced relocation *not*

undertaken in a manner that makes mass death inevitable, and even such a case is likely to be extremely destructive in cultural and moral terms.

Considerable attention has been paid to deportations and reprisals against ethnically defined population groups in Soviet history, especially under Stalin.⁵ Similar actions committed previously by the tsarist/imperial state, however, have received much less attention. Scholars such as Peter Gatrell and Eric Lohr have recently published pathbreaking works on the behavior of the tsarist state, army, and society during the First World War, when major population groups in the western war zone such as Poles, Jews, and Germans, branded as “unreliable,” were subject to violence, expropriation of property, and forced dispersal into Russia’s interior.⁶ In spite of a developing consensus that World War I was the context in which such systematic population manipulations became habitual in Russia, it appears that new ways of manipulating subject populations were at least experimented with several decades earlier in the imperial borderlands. The most prominent example is the large-scale expulsion and massacre of native mountain peoples from the northwest Caucasus in the early 1860s, which I will discuss shortly.

To be sure, Russian imperial expansion had already for centuries brought violence and death to border-dwelling peoples during conquests, in particular, in the areas of eastward and southward (i.e., Asian) conquest, beginning in 1552 with Ivan the Terrible’s “Gathering of the Lands of the Golden Horde”—the conquest of the successor khanates to the Mongol-Tatar empire that had held Russia in dependence from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. By overthrowing the Muslim khanates of Kazan, Astrakhan, and Siberia in a short period of time and annexing their lands and peoples directly to Muscovy, Russia sought the settling of old scores as well as initiating a Christianizing and civilizing mission in Eurasia. These campaigns, in which hundreds and thousands of potential resisters were slaughtered, subjugated, co-opted, and converted by Russia’s armies, rulers, and clergy, paved the way for Russia to stretch eastward through the Volga region, the Ural, and Siberia, and then (with the belated overthrow of the khanate of Crimea in 1783) southward to the Caspian and Black Seas, a process that occupied Russia in a long series of wars with the Persian and Ottoman Empires in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁷

By the nineteenth century, Russia had become the fulcrum of what Michael Geyer and Charles Bright have called a “Eurasian zone of violence, with its focal points in Afghanistan, Transcaucasia, and the Caucasus, and extending westward into the Near East and into Southeastern Europe, where it became the flash point for major European wars.”⁸ The protracted nineteenth-century war in the Caucasus, which by most accounts began in 1801 and ended only in 1864, was waged essentially to secure the territorial

gains Russia had made in Transcaucasia at the expense of the Persian and Ottoman Empires between the beginning of Georgia’s protectorate status (1783) and the Treaties of Turkmanchai (1828) and Adrianople (1829). The more the Russians had invested in winning each piece of Transcaucasian territory, the more fiercely they fought to establish control of the mountainous north that connected those conquests to Russia proper; yet the closer their annexations came to the mountain peoples, the more the latter fought off conquest. The Russians’ chief challenge was the murid movement: the union of Muslim tribes of the eastern Caucasus (Chechens, Avars, Lezghins, Dagestanis, and others) that in 1829 declared a holy war (*ghazavat*) of resistance against Russia. The movement’s most famous leader was the charismatic sheikh Shamil, who took control in 1834 and persisted for twenty-five years until his capture by the Russians in 1859.⁹

The peoples on the northwestern, Black Sea side of the Caucasus (the Circassians, Kabardins, Adyge, Nogais, and others¹⁰) were somewhat less organized in their resistance to Russia, but beginning in the 1830s, they began to receive support and encouragement from covert operatives of Great Britain, Russia’s rival in the “Great Game” for dominance in this Eurasian zone.¹¹ This situation continued into the Crimean War (1853–55), in which Britain and France allied with the Ottomans to put a check on Russian expansion. Even worse for Russia, during the war Shamil made overtures to the British and French to join forces in their mutual efforts against Russia. Although the Europeans declined the offer, and the Russian army did eventually capture Shamil after the war, the naval defeat at Sevastopol and the ensuing Treaty of Paris (1856) were a disaster for Russia, freezing its longtime ambitions to control the Black Sea and shattering the prestige it had enjoyed in Europe since its role in Napoleon’s defeat.

Though historians often refer to post-1855 Russia as a lame duck (in this volume, Mark Levene calls it a “retreating empire”), in fact the empire—though humiliated—continued to advance and grow. Immediately following Shamil’s capture and the pacification of his followers, the tsarist army went into the northwestern Caucasus—whose peoples had not joined the murid movement and did not cease their resistance in 1859—to clear the entire area of the mountain tribes, lest these tribes continue to be used by the British to destabilize Russia’s presence, and to replace them with Cossacks and other Russian settlers who would be reliably loyal. The brutal last stage of Russia’s long war of Caucasian conquest was played out in an accelerated frenzy, an expression of Russia’s vengeance not only against the mountain peoples but also, in a sense, against Europe for its efforts to clip Russia’s wings in Asia and its condescending dismissal of Russia’s claim to be a European power. The expulsion plan, which had been discussed even before 1859, was carried out between 1860 and 1864.¹²

The northwest Caucasus was cleared of virtually its entire indigenous population: historians estimate that during this period as many as 700,000 Circassians, Nogais, Kabardinians, Adygeis, and others emigrated to the Ottoman Empire either "voluntarily" (largely from fear and with strong Russian encouragement) or were forced out, and that anywhere from about half a million to 1.5 million more were slaughtered or perished in the process—including women, children, and entire communities who had never resisted the Russian advance.¹³

As soon as the Circassians were gone, the Russian army continued eastward into the borderland with Persia to begin conquering Turkestan (Central Asia), a stepwise process that took the next twenty years. By many accounts, the bloodiest stage in the conquest of Central Asia was the struggle against the Turkmen nomads east of the Caspian Sea from 1879 to 1881. After a humiliating failed attempt to capture the fortress of Gök Tepe in 1879, the Russians returned under General Mikhail Skobelev on 12 January 1881 and, even after seizing the fortress, proceeded to massacre some 14,000 people, of whom most were either civilians who had been inside the fortress, or soldiers fleeing in surrender.¹⁴ It is perhaps significant that the two-year Gök Tepe episode began on the heels of another diplomatic debacle, the Treaty of Berlin (1878) that, in the view of Geyer and Bright, continued the trajectory begun by Paris (1856) of western European intrusion into what Russia saw as its private affairs along its borders with Asia.¹⁵ There may have been a pattern, then, in the role of diplomatic humiliation by Europe in triggering the most dramatic atrocities against border peoples during these years.

An alternative explanation has been advanced by Peter Holquist, who has argued that the Circassian campaign—and therefore the state brutality against many Russian and Soviet subjects in the twentieth century that it foreshadowed—was the result of the introduction of a modern scientific worldview into the Russian military establishment. According to Holquist, expulsions and exterminations reflected the tsarist army's interest in the strategic importance of certain populations in the empire (which he calls "population politics"), and further asserts that such acts could first be conceived only with the development of a particular way of knowing and thinking about the empire—"population statistics"—in which the military played a leading role. "The idea of extracting 'elements' of the population first became conceptually and practically possible," Holquist writes, "only with the rising concern throughout the nineteenth century for a realm termed 'the social' and with the emergence of technologies for measuring and acting upon this realm. The rise of military statistics, in Russia and throughout Europe, was a critical link in this more general process."¹⁶ By the 1860s, the new scientific mindset had achieved maturity and become

operable. "While the Russian empire had earlier practiced 'demographic warfare,'" Holquist asserts, "contemporaries saw [the Circassian] campaign's breadth and systematic nature as marking a new departure. These measures aimed, one participant wrote, to subjugate the Caucasus 'to such a finality of result as had never previously been seen.'"¹⁷ The clarity of intention and precision and thoroughness of execution that Holquist documents in this episode are the same features one would stress in labeling the event an instance of genocide according to Lemkin's definition (though Holquist avoids using the word, referring instead to "extermination").

It makes good sense to stress the role of military institutions in the history of physical genocide (whether one calls it that or not). Virtually by definition, forced population transfers and the like can only be carried out by powerful bodies such as police brigades or armies. War situations can be fertile grounds for ethnic cleansing because they divert the attention of possible objectors, including international public opinion; war may also provide states and politicians with pretexts of state security and reasons for the suspension of normal laws protecting subjects or citizens, and it mobilizes men to commit military violence that may blend seamlessly into extra-military genocidal violence.¹⁸ And indeed, the tsarist military establishment, having played an important role in the long history of state coercion of ethnic minorities, became more accomplished and systematic at this over time, as shown in the works by Lohr and Gatrell on World War I.

But Holquist's explanation does not satisfactorily account for the *conceptual* emergence of genocidal impulses. It overestimates the role of purely military institutions and concerns, by seeming to assume that the imperial-social vision the army was implementing had been incubated entirely within the army itself. And although some kind of modernist account of the emergence of ethnic cleansing is appealing, the one Holquist offers places too much emphasis on statistics as the modern form of knowledge presumably responsible for that vision, without providing any credible evidence of its role in official views of minority populations and decisions to expel or exterminate them. Weaknesses in Holquist's account are laid bare by two sources from the first half of the nineteenth century, which I discuss below. Both advocated genocidal projects in the Russian borderlands well before Holquist's account says such ideas were possible, and outside of the conditions he says were determinative.

Two Apostles of Genocidal Expulsion

Pavel I. Pestel was one of the key participants in the constitutional, anti-autocratic rebellion of December 1825, leading that movement's so-called

Southern Society. In the early 1820s, envisioning a revolution or coup d'état in Russia, Pestel composed a blueprint for Russia's future titled *Russian Justice* (Russkaia pravda), with the subtitle *Instructions to the Temporary (or Provisional) Supreme Administration*. The book of some two hundred pages circulated underground among sympathizers who later participated in the rebellion and became known to history as the "Decembrists." It is well agreed that Pestel's vision was less moderate than that of the Northern Society of the movement. Whereas the Northern Society in St. Petersburg entertained the possibility of a constitutional monarchy (which, because of bungled timing, by the date of the actual uprising on 14 December, turned out to be all the conspirators could reasonably hope to achieve), Pestel was a committed republican who is often described as Jacobin in his embrace of ruthless coercion, and socialist in his vision for nationalizing and redistributing half of the land in Russia.

The program Pestel put forth in *Russian Justice* contained a section on Russia's national minorities that advocated a heavy-handed and potentially genocidal treatment of Russia's Jews, and eerily presaged the genocidal expulsion campaign against the peoples of the northwest Caucasus forty years later. Although Pestel was a military officer (as were most of the Decembrists), his ideas reflected motives not strictly military in nature, and predated by at least fifteen years the era Holquist identifies with the rise of military statistics. The first and second chapters of Pestel's book present, respectively, a geographical overview of the Russian Empire and a survey of its peoples, each followed by administrative recommendations for the new government. A recent Pestel biographer has aptly described this section of *Russian Justice* as amounting to "in effect the first serious consideration and proposed solution of the nationalities problem in modern Russian history."¹⁹ The second, virtually devoid of any statistical information on population groups, expresses the overall insistence that "all the tribes [*plemena*] must be melded [*slity*] into one people [*narod*]."²⁰ While this ambition was inspired by Enlightenment rationalism as applied to state-building, and seems to express a highly inclusive, civic understanding of the political nation, it turns out that Pestel envisioned this process of melding as not wholly inclusive and not entirely peaceful, just as the transition to his prescribed political-social system would require violent action against the existing autocracy. In his section on the Caucasus, he argues that the warlike nature of some of the region's peoples has left them poor, unenlightened, and "half-savage"—and therefore unfit to exist within the Russian Empire.

The position of this region next to Persia and Asia Minor could provide Russia with a very significant capability toward establishing the most vigorous and

profitable commercial relations with southern Asia and therefore toward the enrichment of the state. But all this is completely lost only because the Caucasian peoples are such dangerous and volatile neighbors, such unreliable and useless allies. Taking into account that all efforts have already proved irrefutably the impossibility of inclining these peoples to tranquility by gentle and friendly means, the Supreme Administration resolves: 1) to conquer decisively all the peoples living, and all the lands lying, to the north of Russia's borders with Persia and Turkey, including the maritime part now belonging to Turkey; 2) to divide all these Caucasian peoples into two groups: peaceful [*mirnye*] and unruly [*buinye*]; to leave the former in their homes, and give them Russian [*rossiiskoe*] governance and living conditions [*ustroistvo*], and to relocate the latter by force into the interior of Russia, breaking them down into small numbers among all the Russian districts [*volosti*]; and 3) to start Russian settlements in the Caucasian land, and to distribute to these Russian settlers all the lands taken from the previous unruly inhabitants, and thus to obliterate in the Caucasus every last sign of its previous (i.e., present) inhabitants and to turn the region into a peaceful and comfortable Russian territory [*oblast'*]. All the details of this undertaking are left to the disposal of the Temporary Supreme Administration.²¹

Because it is not clear whether "gentle and friendly means" were really applied toward these peoples *before* they perceived that the Russians were attempting to conquer them and their territory (the war was underway by the time of Pestel's writing), one wonders whether Pestel has identified the "nature" of the Caucasian peoples or simply their stance toward the prospect of subjecthood within Russia.

There are two striking features of the passage. First is Pestel's determination to erase the memory of these people's presence from the Caucasus—every bit as thoroughly as what was achieved in the 1860s and in twentieth-century ethnic cleansings. The chief difference from the Circassian events is that Pestel wanted to banish Caucasians into the interior of Russia rather than out of the empire, but it is clear enough that once "interned" into central Russia in small groups the Caucasian peoples would be expected (or even forced) to assimilate completely. It is not just their presence in one place that needs to be erased, Pestel implies, but their very existence as a group. In his plan, these identities and cultures (though he might not have used the word "culture" to describe peoples he considered half savage) are, simply put, slated for destruction. Since Pestel prescribes destroying the group's identity without actually killing the individuals that constitute it, his impulse is for cultural genocide. But we might also predict that if enacted, the plan might also result in enough deaths to constitute physical genocide.

The second striking fact here is that although Pestel considered some of the Caucasian peoples to be a military threat to Russia, and Russia was already at war with them, his advocacy of ethnic cleansing of "unreliable"

peoples in the above passage does not stem primarily from military-security concerns, but rather from his perception that belligerent peoples were hampering the enrichment of the Russian state through commerce. (Many of the Decembrists were similarly concerned with improving Russia's economic productivity and efficiency, and economic arguments played a role in their insistence on the abolition of serfdom—a position that motivated their uprising no less than their desire to change Russia's political system.) This idea contradicts the notion that the desire to rid Russia of certain population elements arose primarily within the institutions and concerns of the military.

About twenty years after Pestel's tract, a different economic argument for the forced relocation of peoples appears in a report to Russia's Ministry of Finance by economic advisor Iulii A. Gagemeister (or Hagemeister, who eventually, in the late 1850s, became director of the ministry's chancellery). Gagemeister was sent to Transcaucasia at least twice, in 1835 and 1844, to survey the regional economy and its role in international trade, and to suggest reforms. Some sections of the reports he submitted after the latter trip are of an ethnographic nature, describing communities in the region and their economic activities and roles—using little or no quantitative data. One report, "The Bases of Popular Wealth in Transcaucasia," described in some detail the economist's concern for eradicating nomadism from the region:

Nomadism [*kochevanie*] has become so habitual for the Muslim residents of hot places, it is so characteristic for the climate and the mountainous location of the Transcaucasus, and finally is so tempting for everyone that the possibility of settling [*obratit' k osedlosti*] all the residents is hardly foreseeable. In any case, however, order and provisioning [*blagoustroistvo*] are impossible because the time of relocation is always a time of raids and theft, especially in border locations, where it is impossible to track down the perpetrators.

In any case, when hot weather sets in the migration of herds from valleys to mountaintops is unavoidable. But it is more desirable that they be accompanied only by the shepherds. To achieve this it is necessary to give agricultural land to the nomadic residents, so that they don't have to live only by means of their herds, and in time to completely force out [*vytesnit'*] from Russian territory those such as the Kurds who are incapable of settlement [*osedlost'*]. In a short time their place will be occupied by other, more useful, subjects [*polezneishie poddannnye*].²²

Michael Khodarkovsky has argued that Russian antipathy to nomadism was a long tradition: the transformation of frontier steppe lands into imperial borderlands between 1500 and 1800 was essentially the transition from nomadic pastureland to agriculturally or industrially useful land. The reasons were both military and economic:

While application of Russia's growing military, economic, and political power successfully reduced the threat of raids in the eighteenth century, the need to transform pasturelands into agricultural colonies and industrial enterprises kept the government on a confrontational course with its nomadic neighbors. Whether intent on eliminating nomadic raids or settling and cultivating new lands, the government's experiences dictated the same conclusion: the nomadic way of life eventually had to disappear.²³

Though Khodarkovsky's account suggests that this project was largely completed in the eighteenth century, Russia of course acquired new nomadic populations in later conquests. The Enlightenment now offered quasi-scientific reasons for stigmatizing nonsedentary, nonagricultural populations: nomads were seen as fundamentally uncivilized and therefore having little importance or value, and were expected eventually either to conform to the march of human progress by settling (adherents of Enlightenment thought generally considered them capable of it) or at least to get out of its way. Given the context of Western challenges to Russian expansion and concerns for both military security and economic development, it is not difficult to see how Russian administrators in the nineteenth century might have grown impatient and frustrated with the slow process of settling nomads and became eager simply to expel them.²⁴

Besides a concern for economic development of the empire, negative attitudes toward non-Christian religions also played a role in both Gagemeister's and Pestel's proposals for population expulsions. In his report on Transcaucasia, Gagemeister mentions that "there are no Christian nomads at all, although [Christians] are mixed together with the Muslims. . . . Consequently, although nomadism is appropriate to the climate, it is not a necessity for the geographic position of the Transcaucasian region. In all places where the location has allowed, the Tatars have preserved the habits of their ancestors who came from Central Asia. But they have chosen primarily pastureland, leaving the arable land to the indigenous residents."²⁵ Gagemeister mentions the Christian population ostensibly to prove that settled agriculture is possible in Transcaucasia and will lead to greater productivity there, but since his statements also imply that Muslims are below Christians on the ladder of civilization (in addition to describing them as immigrants to the region, not the original inhabitants), the information seems intended to assure his superiors in St. Petersburg and Tiflis (the administrative headquarters for Caucasia and Transcaucasia) that it is only Muslims whose expulsion from the empire he is prescribing. Russian authorities could therefore be pleased that the expulsion of Kurds and "Tatars," leading to their replacement by Christians, was both economically and culturally justified and would produce both economic and cultural benefits for the empire. So it appears that in advocating expulsion, Gagemeister was even less motivated by

military objectives than Pestel was. He was not even writing about the war zone, but the region to its south, and the Muslims in question were not the same communities whose dispersal Pestel had advocated earlier—though Gagemeister well may have been inspired by a common idea that Muslims did not belong in the Caucasus.

In *Russian Justice*, Pestel's advice to the projected revolutionary government for handling Russia's Jewish population—whom few if any would have portrayed as a military threat in the 1820s—also reads like a recipe for genocide. And as in Gagemeister's thinking, economics and religion loom large here as motivations. Like many imperial officials of this era, Pestel felt that the empire's Jews were a menace to Russia's social and political order because of their hostility to Christians (stemming from their solidarity and the belief of their superiority) and their control of commerce in certain regions, to the detriment of possible competitors and to peasant debtors. "The former government gave them many special rights and advantages that intensified the evil they do," Pestel claimed, with the result that "the Jews constitute, so to speak, their own special, completely separate state within a state, and also now enjoy more rights in Russia than the Christians themselves."²⁶

Pestel outlines two possible solutions for correcting the position of Jews to make them less harmful to Russia. The first is a vaguely described gathering of Jewish elites, exhorting them to devise measures to "stop the evil described above and replace it with an order that would correspond in full measure to the general fundamental rules that must serve as the basis of the political edifice of the Russian state. If Russia does not chase out [*vygoniat*] the Jews," Pestel concludes, "then all the more so must they not put themselves in a hostile attitude toward Christians. The Russian government, although offering every individual protection and mercy, is however obliged first of all to prevent anyone from opposing the state order or the private and social well-being."

The second possible solution, as warned, was to chase the Jews out—or as Pestel then attempts to put it more mildly, "to assist the Jews in the establishment of a special, separate state in some part of Asia Minor." To carry out the plan "it would be necessary to designate an assembly point [*sbornyi punkt*] for the Jewish people and to give them some troops for reinforcement." With more than two million Jews assembled from Russia and Poland, Pestel imagined:

it will not be hard for such a number of people to overcome all the obstacles that the Turks could pose to them, and traversing all of European Turkey, to go into the Asian part and there, occupying sufficient space and lands, to set up a special Jewish state. But since this gigantic undertaking demands special circumstances and truly ingenious enterprise, it cannot be presented to the Temporary

Supreme Administration as a specific responsibility. It is mentioned here only to give a hint [*namek*] as to everything that could be done.²⁷

In light of twentieth-century history, the potential for serious, widespread violence is not hard to discern. And though this vision may *seem* to have been a century ahead of its time (particularly if one accepts Holquist's claims), in reality—as Pestel himself saw—only the likelihood of its realization was.

The context of both Pestel's and Gagemeister's proposals was broadly military: Pestel was planning a military coup, and Gagemeister was concerned with the development of a region still under military rule. Yet the motives expressed in these texts were not military, but economic and cultural, reflecting not only the kinds of programmatic, utopian social planning that states began to do during the Enlightenment, and without which there might never be a need for anything as categorical and deliberate as a population transfer, but longstanding prejudices against certain religious groups as well.²⁸ Both Pestel's and Gagemeister's arguments for expulsion, moreover, appear utterly unconnected to quantitative-statistical data or reasoning. It seems more likely that, against Holquist's assertions, ethnic stereotypes already existing in the prestatistical era were perfectly sufficient for inspiring protogenocidal ambitions, and that to the extent that statistical knowledge may have been used to support these stereotypes and these ambitions, it provided nothing more than a veneer of scientific authority. One only has to look at ethnographic or travel literature of the late eighteenth century to know that associating the attribution of qualitative traits to certain population "elements" with the use of statistics is inaccurate; the description of ethnic subpopulations as representing qualitative types was a product of earlier qualitative, not later quantitative, research.²⁹ In fact, many generalizations about the nature of both Muslims and Jews, and their alienness from Europe, had medieval origins. Even without any serious attempt at scientific-statistical corroboration, these prejudices might, in the context of new ambitions on the part of the Russian state, be invoked as grounds for the exclusion or destruction of these groups. Gagemeister's statement on the Kurds suggests that he thought both factors—the state's ambition for improved economic development, and a group's perceived cultural inferiority or nonbelonging—had to be present to justify removal.

Ethnic Identity Theft: Figurative Genocide

Though specific reform blueprints and policy recommendations such as those of Pestel and Gagemeister certainly reflected genocidal attitudes,

such mentalities could also reside in and be conveyed by much vaguer forms of expression. One example is a linguistic convention in imperial Russia—especially in military culture—that I call “ethnic identity theft.” Once again the context is the imperial borderlands during the early nineteenth century.

Russian dictionaries, both of the nineteenth century and today, define the word *kavkazets* (plural: *kavkaztsy*) as “Caucasian” or “native of the Caucasus.” This is exactly what would be expected from the word’s etymology—the name of a region, *Kavkaz* (Caucasus), plus the personalizing suffix *-ets*. The term often includes peoples of the Transcaucasus region as well as the mountain region itself. Yet in historical literature on Russia, one rarely encounters the word used in this way, for in the nineteenth century it became well established as identifying something quite different: a certain subset of the *Russian* military personnel who served the tsarist state in its long campaign to pacify the region.

Literary and memoir sources from the Caucasus—and the historians following them—have often made an issue of Russian officers’ adoption of behavior associated with that of the Caucasus mountain peoples (usually known as *gortsy*)—the very populations who were waging guerilla war against the Russian Empire for much of the nineteenth century. As is well known by readers of Mikhail Lermontov’s novel *A Hero of Our Time* (1840), many of these officers, most of whom had learned to romanticize the *gortsy* from popular literary works beginning with Aleksandr Pushkin’s poem “The Prisoner of the Caucasus” (1822), deliberately adopted the clothing, military accoutrements, and putative value system (freedom, honor, heroism) of the Chechens, Circassians, and other native peoples, as well as (perhaps less consciously) types of behavior that had given the *gortsy* a reputation for savagery such as raiding and kidnapping.³⁰ According to Dana Sherry’s recent study of Russian *kavkaztsy*, a “seeming confusion of identities highlights what may be the most important consequence of service in the Caucasus for the Russian officer—the slow but steady exchange of typical Russian customs and modes of behavior for those attributed to the population indigenous to the Caucasus.”³¹ But such sources and analyses have almost never commented explicitly on the irony of the Russian officers’ appropriation of the label referring to the Caucasus region’s inhabitants.

In 1841, Lermontov, whose fiction helped to popularize the phenomenon of officers “gone native” in the Caucasus, wrote a short essay titled simply “*Kavkazets*.”³² A reader previously unfamiliar with the phenomenon might find the essay jarring for the aggressive way in which it seizes that label for the Russians. It begins like an ethnographic study: “First of all, what exactly is a Caucasian, and what kinds of Caucasians are there?”

In reply, Lermontov states: “A Caucasian is a half-Russian, half-Asian being; his inclination for oriental customs takes the upper hand, but he is ashamed of this in the presence of strangers, that is of visitors from Russia.” One might still think the author is speaking of Caucasus natives (undergoing Russification), but Lermontov soon dispels this by noting that a *kavkazets* is “usually thirty to forty-five years old,” and “if not a staff-captain, then probably a major.” In a series of phrases referring to “real Caucasians,” Lermontov continues to tease the reader into thinking that he will be discussing Caucasian native peoples, but it soon becomes clear that all the distinctions being made are among different Russians who might (and presumably did) call themselves *kavkaztsy*. Thus we learn that “civil *kavkaztsy* are rare; for the most part they are an awkward imitation, and if you meet among them a real one, then only among the regimental physicians.”³³

Of course, even the “real” *kavkaztsy* were Russian poseurs merely imitating (awkwardly or not) native Caucasian men. Lermontov’s *kavkazets* is emphatically not native to the Caucasus; he is most likely from Petersburg, where in the Cadet Corps he surreptitiously read Pushkin’s “Prisoner of the Caucasus,” daydreamed of adventures in the south, and began to sport articles of Circassian clothing. Upon arriving in the south, the “Caucasian” immediately purchases a dagger, with which he never parts, and “as is proper, falls in love with a Cossack girl [*kazachka*].” Here Lermontov finally introduces a sardonic tone by interjecting: “Beautiful! How poetic!” It is important that Lermontov reveal his skeptical attitude toward the officers here, for he now tells us that the typical *kavkazets* begins to dream of subjugating the native peoples, or *gortsy*. “He thinks about capturing some twenty mountaineers with his own hands; he dreams of frightful battles, rivers of blood, and generals’ epaulettes.”

Such an officer eventually becomes a “real *kavkazets*” by Lermontov’s definition only after he befriends some “peaceful Circassian” and from him develops a love for simple, primitive life over the urban, urbane existence he had known in Russia; knowledge of regional customs, folklore, and genealogy; a superficial ability to converse in “Tatar” (although the Caucasian languages are unrelated to Tatar, Russians used this word generically for languages of the region); and a complete Circassian outfit and set of weapons.³⁴ According to Lermontov, “His passion for all things Circassian reaches an unbelievable degree” and even squelches his interest in women. He becomes a self-appointed authority on “oriental” customs and on the virtues and faults of the various tribes, becomes so attached to his burka that he rarely takes it off, and constantly sings the pleasures of service in the Caucasus. When the *kavkazets* retires from service, according to Lermontov, he takes his identity with him back to Russia proper (“even in

Voronezh province he doesn't remove his dagger or his saber"), where he lives out his days telling exaggerated tales about feats performed during his service. The retired officer's role as popularizer of the war raises the possibility (unaddressed by Lermontov) that the cult of the *kavkaztsy* was as important to civilians outside of the Caucasus as to the officers themselves, and that the civilian public may actually have coined the name.

On one level, the use of a preexisting term for the indigenous mountain peoples to designate the ethnic Russian military personnel fighting against them might be regarded as an innocent coincidence resulting from the structure of the Russian language. In both usages, groups of people are simply named after locations with which they are identified. Officers in the Caucasus war sought to distinguish themselves from their "ordinary" counterparts serving elsewhere in the empire because presumably their burden was greater. For many, identification with the mountain *peoples* too may also have been deliberate, as a way of thumbing their noses at Russian officialdom and authority by expressing admiration for and even solidarity with the enemy, the supposedly inferior object of Russia's civilizing mission—though Sherry's recent collective portrait emphasizes the extraordinary dedication of these officers to the war effort.³⁵ The same connotations may have been intended even if the term was first coined by civilians.

Whoever was originally responsible for calling the officers *kavkaztsy*, and for whatever conscious purpose, the cumulative and perhaps subconscious *effect* of this usage was pernicious. While the tsarist officers claimed some perceived attributes of "the other," they used a label normally associated with the other but now actually *excluding* all of the true, original members of that group—in effect, stealing the identity. Appropriation of the label made an enormous adventure (even a game) of officers' experience in the war while diverting attention—the public's as well as the officers' own—from the plight of the mountain communities who were killed in large numbers for daring to defend their freedom against the Russians. How else could these men, who claimed to appreciate the mountain peoples and their culture, have abetted their generals in clearing out virtually entire Caucasian populations from the 1830s to the 1860s?³⁶ Most importantly, the figure of speech implied that Russians belonged in the region whereas many of the peoples living there already did not. By simply declaiming what Pestel and Gagemeister had earlier argued, it both prepared the agents of destruction for their task and conditioned the broader public to accept the Caucasian natives' decimation. Thus the *kavkazets* cult functioned psychologically for Russians as a figurative form of genocide and a mechanism for enabling the actual genocide undertaken militarily.

Identity-formation around the theaters of war and the names of peoples living there persisted through the remainder of the nineteenth century. After

the *kavkaztsy*, Russian officers in later wars were known as "*bolgary*" (in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877/78, which was in part a war to liberate Bulgaria from the Ottomans) and "*turkestantsy*" (in the conquest of Turkestan in the 1880s).³⁷ At first glance, the Bulgarian label seems different because the Bulgarians were not Russia's enemies in the Russo-Turkish War, but it may be key to understanding the other cases. In the Caucasian and Turkestan cases, Russians' use of "enemy" names was appealing because those peoples were being vanquished not so much for offense toward Russia as for resisting Russia's advance, which supposedly was intended to civilize and even liberate them. This linguistic tradition, then, held only in situations where the "others" were traditionally considered inferior (as either "little brother" Slavs or non-Europeans)—so inferior that their existence mattered only insofar as it showed the Russians' higher status.³⁸ But soldiers' taking of these peoples' names actually helped make the destruction of these peoples palatable. The appearance of new "Caucasians" and "Turkestanis" from Russia helped Russians mentally to begin clearing the regions of these native presences so that the Russians themselves could move in. The trope reemerged, of course, during the 1980s as the Soviet Union attempted to establish control over Afghanistan. Soviet soldiers serving there, and afterwards veterans of the war, became widely known as "*afgantsy*"—"the Afghans."

One final, telling example from the tsarist era appears in a nonmilitary context. Russian students in the Anti-Islam Division of the Kazan Theological Academy in the 1860s were known as "the Tatars" because they were developing knowledge of Tatar culture through linguistic and religious studies. Those who began studies in that division but discontinued became known as "apostates" (*otpadshie*), a wry reference to some of the Tatars they were being trained to convert back to Christianity.³⁹ By giving themselves the ethnonym of their subjects, the students expressed a certain affinity with the Tatar people, but in effect diverted attention from the very negative effects their future work as missionaries would have on Tatar culture. Indeed, they would be striving to dismantle that culture (since they ultimately envisioned turning the Tatars into Russians through conversion)—but by calling themselves "Tatars" they removed the real Tatars from the story, focused all attention on themselves, and thus masked the destructive aims of their future work.⁴⁰

Great-Power Ventriloquism and Genocide by Assimilation

I have been arguing that the idea of genocide in imperial Russia was far from being limited to the military sphere and its technologies and strategies;

imperial discourses circulating more broadly in Russian officialdom and society also gave play to genocidal fantasies. The genocidal overtones of ethnic identity theft were largely unconscious or subconscious, but closely related ways of thinking were considerably more explicit and more visible. One of these, which I call "great-power ventriloquism," was articulated most famously by Fyodor Dostoyevsky in 1880. Another was assimilatory discourses that envisaged the disappearance of colonized peoples.

The occasion for Dostoyevsky's imperial apologetics was the unveiling of a monument to Pushkin in Moscow (arguably the formal beginning of the Pushkin cult that still flourishes in Russia today).⁴¹ In his speech lionizing the poet, Dostoyevsky claimed that Pushkin's chief virtue was his ability to speak not only for Russians but for the rest of the world: "Pushkin alone, of all the poets of the world, possesses the quality of embodying himself fully within another nationality."⁴² Though Dostoyevsky was most concerned with Pushkin's capturing of European mentalities,⁴³ he also mentioned Pushkin's success in taking on an Eastern voice in one of his poems. Decades earlier, the writer Nikolai Gogol had called attention to Pushkin's ability to capture foreign ethnolnational mentalities,⁴⁴ but Dostoyevsky took a new turn by attributing this element of Pushkin's genius to the Russian nation as a whole. "The capacity to respond to the entire world and to assume completely the form of the genius of other nations in a reincarnation that is almost total," he said, "is an altogether Russian one, a national one, and Pushkin merely shares it with our entire People."⁴⁵ And he made it clear that he saw this capacity as a moral virtue and expression of good will. "Indeed," Dostoyevsky proclaimed, "the mission of the Russian is unquestionably pan-European and universal. To become a real Russian, to become completely Russian, perhaps, means just (in the final analysis—please bear that in mind) to become a brother to all people, a *panhuman*, if you like."⁴⁶

Russians' love for all humanity, according to Dostoyevsky, prevented them from "wall[ing] ourselves off from other nationalities behind our own nationality so that we alone may acquire everything while regarding other nationalities as merely lemons to be squeezed dry (and there really are peoples in Europe who feel this way!)"⁴⁷ By invoking European greed and selfishness in opposition to Russian generosity and benevolence, however, Dostoyevsky turned the claim of Russians' empathy and cultural understanding into a narrow-minded ideology similar to the claims of Slavic spiritual-cultural superiority made by racist neo-Slavophiles. In effect, the virtues claimed for Russians were cancelled out by the arrogance of claiming that *only* the Russian people possessed such traits.

That such an altruistic ideology could have an aggressively self-serving underside became even clearer six months later in one of Dostoyevsky's last

pieces of writing. In January 1881, when the Russian army captured the stronghold of Gök Tepe in Turkestan, Dostoyevsky celebrated the event in his newspaper column. He took issue with Russia's "Westernizers" who saw no purpose in the conquest of Central Asia, fearing it would work against Russia's acceptance as a European power. "This shame that Europe will consider us Asians has been hanging over us for almost two centuries now," wrote Dostoyevsky. "This mistaken shame of ours, this mistaken view of ourselves as exclusively Europeans and not Asians . . . has cost us dearly"⁴⁸ A newfound engagement with Asia would prove more fruitful:

[W]hen we turn to Asia, with our new view of her, something of the same sort may happen to us as happened to Europe when America was discovered. For, in truth, Asia for us is that same America which we still have not discovered. With our push toward Asia we will have a renewed upsurge of spirit and strength. . . . In Europe we were hangers-on and slaves, while in Asia we shall be the masters. In Europe we were Tatars, while in Asia we are the Europeans. Our mission, our civilizing mission in Asia will encourage our spirit and draw us on. . . . Every place the "Russ" settles in Asia will at once become Russian land. A new Russia will be created that will also restore and resurrect the old one in time and will clearly show her the path to follow.⁴⁹

Considering this essay together with the Pushkin speech, one is reminded that Russian statesmen often used Russians' putative empathy with other peoples as a justification for imperialism, particularly in the Asian parts of the empire where Russia could play a "civilizing" role. This view described the Russian Empire as a justifiable philanthropic undertaking in contrast to the other European empires that were supposedly illegitimate, coercive, and exploitative. The capacity for ventriloquism, then, was especially important in Asia, where it turned out that the ulterior motive was not the appreciation of non-Russian cultures but a mission to spread *Russian* culture.⁵⁰

This ideology of empire went hand in hand with reigning views of cultural assimilation, which—as the study of Russia's history developed in the nineteenth century—intellectuals were beginning to view as an ubiquitous and central aspect of its past. The motif was present in the work of most of the major historians, but was especially pronounced for those with a more populist bent. Russia's expansion as a land-bound empire, offering ease of Slavic peasant settlement in annexed regions, was frequently cited as a key difference between Russian colonialism and its Western European counterparts. In the eyes of many Russian elites, the resulting possibilities for cultural cross-borrowing made the Russian Empire a more natural, humane, and therefore justifiable undertaking compared with the overseas empires of Britain and France, Russia's key rivals in the nineteenth century. Thus, the

Russian "empire" could be represented as something more benign than an empire: the organic development of a Russian nation-state, ultimately with a homogeneous population.⁵¹ Although those espousing this view of Russian history usually did not deny that cultural assimilation was a two-way process—with the Russians changing as they acquired new cultural traits, habits, and even blood (miscegenation was generally not looked down upon by Russians)—they almost always agreed that Russification was and had to be the dominant trend. Particularly in the eastern and southern parts of the empire, Russian culture was assumed to be superior to the native cultures and therefore was expected to prevail when the peoples mixed. Normatively, assimilation meant Russification.⁵²

While many Russians saw expansion and Russian colonization of the empire in a positive light as the mechanism by which Russia established its national character and identity, some people (usually ethnographers) focused on, and lamented, the resultant destruction of minority peoples and cultures. This concern was especially pronounced in Siberia, where the native populations were small, dispersed, and by the late nineteenth century seemed to be dying out because of rampant disease, environmental change, subsistence crises, and poverty. Some revolutionary exiles took up ethnography and devoted themselves to raising public awareness of the crisis. One was Nikolai M. Iadrntsev, who in his book *Siberia as a Colony* (1882) championed the cause of a Siberia free of Russian state domination and blamed the impending extinction of some of the Siberian peoples on the various effects of Russian colonization.⁵³ Iadrntsev was answered by more conservative commentators such as M. A. Miropiev, who insisted (with some degree of justification) that his colleague had misidentified the process of Russification—through native proximity to Russian settlements—as biological extinction.⁵⁴ Although *cultures* may have been dying out, these critics said, it was happening not because large numbers of people were starving, but because they were gradually being transformed into Russians, a process they saw as beneficial in economic and cultural terms ("extinction as survival," in the words of Yuri Slezkine).⁵⁵

The prominent nineteenth-century ethnographer Ivan N. Smirnov painstakingly used linguistic and cultural data to trace the ethnic history of eastern Russia in order to document the gradual assimilation of Russian-Christian culture by several Finno-Ugric, animist peoples—the Mordvins, Cheremisses (Maris), Votiaks (Udmurts), and Permiaks (Komis). In his writings on these peoples, Smirnov argued—in a celebratory tone that is impossible to overlook—that even without the direct intervention of the tsarist state, the language, religion, and customs of the Russians (and eventually their blood too) over time had been so thoroughly absorbed by minority communities in some locales that observers might mistake assimilation

for either the out-migration or the biological extinction of those peoples. Smirnov sometimes tried to predict how long it might take before the last representative of this or that Finnic people would become Russian, leaving the tribe's existence as only a vague memory.⁵⁶ He might not appear so sinister in simply describing this process if it were not for his role in the notorious Multan human sacrifice case, in which it became evident that Smirnov thought some of the indigenous cultures of the middle Volga region had to be destroyed because they were utterly savage.⁵⁷

Smirnov was one of Russia's chief proponents of evolutionism, the predominant school of anthropological thought in the US and Britain. Although evolutionism was in some regards radically more tolerant of ethnic difference than preceding schools of thought, it could also function as a scientific basis on which to condone or promote genocide. As George Stocking has shown in the case of British scholars and the destruction of the Tasmanians, some evolutionist ethnographers and anthropologists in effect sought the demise (by assimilation when possible, by other means when necessary) of peoples and cultures they considered demonstrably least advanced and thus destined to disappear.⁵⁸

Through the dissemination of ethnographic writings such as Smirnov's, the Russian reading public became familiar with the notion that ethnic groups in Russia might (and rightfully should) disappear over time because of Russification. Russification was seen as the manifestation of the strength of Russian culture, so that the disappearance of neighboring minority groups could be a source of satisfaction. If anything impeded the assimilation process, it might become a subject of heated controversy. This is what happened to the educational project of the famous lay Orthodox missionary Nikolai I. Il'minskii, who founded an enormous network of schools for minorities using native languages and native teachers (rather than the Russian language and Russian teachers) so that the pupils would achieve a deeper understanding of the Orthodox religion and remain within the church. Frequently, the result, even where integration into the Russian church was most successful, was a strengthening of some non-Russian identities that otherwise might have given way to Russification. Amidst the public backlash, at an assembly of Russian aristocrats discussing the schools in Kazan province in 1911, one nobleman waxed nostalgic for the days of aggressive Russification: "In the past, the Russian people were strongly organized, thanks to which we wiped a lot of alien peoples [*inorodtsy*] from the face of the Earth. They fused with the Russians, leaving only their names in history."⁵⁹ This statement was a genocidal fantasy not because the disappearance of peoples and cultures happened to be a by-product of the assimilation project the speaker advocated, but because the speaker clearly regarded that disappearance as a desirable goal and a reason to pursue

Russification. Moreover, the very words he used—wiping peoples from the face of the Earth—suggest a willingness to see that goal achieved through violence, so that the minorities might actually be exterminated rather than assimilated. The conflation of cultural and biological genocide here suggests that to some Russians hostile towards a minority ethnic group there might not have been a significant difference between the two; both rid the society of a group perceived as unworthy or troublesome.⁶⁰

Such a mindset also existed within imperial Russia's corridors of power. Konstantin P. Pobedonostsev, the *ober-prokuror* (lay administrator) of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church from 1880 to 1905, childhood tutor and thereafter adviser to Tsar Alexander III, and a notorious advocate of coercive Russification policies (by religion and other means), is famously said to have responded to a question about the future of Russia's Jews by predicting, "One-third will die out, one-third will leave the country, and one-third will be completely dissolved in the surrounding population."⁶¹ The statement suggests that Pobedonostsev envisioned the demise of the Jews without sympathy or concern, and perhaps even with satisfaction. Coming from a different person, the prediction might have been made ruefully, but anyone who knew Pobedonostsev's reputation would perceive these overtones. He was concerned only that Russia be rid of the thorny "Jewish question"; his assumption was that it would disappear only when the Jews themselves did. Emigration, assimilation, and extinction were hardly distinguishable in Pobedonostsev's eyes, insofar as they would all contribute to this end. And though we might label this a genocidal fantasy, Pobedonostsev's position made it more than just a fantasy. As one of the tsar's chief advisors, particularly on issues concerning ethnolnational minorities, he successfully championed a great number of legal limitations on the rights of these peoples to worship according to their faiths, use their languages in public, participate in civic life, pursue their ambitions, and make ends meet. The Jews faced more restrictions than most (many of the most notorious arising during Pobedonostsev's tenure), including confinement of residence to the Pale of Settlement and to certain places within it, and numerous limitations on property ownership, economic activity, and educational opportunity. Historians of the Jews in Russia would agree that his policies contributed significantly to the decline of Jews and Jewish culture in the Russian Empire—many Jews emigrated, some converted in order to escape restrictions, some died in pogroms that may have been abetted by agents of the government, and many were impoverished as a result of discriminatory policies. Such a set of actions would seem to constitute genocide according to Lemkin's definition, and reportedly Lemkin did include the case of Jews in tsarist Russia in his researches on genocide in history.⁶²

Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter has been to examine the range of motivations that can inspire or contribute to genocide, particularly in multiethnic empires such as tsarist Russia. Genocidal impulses and fantasies may be official or unofficial; they may be based on notions that are modern or pre-modern; they can express concerns that are economic, military, religious, political, or ethnographic; they can be explicitly violent, or seemingly devoid of violence; they can be conscious, specific, and well articulated, or vague and even subconscious. Paying attention to such expressions may not help historians to be more precise in defining and identifying genocide, or in assigning blame for it; it may even work against these *judicial* functions that historians of genocide are sometimes expected to perform. But it can make us more *judicious* as historians by leading away from overly mechanistic conceptions of genocide (a tendency of extreme versions of both the intentionalist and structuralist paradigms) and toward more nuanced, sophisticated, and realistic accounts of causation and agency in human affairs.

It bears reemphasizing that genocidal impulses and fantasies are not tantamount to genocide or even to genocidal "intent." Nor are they mutually equivalent, either in moral terms or in terms of their potential to inspire genocidal actions. Obviously a figure of colloquial speech (like referring to invaders using the name of the people invaded) is not the same as a specific written proposal (like Pestel's or Gagemeister's) to eliminate a population; the desire of a gentry bystander to see Russia's minority peoples undergo extinction is not the same as a similar statement coming from one of the empire's chief policy makers. But while a proposal or official statement might stand a better chance of *directly* inspiring a genocidal event if it strikes the fancy of those with the power to carry it out, an especially pervasive lay opinion or figure of speech could quite possibly play a significant role in motivating genocidal activities or allowing them to be undertaken (even if historians might never be able to measure or even verify that role).

I have presented here in part only several stray examples of genocidal thinking in imperial Russia. Indeed, some of them were made by not particularly prominent individuals. The point is that in a number of realms, in a number of different ways, and for a number of different reasons, many Russians wished for, hoped for, and envisioned the destruction or disappearance of certain subpopulations in their vast empire. But I am emphatically not suggesting—as a Daniel Goldhagen of Russian studies might—that such impulses and fantasies were universal or predominant among Russians, let alone the single *essence* of Russians' imperial vision.⁶³

Had that been the case, the history of that enormous conglomeration of peoples would certainly have been many times bloodier, more miserable, and more tragic than it was, and the world would be significantly less diverse today as a result.

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Notes

1. Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (Washington, DC, 1944), 79.
2. On distinctions among intent, motivation, and rationalization, see Michael A. McDonnell and A. Dirk Moses, "Raphael Lemkin as Historian of Genocide in the Americas," *Journal of Genocide Research* 7, no. 4 (2005): 510–13.
3. The intentionalist and structuralist approaches are delineated in A. Dirk Moses, "Genocide and Settler Society in Australian History," in *Genocide and Settler Society: Frontier Violence and Stolen Indigenous Children in Australian History*, ed. A. Dirk Moses (Oxford, 2005), 23.
4. Norman Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2001), 4.
5. Literature from the Cold War period includes Robert Conquest, *The Nation Killers: The Soviet Deportation of Nationalities* (New York, 1970); idem, *Stalin—Breaker of Nations* (New York, 1991); Aleksandr Nekrich, *The Punished Peoples: The Deportation and Fate of Soviet Minorities at the End of the Second World War* (New York, 1978). Post-Cold War contributions include J. Otto Pohl, *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR, 1937–1949* (Westport, CT, 1999); Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY and London, 2001), esp. chap. 8; Martin, "The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," *Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 4 (1998): 813–61; Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*, chap. 3; Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton, NJ, 2002), chap. 3; Alfred Rieber, "Civil Wars in the Soviet Union," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 4, no. 1 (2003): 129–62; Pavel M. Polian, *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR* (Budapest, 2004). See also Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia's Continuum of Crisis, 1914–1921* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2002), chap. 6, which describes de-Cossackization during the Civil War.
6. Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington, IL and London, 1999); Eric Lohr, *Nationalizing the Russian Empire* (Cambridge, MA and London, 2003). See also Peter Holquist, "Violent Russia, Deadly Marxism?: Russia in the Epoch of Violence, 1905–1921," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 4, no. 3 (2003): 627–52.
7. This process is described broadly by Paul B. Henze, "Circassian Resistance to Russia," in *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance towards the Muslim World*, ed. Marie Bennigsen Broxup (New York, 1992), 63–65.
8. Michael Geyer and Charles Bright, "Global Violence and Nationalizing Wars in Eurasia and the Americas: The Geopolitics of War in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38, no. 4 (1996), 630. Arguably, violence in this zone subsided only after the dissolution of the Russian, Ottoman, and Persian empires and the solidification of new states including the USSR, Yugoslavia, and Turkey, but it re-erupted in the late twentieth century on several fronts—Afghanistan, the former Yugoslavia, and Caucasia/Transcaucasia.
9. Moshe Gammer, *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Dagestan* (New York and London, 1994); V. V. Degoev, *Imam Shamil': Prorok, vlastitel', voin* (Moscow, 2001).
10. In the tsarist period the peoples known today as Circassians (Cherkes), Kabardians, and Adyge were all referred to by the term Circassian. Ronald Wixman, *The Peoples of the USSR: An Ethnographic Handbook* (Armonk, NY, 1984), 45, 49. I use that broad designation here for the sake of convenience.
11. Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (New York, 1992), 153–62; M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774–1923* (London and New York, 1966), 91–92; Henze, "Circassian Resistance," 80–87.
12. Peter Holquist, "To Count, to Extract, and to Exterminate: Population Statistics and Population Politics in Late Imperial and Soviet Russia," in *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*, ed. Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford and New York, 2001), 111–44; Stephen D. Shenfield, "The Circassians: A Forgotten Genocide?" in *The Massacre in History*, ed. Mark Levene and Penny Roberts (New York and Oxford, 1999), 149–162; Austin Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and the Georgian Frontier, 1845–1917* (Montreal and Kingston, 2002), chap. 2, esp. 22–27; A. L. Norochnitskii, *Istoriia narodov severnogo Kavkaza (konets XVIII v.–1917 g.)* (Moscow, 1988), 202–212; R. Trakho, *Cherkesy* (Nal'chik, Russia, 1992), 55–64; and Henze, "Circassian Resistance," 102–4.
13. The lower estimate is in Holquist, "Population Statistics and Population Politics," 119, the higher in Shenfield, "The Circassians," 154.
14. Hopkirk, *The Great Game*, 404–09.
15. Russia had won the war against Turkey in 1877/78, but the initial treaty it negotiated, that of San Stefano (1877), so amplified Russian influence in the Balkans through the creation of a "Greater Bulgaria" client/protectorate state that the Western powers refused to accept it and forced Russia to accept the Treaty of Berlin, which reduced the new Bulgarian state considerably.
16. Holquist, "Population Statistics and Population Politics," 111.
17. *Ibid.*, 117.
18. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*, 187–90.
19. Patrick O'Meara, *The Decembrist Pavel Pestel: Russia's First Republican* (Houndmills, UK and New York, 2003), 82.
20. P. I. Pestel', *Russkaia pravda: Nakaz Vremennomu Verkhovnomu Pravleniiu* (St. Petersburg, 1906), 55.
21. *Ibid.*, 47–48.
22. 22 lu. A. Gagemeister, "Osnovnye nachala narodnogo bogatstva za Kavkazom," Central State Archive of the Republic of Georgia, Tbilisi, f. 4, op. 2, d. 8, l. 103–103ob. The report was also published, in "Zakavkazskie ocherki Gagemeistera," *Zhurnal*

- Ministerstva vnutrennikh del* (Sept. 1845), 411–39; (Oct. 1845), 32–64; (Nov. 1845), 211–55; (Dec. 1845), 353–99.
23. Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500–1800* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IL, 2002), 222. It is strange that Khodarkovsky's account of this transformation does not discuss the human toll of this campaign on the nomadic peoples.
 24. On the Russian state's aggressive encouragement of Slavic peasant settlement in the Kazakh steppe around the turn of the twentieth century and the disastrous effects on the nomads (described as similar to the American repression of indigenous peoples), see Daniel Brower, *Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire* (London, 2003), chap. 5. According to Brower, Kazakhs' land was protected only if they settled on it and gave up nomadic life; otherwise they faced expulsion. Tens of thousands seemingly chose the former option, leading tsarist apologists to hail the peasant migration as a civilizing influence, but on closer scrutiny it turned out that most of these Turkic communities continued to subsist on pastoral herding, only using newly restricted spaces. In other words, the nomads were not being settled but slowly crowded out.
 25. Gagemeister, "Osnovnye nachala," 103ob.
 26. Pestel', *Russkaia pravda*, 52.
 27. *Ibid.*, 53.
 28. See James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT and London, 1998), 90–93.
 29. For a description of such research and the judgments and categorizations it made on the basis of purely qualitative (not quantitative) observation, see Yuri Slezkine, "Naturalists versus Nations: Eighteenth-Century Russian Scholars Confront Ethnic Diversity," in *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700–1917*, ed. Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini (Ithaca, NY and London, 1997), 27–57. Even had statistical thinking been more central to the judgments behind expulsions and ethnic cleanings, Holquist's account would still be misleading in that it seems to overestimate the prominence of the Russian army in the development of statistics as a discipline. The article on the history of statistics in Russia in the most prominent tsarist-era encyclopedia gives much greater emphasis to statistics' use in the study of taxation, agriculture, and commerce by Russia's economic ministries (Finance and State Domains) in the early nineteenth century than by the army. See *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar' Brokgauza i Efrona*, s.v. "Statistika teoreticheskaiia."
 30. The standard source on this phenomenon and generally on Russian literature of the Caucasus is Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge, 1994).
 31. Dana Sherry, "Kavkaztsy: Images of Caucasus [sic] and Politics of Empire in the Memoirs of the Caucasus Corps' Officers, 1834–1859," *Ab Imperio* 3, no. 2 (2002): 191–222 (quotation on 219).
 32. M. Iu. Lermontov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 4 vols. (Moscow-Leningrad, 1948), 4: 161–64. Writing for a projected literary collection on various Russian social types, Lermontov used his essay to address criticism of *A Hero of Our Time*, including remarks made by Tsar Nicholas I to the effect that the book was too cynical in portraying its protagonist, Pechorin, as a hero. But the censors disallowed the book and so the essay remained unpublished and unknown until 1929. E. E. Naidich, "Ocherk Lermontova 'Kavkazets' v svete polemiki vokrug 'Geroia nashego vremeni,'" *Russkaia literatura*, no. 4 (2001): 141–47.
 33. Lermontov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 4:161.

34. According to Sherry's interpretation of officers' memoirs, the defining feature of a *kavkazets* was his spending his entire military career in the Caucasus, unlike the many officers who served there only for a year or two. Sherry, "Kavkaztsy," 197.
35. In fact, Sherry implies, the peculiar group identity of the *kavkaztsy* was in part a way of strengthening these officers' resolve in a situation that required a great deal of self-denial and only limited recognition (a large number of the officers who served in the Caucasus had been exiled to the region as punishment). Sherry, "Kavkaztsy," 217.
36. A recent analysis of attitudes of Russian aristocrats toward the Caucasus concludes that indeed, in spite of the mountain peoples' seeming importance to the officers as inspiration for various aspects of their own self-image, "their fate was only secondary and, in effect, was not taken into account." Ia. Gordin, "Russkii chelovek na Kavkaze: Predvaritel'nyi zametki o kavkazskoi utopii," *Zvezda*, no. 7 (2002): 174.
37. Kavad (Karem) Rash, "Derzait'e, Rossyi!," *Nash sovremennik*, no. 5 (1991). Not having done a search of primary sources, I am unable to cite examples of "bolgary" to back up Rash's claim. The use of "turkestanets" in this manner, however, is exemplified by D. L. Ivanov, "Iz vospominanii turkestantsa [From the memoirs of a Turkestanian]," *Istoricheskii vestnik* 64, no. 6 (1896): 830–59. On "turkestantsy," also see Dietrich Geyer, *Russian Imperialism: The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policy, 1860–1914*, trans. Bruce Little (New Haven, CT and London, 1987), 95, 107.
38. According to Rash, "even the malevolent enemies of Russia had to admit, when the dust, hysteria, and demagoguery fall aside, that the actions of the Russians in these regions had a progressive-philanthropic influence on the fate of the residents of the region."
39. N. P. Ostroumov, "Vospominaniia o missionerskom protivomusul'manskom otdelenii pri Kazanskoi Dukhovnoi Akademii," *Pravoslavnyi sobesednik*, no. 1 (1892): 131–42 (2nd pagination).
40. Missionaries trained after the early nineteenth century were not supposed to be imposing Christianity coercively. Beginning in the 1840s, officially the Russian Orthodox Church and the state were adamant that conversion be achieved only by persuasion. But there is evidence that some clergy continued to use coercion, either on their own initiative or with the blessing of local authorities, to convert non-Christians. Use of material incentives remained even more common. Though it would be stretching definitions to say that the missionaries were being trained in genocide, still, missionary work continued to be inspired by fantasies of the minority cultures' disappearance. See Robert Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, NY and London, 2001), chaps. 2–3.
41. On the event, see Marcus C. Levitt, *Russian Literary Politics and the Pushkin Celebration of 1880* (Ithaca, NY and London, 1989).
42. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *A Writer's Diary*, trans. and ed. Kenneth Lantz, 2 vols. (Evanston, IL, 1994), 2: 1292.
43. In a sense, this was Dostoyevsky's way of bridging the gaping divide of the decades-old Slavophile-Westernizer debate (Dostoyevsky being decisively on the Slavophile side): Pushkin's putative ability to speak in all national idioms allowed Russia to express affinity with the West without becoming Westernized, that is by being in control rather than slavishly importing European ideas and structures. The ability and inclination to mimic, in other words, was a source of strength, not of weakness, and a manifestation of talent rather than of a lack thereof.
44. Quoted in Katya Hokanson, "Literary Imperialism, *Narodnost'*, and Pushkin's Invention of the Caucasus," *Russian Review* 53, no. 3 (1994): 341.
45. Dostoyevsky, *A Writer's Diary*, 2: 1272–73.

46. *Ibid.*, 2:1294.
47. *Ibid.*, 2:1275.
48. *Ibid.*, 2:1369.
49. *Ibid.*, 2:1373–75.
50. The ability of Russians to interact harmoniously with neighboring peoples was sometimes cited as a reason for Russians' "assimilatory capability"—their success in spreading their culture even without the help of state policy. I. N. Smirnov, "Ob-rusenie inorodtsev i zadachi obrusitel'noi politiki," *Istoricheskii vestnik* 47 (1892): 752–65. But in light of many countervailing examples this affability was also blamed for Russians' tendency oftentimes to become assimilated to the alien languages and cultures, to the point that some elites saw the Russian people as having a weak sense of national identity. N. Kharuzin, "K voprosu ob assimiliatsionnoi sposobnosti russkogo naroda," *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie* 4 (1894): 43–78.
51. Seymour Becker, "The Muslim East in Nineteenth-Century Russian Popular Historiography," *Central Asian Survey* 5, nos. 3/4 (1986): 25–47; *idem*, "Russia between East and West: The Intelligentsia, Russian National Identity and the Asian Borderlands," *Central Asian Survey* 10, no. 4 (1991): 47–64.
52. See Willard Sunderland, "Russians Into Yakuts? 'Going Native' and Problems of Russian National Identity in the Siberian North, 1870s–1914," *Slavic Review* 55, no. 4 (1996): 824.
53. N. Ia. Iadrintsev, *Sibir' kak koloniia* (St. Petersburg, 1882); see also *idem*, *Sibirskie inorodtsy, ikh byt i sovremennoe polozhenie* (St. Petersburg, 1891).
54. M. A. Miropiev, *O polozhenii russkikh inorodtsev* (St. Petersburg, 1901).
55. Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca, NY and New York, 1994), 120.
56. I. N. Smirnov, *Permiaki* (Kazan, 1891), 172–73; *idem*, *Votiaki* (Kazan, 1890), 70, 260. For more on Smirnov's discussion of assimilation, see Geraci, *Window on the East*, 171–76, 195–222.
57. See Robert Geraci, "Ethnic Minorities, Anthropology, and Russian National Identity on Trial: The Multan Case," *Russian Review* 59, no. 4 (2000): 530–54.
58. George Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York, 1987), 274–83.
59. Russian State Historical Archive, St. Petersburg, f. 846, op. 1, d. 165, l. 28. For more on this controversy regarding the assimilatory effects of schools in Russia, see Geraci, *Window on the East*, chap. 7.
60. Only in the context of strong racialist assumptions about the biological rootedness and heritability of human characteristics (suggesting the impossibility of erasing negative traits by purely cultural means), or extraordinary impatience with waiting cultural change to occur, would physical extermination take on any special appeal. In Russia, such racialist attitudes were not significantly developed (owing probably to the obvious frequency and importance of miscegenation in the country's history), though a sense of urgency was sometimes present.
61. Simon M. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland from the Earliest Times until the Present Day*, trans. I. Friedlander, 3 vols. (New York, 1975), 3:10. Whether Pobedonostsev said exactly these words is a matter of minor uncertainty. The remark was allegedly made in an unrecorded conversation between Pobedonostsev and a Jewish journalist. More frequently it has been rendered: "A third will be converted, a third will emigrate, and a third will die of hunger." John Klier and others have questioned that particular version, which Klier claims is a later one, on the basis of Pobedonostsev's well-known lack of enthusiasm or hope for the conversion of Jews in Russia. John D. Klier, "State Policies and the Conversion of Jews in Imperial Russia," in *Of Religion*

- and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*, ed. Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky (Ithaca, NY and London, 2001), 106–7. In spite of Klier's skeptical tone, there is no particular reason to question the veracity of the remark.
62. McDonnell and Moses, "Raphael Lemkin," 502.
 63. I am referring, of course, to Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York, 1996).