Russia’s relations with the West occupy a significant part not only of its history, but also the formation of its identity. The question of whether Russia is, or should be, a part of Europe recurs throughout Russian history. Given the extent of borrowing from the West, especially from France and Germany, it is not surprising that Russians frequently defined themselves in terms of their relation to the West. While French culture was largely imported from abroad, German culture could be absorbed domestically. The Germans formed the most influential European minority within Russia. Already in Muscovite Russia, the generic term for foreigner was Nemets ('mute', one who does not speak Russian), a term which soon was applied exclusively to Germans. During Peter’s reign, Germans rose to dominant positions in trade, science, and government. Peter conquered and absorbed the Baltic German nobility, invited German tradesmen, officers and scientists to Russia, and initiated the Romanov policy of German marriages. In the reign of Catherine II, herself a German princess, thousands of German farmers were settled on the Volga and along the Black Sea coast, which established a large German peasant presence in the Empire. By 1914, the German population in Russia exceeded two million.1

In the nineteenth century, when educated Russians became absorbed with the question of Russia’s identity, in particular in relation to the West, the role and status of these Germans became a source of ongoing public controversy. This article will trace the development of attitudes towards the Russian Germany minority in public opinion, and government policy, in the second half of

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the nineteenth century. This time period witnessed the emergence of three successive "German questions". The first focused on the Baltic Germans, the second on German migration into the Western provinces, the third on the German colonists of South Russia.

I. The Slavophile origins of the German Question

The Slavophiles laid the ideological groundwork for this controversy. Their thought arose in response to Peter Chaadaev's *First Philosophical Letter*, in which he indicted Russia as a nation without history, continuity, or tradition, a nation incapable of contributing anything positive to world civilization, "a culture based wholly on borrowing and imitation." In answer to Chaadaev's critique, the Slavophiles sought to delineate a native Russian tradition, independent of Western borrowing, and capable of making an independent contribution to humanity. To do so, they chose first to define and critique the West. The basis of Latin-Germanic civilization, they argued, was Roman legalism, which defined society as a collection of individuals, and which structured their relations on the basis of external, rationalized law. The Roman Catholic church absorbed this system, thereby perverting Christianity from a communal religion based on love to a legalistic one based on punishment. Western legalism and individualism sanctioned the use of force to structure social relations. The result was feudalism, a rationalized system of class conflict and oppression. Western individualism's end result

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