Marx, Engels, and Russia: 1848-49

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On March 27, 1848, shortly after demonstrations had forced the abdication of Louis Philippe in France and rioting had shaken cities in Italy, Austria, and Prussia, Tsar Nicholas I of Russia issued a manifesto condemning the disturbances in Western Europe. His proclamation called upon the Russian people to join in a united effort to defend their country against the revolutionary disease and closed with the bold and portentous assertion: "God is with us! Understand, ye nations, and submit: for God is with us!" [1] This manifesto was a warning to European liberals that the Russian government, bastion of the *status quo* since 1815, would lead the vanguard of reaction against the revolutionary movement in 1848-49. It is not surprising, therefore, that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels should have vigorously opposed and relentlessly condemned the policies of the tsarist regime throughout those years of revolutionary ferment.

For Marx and Engels the issue was clear: ". . . From now on," wrote Marx, "there are only two parties in Europe: the 'revolutionary' and the 'counterrevolutionary'; only two watchwords: 'the democratic republic' or 'absolute monarchy'." [2] Russia was the embodiment of both the counterrevolution and absolutism. In this sense, the Russian issue became a pivot of Marx's and Engels' thought in 1848. The Russian menace was always in the back of their minds, and it was one of the factors which had to be considered before decisions could be made on any European issue. The formula was simple. Whoever hated tsarist Russia, Marx and Engels favored. Anything that postponed the downfall of the Romanov regime drew their criticism.

Enmity toward Russia was not an attitude peculiar to Marx and Engels in 1848. The tsarist government had been the object of widespread liberal criticism throughout the second quarter of the nineteenth century. After 1815 Russia's immense size and power were widely admired in Europe, since tsarist armies had helped to defeat Napoleon. But westerners began to look suspiciously upon Russia

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1. Quoted in Theodor Schiemann, *Geschichte Russlands unter Kaiser Nikolaus I*, Vol. IV: *Kaiser Nikolaus vom Höhepunkt seiner Macht bis zum Zusammenbruch im Krimkriege 1840-1855* (Berlin, 1919), 143.
2. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED (Berlin, 1961), VI, 206.

after the revolutions of 1830, when Nicholas I had shown his readiness to crush the Polish revolt. It was recognized that Russian power could, and would, be used to impede progress. It is interesting to note that Russia's role in the revolutions of 1830 produced a prevalent but unfounded opinion in Western Europe that Russian military strength was commensurate with her enormous size. Marx and Engels shared this illusion and continued to overestimate Russian military capacity despite the weaknesses revealed during the Crimean War.[3]

Moreover, Marx's and Engels' hatred of the tsarist government was not merely the product of Russia's reactionary role in 1848. On the contrary, both men had expressed their displeasure with Russian policy previous to the mid-century revolts. According to Isaiah Berlin, Marx's tenure as the editor of Cologne's left-wing *Rheinische Zeitung* (October, 1842—March, 1843) was cut short through the influence of the Russian government. Several editorials from his pen had been unfavorable to the tsarist regime, and Nicholas I, upon seeing one of these articles, protested to the Prussian government. As a consequence, Marx was forced to resign his post.[4] It is possible that his unpleasant early experiences with radical Russian émigrés contributed to Marx's negative view of Russia. During his residence in Paris between 1843 and 1845 Marx had come into contact with several Russian liberals, many of whom he considered romantic visionaries dealing in illusory abstractions. Russian intellectuals traveling in the West mouthed revolutionary ideas, but Marx noted that they neatly fit into bureaucratic slots once they returned to Russia. Reflecting on past contacts with Russian students in a letter of 1868, he remarked:

> Russian aristocratic youth, educated in German universities and in Paris, is always striving after the most extreme that the West can offer. This is pure gourmency. . . [and] does not preclude the same Russians from becoming scoundrels once they enter the service of the state.[5]

Marx's opinion of the exiled Russian radicals was no higher. His relations with the celebrated revolutionary Bakunin were often

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3. Oscar J. Hammen, "Free Europe versus Russia, 1830-1854," *The American Slavic and East European Review*, XI (February, 1952), 27-28, 32; Solomon F. Bloom, *The World of Nations: A Study of the National Implications in the Work of Karl Marx* (New York, 1941), 156.

4. Isaiah Berlin, *Karl Marx: His Life and Environment* (3rd ed.; New York, (1963), 75.

5. Quoted in Lazar Volin, "Karl Marx and Russia," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, LII (April, 1953), 166.

strained,[6] and he castigated the "pseudo-democratic and socialist form of panslavism" taught by Alexander Herzen.[7]

Likewise, hostility toward Russia was nothing new to Engels in 1848. As a young liberal during the Eastern crisis of 1840 Engels censured the actions of Russia and England and approved France's policy, even though much public disapproval was voiced against the government of Louis Philippe in Germany. He feared further Russian expansion and British gains in commercial power would allow the two countries to encircle Germany and eventually permit them to crush her. "The constant policy of England and the system of Russia," Engels wrote at the time, "these are the hereditary foes of European progress, not France and her movement." [8] This statement foreshadowed his later attitudes as a contributor to the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in 1848-49.

The abhorrence with which Marx and Engels looked upon reactionary Russia was matched by the significance they attached to the tsarist regime in the unfolding of events in 1848-49. They viewed the revolutions of 1848 as the means by which the liberal bourgeoisie would reach the zenith of its power in the states of Western and Central Europe. Bourgeois hegemony would be only of an interim nature. After a period of middle class rule the workers would proclaim the permanent revolution and carry out the socialization of society.[9] Russian foreign policy was assigned a major role in this process by the two revolutionary thinkers. To Marx and Engels Russia appeared to be an expansionist behemoth whose primary objective was the domination of Europe. Before the bourgeois revolution could survive it would have to engage in a great war with encroaching tsarist despotism, the basic premises of which were antithetical to, and therefore could not exist alongside, middle class republicanism. Marx and Engels reasoned that the Russian war would revitalize the revolution in 1848, just as the national wars had renewed the revo-

6. Berlin, *Karl Marx*, 109. See also E. H. Carr, *Michael Bakunin* (London, 1937), *passim*.

7. Quoted in Volin, "Karl Marx and Russia," 167.

8. Quoted in Gustav Mayer, *Friedrich Engels: eine Biographie* (2nd ed. rev.; The Hague, 1934), I, 55.

9. The phrase "permanent revolution" is most frequently associated with Leon Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg. By permanent revolution Trotsky meant the necessity of spreading the socialist revolution from agrarian Russia to Western Europe, where the revolution would have sound economic and social bases. But the phrase was originally used by Marx during the revolutions of 1848 to signify merely a national revolt in the tradition of 1789, which would eventually lead to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. See George Lichtheim, *Marxism: An Historical and Critical Study* (2nd ed. rev.; New York, 1965), 318.

lutionary movement in France after 1792. The Russian threat, they contended, would force moderate and undecided elements to declare for a republic. It would solidify the popular forces and compel the bourgeoisie to establish democratic, centralized states in Western Europe. These modernized states would provide the environment in which international socialism could take root and flourish. By taking all these factors concerning Russia into consideration, it is easier to understand Engels' statement that the establishment of the

> 'European brotherhood of peoples' will not come into being through empty phrases and pious wishes, but only through thoroughgoing revolutions and bloody struggles; it is not a question of a brotherhood of all European peoples under one Republican banner, but of the alliance of the revolutionary peoples against the counterrevolutionaries, an alliance which will not come into being on paper, but only on the field of battle.[10]

It should not be assumed, however, that Marx and Engels were alone in preaching a war of the revolutionary West against the "barbaric" East. The idea of a war of European allies against Russia enjoyed considerable popularity in liberal-nationalist circles in Western Europe in 1848. For example, Baron Heinrich von Arnim, a German aristocrat of liberal sympathies and since March 21 the Prussian foreign minister, suggested that war with Russia would facilitate the achievement of German unity. Moreover, the aged Polish nationalist Prince Adam Czartoryski, the former advisor to Tsar Alexander I, agitated for a war against Russia as a means by which Polish independence could be reestablished. The Russian war could thus be interpreted in various ways. Marx's and Engels' concept of its purpose was only the most radical of many, in that they saw the projected conflict functioning as a catalyst in the development of international socialism. In any case, it is important to note that in advocating a European war against Russia, as well as in their general hostility to tsarist autocracy, they reflected a prevalent attitude of the period.[11]

Marx's and Engels' prediction of a Russian war was not entirely unrealistic. As revolutions spread during February and March, a

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10. Marx and Engels, *Werke*, VI, 270-271; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Russian Menace to Europe: A Collection of Articles, Speeches, Letters and News Dispatches*, ed. Paul W. Blackstock and Bert F. Hoselitz (Glencoe, Ill., 1952), 68.

11. C. E. Black, "Poznan and Europe in 1848," *Journal of Central European Affairs*, VIII (July, 1948), 199; M. K. Dziewanowski, "1848 and the Hotel Lambert," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, XXVI (April, 1948), 363-366.

Russian invasion of Western Europe appeared to be a distinct possibility. Soon after news of events in Paris reached St. Petersburg it was rumored in high Russian circles that Nicholas I planned a "preventive war" against revolutionary Europe. These rumors were supported by such official government statements as the imperial decree of March 7 in which the tsar announced:

> Events have occurred in Western Europe which foreshadow a criminal tendency to overthrow legally established powers. The treaties of friendship and the conventions which unite Russia with neighboring powers impose upon us the sacred duty of . . . . placing on a war footing a portion of our forces to be in condition, if circumstances made it necessary, to oppose a powerful wall to the destructive torrent of anarchy.[12]

When public opinion in Prussia began to demand independence for the Polish province of Poznan, Russian intervention seemed imminent. By the end of March a war with Russia appeared unavoidable. But internal dissension between German and Polish nationalist factions in Poznan along with moderate developments in Paris and Berlin as the spring progressed made the tsar hesitant to act. Mindful of the limitations of his treasury and fearful of upsetting conditions in Poland lest the turbulence spill over his own borders, Nicholas concluded that armed intervention would be unwise.[13]

Even though they were nearly correct in prophesying a Russian invasion of Europe in the spring of 1848, Marx and Engels exhibited a serious misunderstanding of tsarist foreign policy. Nicholas I was not an imperialist. His foreign policy was dictated less by an ambition to extend the borders of his realm than by a desire to maintain the *status quo* in Europe.[14] The Russian foreign office frequently intervened in the affairs of Germany and Austria, but this intervention had the purpose of supporting the "divinely ordained" governments of those countries, not the annexation of their territories. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to see how Marx and Engels, as contemporaries of the "gendarme of Europe," could have misinterpreted the motives behind Russian foreign policy.

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12. Quoted in A. Lobanov-Rostovsky, *Russia and Europe, 1825-1878* (Ann Arbor, 1954), 116-117.

13. Isaiah Berlin, "Russia and 1848," *The Slavonic and East European Review,* XXVI (April, 1948), 349; Black, "Poznan and Europe in 1848," 199.

14. Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825-1855* (Berkeley, 1959), 236, 247-249.

On June 1, 1848, the first issue of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* appeared in Cologne. Edited by Marx and Engels, this newspaper became the leading organ of radical democracy on the continent during the disturbances of 1848-49, and its articles reflected the Russophobia of the two revolutionary thinkers. Therefore, a survey of Russian activity in Europe as it was presented in the pages of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* can prove valuable for an understanding of their attitudes toward Russia.

Nowhere did Marx and Engels see the stifling reactionary policy of Russia more clearly mirrored than in her relations with Poland. Historically, they contended, the key to Russia's tremendous influence in European affairs could be traced to the partitions of Poland, crimes in which the three most powerful monarchies of Europe shared and which formed the basis for the Russian-dominated Holy Alliance.

> On what [asked Engels] has the power of the reaction in Europe been based since 1815, indeed, in part since the first French Revolution? On the Russian-Prussian-Austrian Holy Alliance. And what holds this Holy Alliance together? The partition of Poland, by which all three allies profit.[15]

According to Marx and Engels, a "new Holy Alliance" arose in 1848 to menace the revolutions, a "Holy Alliance of the knout," led by Russia and based on common oppression of Poland. For this reason the editors of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* sympathized with all manifestations of the Polish national movement and campaigned indefatigably for Polish autonomy. Their enthusiasm for Polish nationalism led Engels to praise the Polish rebellion of 1830 as a "giant step forward against Russian despotism," and to condemn the Cracow incident of 1846 as an example of the tsar's meddling in the politics of other nations.[16]

In 1848 the Polish issue that concerned Marx and Engels most involved Russia only indirectly. This was the issue of the independence of the province of Poznan, a part of Prussia's spoils from the Polish partition. The *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* vigorously supported the cause of Poznan, reasoning that the establishment of its independence would be the signal for a Russian invasion to reestablish the *status quo*. This invasion would in turn touch off the war of revolution versus reaction which Marx and Engels so ardently anticipated. In August, after the Frankfurt Assembly had failed to support a proposal for in-

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15. Marx and Engels, *Werke*, V, 332.
16. *Ibid.*, VI, 146, 491, 304; V, 297.

dependence in Poznan, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* scornfully remarked, "a tender, forgiving smile is now present on the lips of the Tsar." [17]

Russian relations with the Austrian empire were very carefully followed and analyzed by Marx and Engels during 1848-49, particularly when they touched upon the affairs of the numerous Slavic nationalities living under Habsburg rule. With the exception of the Poles, whom Marx and Engels considered progressive because of their consistent record of national opposition to Russia, the two journalists had a distinctly negative attitude toward all the Slavic peoples. Engels was especially vehement in his denunciation of the South Slavs as "waste products of a highly confused development," and "highly intermixed ethnic trash." [18]

For purposes of studying Marx's and Engels' attitudes toward Russia it is helpful to note that one of the primary reasons for their hatred of the South Slavs lay in the fact that they identified the Slavic national movement with Panslavism, which they considered a device of the tsarist government.[19] The Czechs and South Slavs, they argued, had traditionally looked to the tsar as their natural protector and future emancipator. Now the tsarist government was converting Panslavism, originally the fantasy of an oppressed people, into a concrete political ideology designed to promote Russian interests in Eastern Europe. By subscribing to Panslavism, Slavic intellectuals were becoming the tools of Russian despotism, the unwitting servants of a tsarist expansionism which aimed at the establishment of Russian outposts on the Elbe and the Danube. The Panslav visionaries imagined that their empire would be held together by the ab-

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17. *Ibid.*, V, 296.

18. *Ibid.*, VI, 172. Inevitably, the question of national prejudice arises with reference to Marx's and Engels' attitudes toward the Slavs. Most scholars are in agreement in saying that their vicious indictment of the Habsburg Slav minorities was at least partially the product of cultural prejudice. It is not unreasonable to believe that the two men absorbed the common German prejudices toward the Slavs from the environment in which they were raised. This idea, however, should not be carried too far. Prejudice toward the Slavs was a factor in Marx's and Engels' condemnation of the Austrian Slavs, to be sure, but it was certainly overcome in their analysis of the Poles, whom they firmly supported, and of the Russians who, for all the hatred directed at Russian leaders by Marx and Engels, were never declared incapable of future national life. See Bloom, *The World of Nations*, 11-13, 188; and Hermann Wendel, "Der Marxismus und die Südslawenfrage," *Die Gesellschaft*, I (May, 1924), 153.

19. Roman Rosdolsky, "Friedrich Engels und das Problem der 'geschichtslosen' Völker: Die Nationalitätenfrage in der Revolution 1848-49 im Lichte der 'Neuen Rheinischen Zeitung'," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* (Braunschweig), IV (1964), 113-114, 221-223.

stract quality of "Slavdom" and the so-called Slavic language. But the real cohesive force behind such a state would be the Russian knout.[20]

Marx's and Engels' thinking on East European issues was obstructed by a tendency to proceed from hatred of tsarism to simultaneous condemnation of everything Russian and everything Slavic. On occasions this hatred even colored their attitudes toward the non-Slavic minorities of the Habsburg Empire. Such broad denunciations of the Slavic and East European nationalities could not be sustained in the day-to-day analysis demanded by practical journalism, and they inevitably caused ambiguities in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung's* treatment of specific East European issues. Marx's and Engels' handling of the Rumanians provides a case in point. While not a Slavic nationality, the Rumanians had been classed alongside their South Slavic neighbors as a "degenerate" nationality, one which had "long since lost all historical driving power." [21] The Rumanians were thus "reactionary" and logically should have been condemned as servants of absolutism. The Rumanians of Transylvania were, in fact, denounced by Marx and Engels when they ranged themselves against the "progressive" Hungarian revolt. But when the Rumanians living under Turkish suzerainty resisted the Russian occupation of Moldavia and Wallachia in July, 1848, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* hailed them as friends and comrades. As a result, Marx and Engels found themselves in the contradictory position of both condemning and defending the cause of Rumanian nationalism.[22]

Perhaps Marx and Engels made their greatest mistake in dealing with the Russo-Slavic issue in 1848-49 when they linked Panslavism with official Russian foreign policy. They were substantially correct in divining a certain degree of Russophilism among the intellectuals of the East European Slavs. As long as linguistic and cultural unity was foremost in the minds of the Austrian Slavs, Russia had to be given a prominent role in Panslav ideology.[23] But these sentiments were not reciprocated by the Russian foreign office. Because Panslavism preached revolt in Eastern Europe, it was repugnant to Nich-

20. Marx and Engels, *Werke*, VI, 171; Marx and Engels, *The Russian Menace*, 62-64, 9.

21. Marx and Engels, *Werke*, VI, 175.

22. *Ibid.*, V, 297; Alfred G. Meyer, Review of *Marx und Engels und das zeitgenössische Russland*, by Helmut Krause, *The American Slavic and East European Review*, XIX (February, 1960), 113; Rosdolsky, "Friedrich Engels und das Problem der geschichtlosen Völker," 146.

23. Peter F. Sugar, "The Southern Slav Image of Russia in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Central European Affairs*, XXI (April, 1961), 46-47.

olas I, who was horrified by the very idea of rebellion against a legally constituted ruler. Furthermore, from the standpoint of practical diplomacy Nicholas realized that an ambiguous official policy toward Panslavism might lead to diplomatic tensions between Russia and those governments which ruled over Slavic nationalities.

In Russia the Third Section, the tsar's secret police force, worked around the clock ferreting out adherents of the seditious Panslav movement. Shortly after the suppression of the Slavophile Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius in 1847, Count S. S. Uvarov, Nicholas' Minister of Public Education, delivered this official statement of the government's policy on Slavophilism:

> The question of Slavdom, as it concerns us, presents two sides: one which malicious men could use to incite minds and spread dangerous propaganda, criminal and provocative; the other side embodies the sanctity of our beliefs, our originality, our national spirit, within the limits of the law, and has an indisputable right to the solicitude of the government. Russian Slavophilism in its purity should express unconditional loyalty to Orthodoxy and autocracy, but every thing which transgresses these limits is an admixture of alien concepts, the play of phantasy or a mask which conceals a malicious desire to take advantage of inexperience and to attract visionaries.[24]

Thus, the "pure" Slavophilism which the government sanctioned was nothing but the administration's own ideology of "official nationality," an authoritarian doctrine formulated by Uvarov in the early 1830's for the specific purpose of stifling revolutionary thought and activity. The tsar himself came right to the point on the issue of Panslavism:

> Under the guise of compassion for the supposed oppression of the Slavic people [he wrote], there is concealed the idea of rebellion against the legitimate authority of neighboring and, in part, allied states, as well as the idea of a general unification which they expect to gain not through God's will but through disorder, which would be ruinous for Russia.[25]

Marx and Engels were not wrong in thinking that there was considerable Panslav agitation taking place in Russia. Slavophiles were

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24. Quoted in Michael Boro Petrovich, *The Emergence of Russian Panslavism, 1856-1870* (New York, 1956), 24-25.

25. *Ibid.*, 26.

particularly active in the Ukraine. But since most Slavophile activity in Russia had to be kept on a clandestine level, they were certainly in error when they identified Panslavism with official policy.[26]

It should be mentioned at this point that although Marx and Engels condemned tsarist Russia as the bulwark of European reaction, they did not place Russia on a level with the other Slavic nationalities. With the exception of Poland, the two German revolutionaries lumped the East European Slavs together as dispensable nonentities possessing neither a significant past nor a vital future. On the other hand, although they never gave Russia a key role to play in the development of international socialism, they did not dispute her notable historic past nor did they deny her a progressive future. Russia in 1848 was so politically and economically backward that, at least for the time being, she had to remain counterrevolutionary.[27] But she was not incapable of progressive development. Reviewing the events of 1847 for the *Deutsche-Brüsseler-Zeitung* a few weeks before the February revolution in Paris, Engels remarked:

> Even in totally barbaric regions the bourgeoisie is making progress. In Russia industry is developing with powerful strides, increasingly converting even the boyars into bourgeois. Serfdom is shrinking in Russia and Poland, a process which strengthens the bourgeoisie as it weakens the aristocracy. And a free peasant class is emerging, something which the bourgeoisie always requires.[28]

Thus, even in 1848 Marx and Engels were not wholly pessimistic about Russia's future. Although her rate of technological development lagged far behind that of the least industrialized of the Western European states, the potential for commercial and industrial expansion existed in Russia. Industrialization had begun. In addition, it is important to remember that Marx and Engels never condemned the Russian people. Their denunciations applied specifically to the tsarist regime, not to the masses oppressed by that institution. This point should not be overstressed. After the outbreak of revolution Marx

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26. The Panslav doctrines taught by the Russian Slavophiles on the one hand, and certain western Slavs on the other, were not identical. Panrussism might be a more appropriate term for Russian Slavophilism during the 1840's than Panslavism. See S. Harrison Thomson, "A Century of Phantom Panslavism and the Western Slavs," *Journal of Central European Affairs*, XI (January—April, 1951), 59; also Benoit P. Hepner, "Le panslavisme révolutionnaire il y a cent ans," *La revue socialiste* (April, 1949), 282-283.

27. Marx and Engels, *Werke*, VI, 274.

28. *Ibid.*, IV, 501.

and Engels were too concerned with assailing the tsarist regime as the arch-foe of European democracy to analyze objectively Russia's internal conditions. Russia's role in suppressing the revolutionary movement dispelled any optimism Marx and Engels may have had concerning her future before 1848.

As editors of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in Cologne, Marx and Engels were concerned primarily with German affairs. They were staunch supporters of German unity and in discussing Russo-German relations they stressed the point that the unification of Germany would force the tsar's hand, compelling him to invade Europe in an effort to restore the *status quo*. By so doing he would initiate a general European war and seal his own fate.[29]

One of the most illuminating of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* articles concerning Russia appeared on August 3, 1848. This article is worthy of detailed consideration because it clarifies Marx's and Engels' interpretation of Russo-German relations and provides, as well, insight into their concept of Russia's traditional role in European affairs.

The article concerns a list of grievances against the liberal and radical German press which was sent to the Russian consulates in various German cities by Count Charles Nesselrode, the tsarist foreign minister. The note was subsequently published in late July, 1848, by the *Frankfurter Oberpostamts-Zeitung*. Specifically, Nesselrode was concerned about the "alteration fever all over Germany," German sentiment for the reconstitution of pre-1772 Poland, the Prussian war against Denmark over Schleswig-Holstein, and talk in the German press of an alliance between Germany and France to be directed at Russia. According to the note, it was Russia's policy to allow the peoples of Europe to make their social and political experiments unhindered. It was affirmed that the Russian emperor had only friendly intentions toward Germany, and the long history of cooperation between Germany and Russia was emphasized. Nesselrode hastened to add "what we wanted in that time [i. e., before February, 1848], we still want today." [30]

This last point was attacked by the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* as unmistakably reactionary: "This is the one phrase in the Russian note by which no one will be confused." To restore what Russia wanted before 1848 would be to revive "the Holy Alliance and its unholy works." Nesselrode contended that Russia planned to stand back and let Europe make her own social and political experiments.

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29. *Ibid.*, V, 397.
30. *Ibid.*, 298.

But had this been the case when Poland attempted to alter her status in 1830? As for Nesselrode's reference to the long history of Russo-German relations, this was not a story of international compatibility but rather a history of tsarist treachery and unwanted meddling in German affairs. It may have been Russian policy to maintain what Nesselrode called the "moral unity" of Germany, but this was something quite different from the "material unity" which was foremost in the minds of German democrats.[31]

On the basis of this article it is clear that Marx and Engles saw Russia in one of her most villainous roles as the guarantor of German particularism. And one of Russia's most useful tools in maintaining the *status quo* in Germany, they contended, was Prussia, "the west province of Russia." Both men intensely hated Prussia as the leading absolutist state of North Germany, and they believed that Nicholas I had Frederick William IV under his thumb. In some of their more extreme statements they contended that the form of the Prussian government, and even the Prussian social structure, were controlled by strings from St. Petersburg.

> From the moment when the first robbery from Poland began [wrote Engels] Germany fell into dependence on Russia. Russia commanded Prussia and Austria to remain absolute monarchies, and Prussia and Austria had to obey. The already weak and timid attempts of the Prussian bourgeoisie to gain power for itself ran totally aground as a result of the impossibility of Prussia's escaping from the domination of Russia, and because of the support which Russia gave to the feudal-absolutist class in Prussia.[32]

These charges were, of course, exaggerated. Prussia and Austria remained absolutist states because their leaders were conservative by conviction, not because Russia forced them to accept absolutism. And the Prussian bourgeoisie was weak because large-scale industrialization had not yet come to Eastern Germany, not because it was opposed by a Russian-supported Junker class. Nevertheless, Marx and Engels (like many other observers in Western Europe) continued to overestimate the military power of Russia, to exaggerate the diplomatic significance of the Holy Alliance, and to regard Prussia as merely a Russian pawn.

Marx and Engels were particularly vehement in their denunciation of Prussia's conduct of the war against Denmark in 1848, which

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31. *Ibid.*, 293-299.
32. *Ibid.*, 332, 104; VI, 479; Mayer, *Friedrich Engels*, I, 309.

they felt had been dictated by the Russian foreign office. In late March the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein had revolted against the Danish government and had set up a provisional administration. Shortly thereafter, when Prussia intervened on the side of the insurgents, Marx and Engels supported the move, in which they saw the germ of a potential national effort needed to stimulate German unification. But in view of the threat of intervention by Russia and Britain, the Prussians retreated and finally concluded an armistice with Denmark which maintained Danish authority over the two rebellious duchies.[33] Marx and Engels condemned the "war of appearances" (*Scheinkrieg*) which Prussia had waged in fear of Russian intercession and which had allowed "forty million Germans" to retreat from "two million Danes." [34] The ratification of the armistice by the Frankfurt Assembly in September led Engels to observe that the traditional chains of the past still bound Germany to the reactionary foreign policy of Russia.[35]

On April 13, 1849, Hungary declared its independence of Habsburg rule. Toward the end of the previous month Francis Joseph had met Nicholas I at Warsaw where the two monarchs pledged cooperation in an intensified campaign to crush the Hungarian revolt. The prospect of a Russian invasion of Hungary in the spring of 1849 rekindled Marx's and Engels' smoldering hopes for a Russo-European war. On April 21 Engels wrote:

> The Russians, who at first merely protected their own borders, have renewed themselves in the same measure as the counterrevolution and have turned to the offensive. . . . A year ago Russia was unprepared. . . . We gave the Russians time to regroup and now—a Russian army of 500,000-600,000 men encircles us from the Nieman to the Danube and the Olt.[36]

The Russian war was imminent. A half million organized barbarians were only waiting for their chance to subdue Hungary, then fall upon Austria and Germany and enslave them. Reports in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* grew progressively more optimistic. Because he felt that a tsarist victory in Hungary would culminate in the Russian domination of Central Europe, Engels predicted that the British and

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33. Priscilla Robertson, *Revolutions of 1848: A Social History* (Princeton, 1952), 157-159.
34. Marx and Engels, *Werke*, V, 396, 253.
35. *Ibid.*, 409; Auguste Cornu, *Karl Marx et la révolution de 1848* ("Collection du centenaire de la révolution de 1848"; Paris, 1948), 35-36.
36. Marx and Engels, *Werke*, VI, 431.

French, out of fear, would rally to the revolutionary banner. On May 9 he reported that the French had finally recognized the East European counterrevolution as a threat to their national existence, and then went so far as to suggest that the Russians planned a partition of France! A high note of optimism still prevailed in the editorial offices of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* on May 19, the day of its suppression, when Engels affirmed the moment to be at hand "when the Magyar struggle will be transformed into a European war by the Russian invasion. . . ." It was left to other newspapers to report the final outcome of events in Hungary.[37]

Surveying Marx's and Engels' writings of the 1848-49 period it is possible to detect a pattern in their attitudes toward Russia. In the early months of revolt Russia was not the primary element in bringing about the international revolution. During this period the two men placed their hopes in the initiative of the liberal French bourgeoisie and its ability to cooperate with the working class to establish a centralized republic. When French middle class leadership defaulted and the Paris workers' revolution was crushed in June, the forces of reaction began to renew themselves. Marx's and Engels' early optimism faded. It was during the summer and early fall that they placed their primary hopes for an effective European revolution in a general European war against Russia which would galvanize the liberal forces of Western Europe. In the late fall, when the German revolution had been vanquished in Vienna and Berlin, Marx and Engels once again changed their attitude toward Russia. The Russian war was still important but the two journalists now pinned their hopes on a rising of the French proletariat, a revolt to be accompanied by a war against England. England, the stronghold of capitalism, now became the chief enemy. Britain took her place in the counterrevolutionary ranks because she was interested primarily in defending her own capital and in conserving the bourgeois social order. Not content with dominating her own proletariat, Marx contended, Britain sought to assist the Italian, German, and French bourgeoisie in oppressing the continental workers. Besides, England's empire afforded the means for a progressive war truly global in scope. A war against England would be a genuine revolutionary war, fought in Canada, India, and Africa, as well as in Europe.[38] In the spring of 1849, however, Marx and Engels again turned their primary attention to Russia. Again a Russian invasion became the principal prerequisite for a successful European revolution.

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37. *Ibid.*, 433, 476, 507, 515.

38. *Ibid.*, 150. See also Cornu, *Karl Marx et la révolution de 1848*, 31, 44-45; Mayer, *Friedrich Engels*, I, 309.

It is possible to discern two distinct stages in the history of Marx's and Engels' thought concerning Russia. Throughout the first period, which extends roughly from the 1840's to the late 1860's, the two men were primarily concerned with the negative aspects of Russian foreign policy. In later years, however, their attitudes toward Russia began to change. Marx began to learn Russian in 1869 in order to become better acquainted with the works of Chernyshevsky and other Russian social critics whose writings had not yet been translated into any of the Western European languages. Subsequently, he developed an interest in the internal aspects of Russian life to match his concern for tsarist foreign policy. The empire of the Romanovs began to interest him as a latecomer to capitalism, and he lost some of his former contempt for the Russians. Marx's Russian disciples wrote to him explaining their concept of the *mir* (commune) as the basis for a special brand of socialism; and Marx, at least ostensibly, accepted the *mir* as a possible solution to Russia's social and economic problem.[39]

Engels, too, was partially reconciled to the Russians, and in 1875 he conceded that the *mir* might prove to be a transitory stage which could lead to a more satisfactory form of Russian economy. In the joint preface to the Russian translation of the *Communist Manifesto* (1883), Engels joined Marx in declaring that a Russian revolution might inspire a revolution of continental proportions. But neither man ever lost his profound hatred of the tsarist government, and Engels continued to denounce Russian foreign policy until 1895, the year of his death.[40]

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39. Lichtheim, *Marxism*, 327-328.

40. Bernhard Dohm, *Marx und Engels und ihre Beziehungen zu Russland*, Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin-Institut beim ZK der SED (Berlin, 1955); 8-9; Marx and Engels, *The Russian Menace*, editors' Introduction, 7; Volin, "Karl Marx and Russia," 170-173.