

## Account for the deterioration of Russo-German relations between 1875 and the fall of Bismarck

By the fifth year of the unified Germany's existence, the country had become a formidable military power in Europe. Despite its unfavourable geographical position, Germany enjoyed a safe and stable international diplomatic climate in 1875. To the west, France was still recovering from the heavy defeat by the Prussian army in 1871; Britain appeared uninterested in continental affairs and was still in "splendid isolation".<sup>1</sup> To the east, Austria was not only suffering from the consequences of the Austro-Prussian war in 1866, but was also tied down by the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867; while Russia was increasingly focused on her colonial ambitions in Central Asia. In this particular diplomatic background, Germany had ample freedom in her foreign policy, and at the helm of this was the German Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck.

Indeed, although Russia was keen on expanding eastwards in the late 1870s, she was still drawn into conflict with European powers over the complicated situation in the Balkans, not to mention inevitable disputes over colonial gains.<sup>2</sup> Her standing in the European stage was one as tentative as that of the newly-formed Germany, with the Balkan problem representing the flash point for potential conflict with the western powers.

The decline in relations between Russia and Germany was unmistakable, eventually pitting the two European powers against each other in the First World War. This was due to various factors. Some of these were products of Bismarck's cunning manipulation and inflated ego, some were results of the influences of individuals, some were consequences of the domestic situations of the two respective countries, while there were also some which were unpredictable circumstances resulting from the ever-shifting European diplomatic stage.

The incident that turned Russia's attention from her affairs in the east (in Japan, for example) was the Eastern Crisis that was sparked off in 1875. This also marked the initiation of Russo-German distrust. Due to Germany's involvement in the Dreikaiserbund agreed in 1873, both Russia and Austria, who had conflicting interests in the Balkans, expected assistance from the third party in the League, Germany.<sup>3</sup> Bismarck's responses to such pleas were largely non-committal, laying the foundations of the antagonisation against Russia for years to come.<sup>4</sup> Bismarck's evasive manner towards Russia's requests for backing was regarded as a betrayal by the Russians – not only were they linked together through the Dreikaiserbund, Russia also expected Germany's friendship in return for their neutrality in the Franco-Prussian war in 1871.

Another event which undoubtedly further soured the two countries' relationship was the Congress of Berlin in 1878, a direct consequence of the Eastern Crisis assembled reluctantly by Bismarck.<sup>5</sup> The German Chancellor himself was not concerned about the Balkans, as seen in his dismissive statement -

<sup>1</sup>Dugdale, *German Diplomatic Documents 1871 – 1914* (London 1928), pp. 1

<sup>2</sup>Carr, *A History of Germany 1815 – 1990* (London 1991), pp. 146

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. pp. 149

<sup>4</sup>Craig, *Germany 1866 – 1945* (Oxford 1978), pp. 110

<sup>5</sup>He tried to propose a French president for the Congress. Carr, *A History of Germany 1815 – 1990* (London 1991), pp. 151



"The whole of the Balkans is not worth the bones of one single Pomeranian musketeer."<sup>6</sup> Instead, he wished to maintain European peace by stepping forward as a mediator.<sup>7</sup> However, he was also keen to use the opportunity keep Russia's western sphere of influence in check. The Russians, on the other hand, had their reasons for reluctance towards a conference. Not only did they wish to keep her territorial gains from the Russo-Turkish war in 1878 (and thus keep the enlarged Bulgaria as a satellite state in the Balkans), she was also torn and distracted by revolutionary disorders that reached new heights of violence in the spring of 1878. In a letter from the Russian Chancellor Gorchakov to Shuvalov, the Russian ambassador in London, Russian reluctance towards any settlement was encapsulated - "It is no longer a question of interests being at stake here, but rather armour-propre and prestige... At this moment, after a bloody and victorious war, we cannot conceive of abasing the dignity of Russia before the prestige of England, even as a matter of form."<sup>8</sup> Therefore, one can see how Bismarck's proposal for the Congress of Berlin would have worsened Russo-German relations. Moreover, the results of the Congress didn't ameliorate the situation either. Instead, the loss of Russian dominance in the Balkans due to pressure from Britain and Austria led Gorchakov to conclude that the Congress of Berlin had been a "European coalition against Russia under the leadership of Prince Bismarck".<sup>9</sup> In this case, Germany's "neutrality" was regarded by the Russians as even more of a betrayal, for it was deliberately publicised by Gorchakov, thus inflaming the Russian public as well as those in higher offices.<sup>10</sup>

From the Eastern Crisis of 1875 the collapse of Russo-German friendship was evident, and this was further aggravated by another Balkan crisis from 1885 - 1888. It should be noted that there were indeed German attempts to repair their relationship with Russia through the renewal of the Dreikaisersbund and their statement of "Russian rights" in Bulgaria. However, the Three Emperors' League now became an uneasy marriage and potentially a flash point between Austria, Germany and Russia, while it also seemed to represent another of Bismarck's short-term expedients. In addition, however much cordiality salvaged through such reconciliation attempts was again stressed over Balkan complications. Russia's willingness to subdue Bulgaria's attempts to unify with Eastern Roumelia, led by the ambitious Prince Alexander of Battenberg, and Austria's determination to protect the threatened Serbs in 1886 brought the reconstituted Dreikaisersbund to the verge of collapse.<sup>11</sup> Although desperate for peace and for Russia and Austria to remain friends, Bismarck's attitude to the situation certainly contained anti-Russian elements - "The Russians do not possess the kind of self-restraint that would make it possible for us to live alone with them and France on the continent. If Austria is eliminated... they will become so domineering towards us that peace with them would be untenable. Austria, therefore, must be protected."<sup>12</sup> This letter from Bismarck to his son Herbert clearly illustrates Bismarck's predilection for ruptured once again. This was further compounded by the establishment of the Mediterranean Agreements by Germany and England, which promised to deter Russian adventurism in the Balkans. However, it must be noted that it was not Bismarck's objective to antagonise Russia, but to maintain a peace that Germany could thrive under.

From the two Eastern Crises, it is clear that Bismarck's policies have been geared towards peace, primarily between Austria and Russia over the Balkans, despite sacrificing Germany's relations with

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. pp. 149  
<sup>7</sup>His "honest broker" approach can be found in his speech to the Reichstag in February 1878. Sontag, *Germany and England: The Background of Conflict*, 1848 - 1894 (London 1964), pp. 151  
<sup>8</sup>Sumner, *Russia and the Balkans, 1870 - 1880* (Oxford 1937), pp. 437  
<sup>9</sup>Sontag, *Germany and England: The Background of Conflict* (London 1964), pp. 155  
<sup>10</sup>Gneiss, *German Foreign Policy, 1871 - 1914* (London 1976), pp. 34  
<sup>11</sup>Craig, *Germany 1866 - 1945* (Oxford 1978), pp. 125  
<sup>12</sup>H. von Bismarck, *Aus seiner politischen Privatkorrespondenz* (Göttingen, 1964) pp. 393



Russia. Bismarck's tendency to choose Austria over Russia was concordant with the anti-Russian German public opinion at the time, and could even have influenced his decisions. This tendency, however, had serious repercussions for Germany's foreign policy – not only was Russia alienated in the short term, Austria also developed a sense of reliance on German protection in the long term, and thus increasingly became more and more aggressive in her dealings with Russia.<sup>13</sup> This was certainly realised by the Russians, therefore souring the two countries' relations.

Indeed, Bismarck did attempt to improve the weakening tie to Russia in his own way, which could easily be misunderstood as outright alienation. The most prominent example of Bismarck using his "bullying" tactics would be the Dual Alliance of 1879, in which Bismarck aimed to isolate Russia from the European stage by depriving her of allies, thus forcing Russia to eventually renew her ties with Germany. Although the terms of the alliance were officially kept secret, the Kaiser, with Bismarck's permission, informed the Tsar of the contents of the "secret" alliance.<sup>14</sup> This foreign strategy did have the success of drawing Russia back to the second Dreikaiserbund by 1881, but the Russian government certainly resented Germany's engineering of the Dual Alliance.<sup>15</sup> This method of forcing the Russians back into Germany's arms was illustrated by Bismarck's statement – "I knew the Russians would come to us once we had pinned the Austrians down."

Another instance which shows the deterioration of Russo-German relations was the earlier "War in Sight" crisis in 1875. This particular occasion also illustrates another example of Bismarck again attempting to "bully" another European Power (France) into acting according to his will, this time with considerably less success. In the end, the Russians exploited the lack of cohesion and weight of the 1873 Dreikaiserbund and foiled Bismarck's plans along with the assistance of Britain.<sup>16</sup> This not only shattered Bismarck's illusions of the alliance being stable and manipulable, but also led to German resentment for having been cheated by their own "ally" and Britain. This joint demarche also served to spark off the personal rivalry between the Chancellors of the two countries, Bismarck and Gorchakov.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the economic exchanges between the Russians and Germans also became an aspect leading to their discontent towards each other. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Germany was a booming economy undergoing mass industrialisation.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, Russia was still burdened at this time by a backward and predominantly agrarian economy. The trade link between the two countries before their estrangement was therefore relatively smooth and a seemingly natural one – Russia relied on exports to Germany for its modernisation, while Germany looked to further strengthen her economy by trading with more countries.<sup>19</sup> This, however, dissipated rapidly as the tariff wars between the two countries ensued. It is important to note that it was first provoked by the German side (Bismarck, to be specific), which imposed heavy tariffs in 1879 on imported Russian wheat, one of Russia's main exports. Soon after this, Bismarck even banned the importing of Russian cattle, blaming it on the need for quarantine against Russian cattle plague.<sup>20</sup> This can also be regarded as another of Bismarck's bullying tactics, as this was initiated in the year after the Congress of Berlin and the year in which the Dual Alliance was agreed, but it was also a consequence of the German domestic situation. Unlike his freedom in his direction of foreign policy, Bismarck was constrained by the Reichstag in his domestic

<sup>13</sup> Carr, *A History of Germany 1815-1990*, London 1991, pp. 151

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, pp. 152

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Langer, *European Alliances and Alignments 1871-1890* (Westport 1977), pp. 43-55

<sup>17</sup> Carr, *A History of Germany 1815-1990*, London 1991, pp. 148

<sup>18</sup> Craig, *Germany 1866-1945* (Oxford 1978), pp. 85-86

<sup>19</sup> Lowe, *The Great Powers, Imperialism, and the German Problem, 1865-1925* (New York, 1994), pp. 70

<sup>20</sup> Craig, *Germany 1866-1945* (Oxford 1978), pp. 113



policies, and these tariffs were necessarily instigated for Bismarck to gain the Reichstag's favour, not to mention to appease the landed elites in Germany who could not compete with the cheap Russian imports, especially during the economic recession in Germany in the late 1870s.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, the tariff war that was begun then became a steady factor for the deterioration between the Russians and Germans, not only in terms of foreign affairs, but also in respect to the two countries' public opinion, which will be investigated further later on. Apart from this example, the so-called "Lombard Stop" of 1887 was another instance which widened the chasm between Russia and Germany. Not only was their trade link further hampered as a result of the *Lombardverbot*, Germany forbade the sale of any horses or rifles to Russia (usually considered a pre-cursor to declarations of war), with Bismarck stating the purpose of the *Lombardverbot* as "to remove the possibility that (the Russians) wage war against us at our own cost." This also exemplifies another instance where Bismarck's foreign policies are affected by domestic issues, as this policy also served to placate Germany's military circles which feared the growth of Russian power.<sup>22</sup>

From the above, one can see how the decline of Turkey along with European diplomatic situations and the economic rivalries between Russia and Germany have contributed to the deterioration in their relations. However, it should also be highlighted that the domestic situations of both Russia and Germany were, to an extent, reasons why their mutual distrust was aggravated, as already hinted at from the example of the *Lombardverbot*. For one, despite the link between the royal families of both countries, there is barely any link between the peoples of Russia and Germany apart from economic aspects. Thus, public opinion in both countries can be regarded as a factor for the eventual split between the two European powers.

This can first be shown in the anti-Russian public sentiments mentioned earlier between the 1870s and the 1880s, which can be traced back to the beginnings of Panславism in the 1860s. Despite the Panслав movement being a distinct minority in the Russian public, there was an increasing tendency from the Germans to generalise Russian national character with the Panслав ideals. Victor Hehn's diary, *De Moribus Ruthenorum* succinctly encapsulated the extent of German dislike for the Russians.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, Germany was still a new country where its people were slowly finding their national identity, while it was also a central country surrounded by expansionist European powers such as France and Russia. Nationalism was still a novel phenomenon in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and had not waned much since Germany's unification. This not doubt resulted in militant attitudes towards Russia, especially among the "Grossdeutsch" nationalists. Therefore, one can see how an inexorable sense of fear and paranoia, compounded by nationalistic fervour, would have affected the German public, causing augmented alienation against the Russians.<sup>24</sup>

It is indeed true that at the very top of the direction of foreign policy, the Kaiser himself was not at all anti-Russian. He respected the Russian autocracy and severely regretted the decline in the relations between Germany and Russia.<sup>25</sup> However, these sentiments were not shared by the War Ministry and the rest of the foreign office. Most notable of the individuals who saw Russia as an impediment to German ambitions was Friedrich von Holstein. Although his reasons for his bitter hostility towards Russia are obscure (Craig suspects that it might be a personal matter), he was, as one of the most

<sup>21</sup> Lowe, *The Great Powers, Imperialism, and the German Problem, 1865 – 1925* (New York, 1994), pp. 70

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> "The Russian is only civilised in the presence of others." Lacqueur, *Russia and Germany: A Century of Conflict* (New

Brunswick, 1965) pp. 44

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. pp. 25-32

<sup>25</sup> Craig, *Germany 1866 – 1945* (Oxford 1978), pp. 114



important foreign ministers after Bismarck, keen to sever all ties with Russia.<sup>26</sup> This can be seen in his

response to the Mediterranean Agreement in his diary (May 1887) - "Now that the Austria-Italy-England bloc has been welded together, the sooner this group comes to blows with Russia the better."<sup>27</sup> Moreover, through his network of contacts Holstein also attempted to encourage the Austrian Government to adopt a militant stance in everything concerning Bulgaria, thus bringing into conflict Russia. These efforts were echoed by the German military, where calls for pre-emptive wars against Russia or France constantly surfaced, especially during the Bulgarian Crisis.<sup>28</sup>

In addition, with Bismarck's fall from office in 1890, the German foreign office could also be blamed for the non-renewal of the Reinsurance Treaty, one of the final indicators of Russo-German estrangement. Although Wilhelm II initially expressed his desire to the Russian ambassador Shuvalov for a renewal of the tie, the inexperience of the new Chancellor Caprivi and the devious persuasion of Holstein swayed the Emperor's decision.<sup>29</sup> It is also notable that in spite of the many bright diplomats within the German foreign office nurtured by Bismarck, none stood up in defence of the Russian tie, for they never quite grasped the secretive intricacies of Bismarck's diplomatic system.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, despite Russian attempts to salvage at least a shadow of the old alliance, the Russian tie was irretrievably snapped, paving the way for the Franco-Russian *rapprochement* that Bismarck constantly lived under the shadow of.<sup>31</sup> Overall, one can see that while neither Bismarck nor the Kaiser were at all keen on any conflict with Russia, there was certainly brewing dislike in Germany against their neighbour, not only in the foreign office, but also increasingly in the general public and the army.

It was not merely due to German antagonisation that relations between Russia and Germany deteriorated so quickly. Nationalistic sentiments had grown more and more prevalent within Russian society, especially within Pan Slav circles. Such nationalism was particularly directed towards exploits in the Balkans and the Straits which would increase Russia's prestige. Therefore, in this light, Germany was seen as the major impediment and enemy.<sup>32</sup> These nationalistic (and thus anti-German) ideals could be detected within many levels of Russian society, unmistakably gathered strength as the century drew to a close, and had increasingly persuasive influence over the new Tsar Alexander III. There were mainly five groups of such nationalists who had it in their power to exert, directly or indirectly, some degree of influence over the decisions of the Tsar - the Pan Slavs, the military, the foreign office, the press, and certain individuals close to him.

According to George F. Kennan - "it would be idle to speak of such a thing as 'public opinion' in connection with international affairs" in considering the Russia at the time. Indeed, the mass of the Russian people, of whom the peasantry constituted some 80%, had no knowledge of the intricacies of high diplomacy and no means of arriving at judgments on questions of foreign policy.<sup>33</sup> Despite this, contempt for Germans can be seen in different aspects of Russian society. Firstly, the high rates of exports from Germany to Russia in the 1870s certainly alienated the Russian industrialists. Moreover, fear was also an important factor for the Russians' anti-German sentiments; fear that the European

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. pp. 127

<sup>27</sup> Rich, *Holstein Papers II*. (Cambridge, 1957) pp. 342

<sup>28</sup> The most outspoken warmonger was Waldersee, who egged the Austrians on to a clash with Russia. Craig, *The Politics of*

*the Prussian Army: 1640 - 1945* (Oxford, 1964), pp. 226

<sup>29</sup> Craig, *Germany 1866 - 1945* (Oxford 1978), pp. 231-232

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. pp. 139

<sup>31</sup> Stern, *Gold and Iron* (New York, 1977), pp. 440

<sup>32</sup> Kennan, *The Decline of Bismarck's European Order: Franco-Russian Relations, 1875 - 1890* (Princeton, 1979) pp. 28 -

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. pp. 27



balance of power had been upset, and that there was now a new powerful military power as their neighbours. Furthermore, the increasing number of Balkan Germans working in Russia had also gained the contempt of the Russian public due to cultural differences.<sup>34</sup>

Another group of people with the same ideals, and have much more direct control over Russia's foreign policy than the Pan-slavs, are certain significant officials of the Russian foreign office. One of the most active and influential of these was Count N.P. Ignatyev, ambassador at Constantinople. Although the foreign minister Gorchakov himself was not an enthusiast for the nationalist tendencies mentioned (most of his training was in West Europe), he was obliged to recognise the influence these tendencies exerted on the Tsar, while his jealousy for Bismarck also often put him at odds with German foreign policy. Moreover, the intimate relationship between the foreign office and Pan-slav committees should also be noted, as this no doubt increased the development of Pan-slav sentiments within the Russian government. This was also echoed by the influence of Pan-slavs in Russian military circles.<sup>35</sup>

Most importantly however, the Russian press also contributed to Alexander III's eventual caving in to the pressures from the nationalist side. The most notable instance of this would be the journals put out by the conservative editor Mikhail Katkov: the Moscow daily *Moskovskie Vedomosti*. Along with other journals, Katkov's paper kept up, over the years, an unsuitable disposition for a French alliance, not to mention a running fire of criticism of the foreign office for its alleged excessive support to western European powers.<sup>36</sup> In 1886, Katkov accused the government of "serving as a crutch for Germany" in foreign affairs, and accommodating in economic terms "to the requirements not of our own (Russia) but of a foreign country, while this was further augmented later by the publication of an article by the conservative paper *Novoe Vremya* which accused Bismarck of striving for German world rule.<sup>37 38</sup> This stance by the press not only helped to sway the Tsar's opinion against the Germans, but also antagonised the Germans considerably, as Bismarck regarded the Tsar's inability (or reluctance) to curb the press as a sign of Russian hostility.

The Tsar himself can also be regarded as a reason for the deterioration of relations between the two countries. Like his father, Alexander III recognised and accepted (if somewhat grudgingly) the tie to Germany that existed in his grand-uncle the Kaiser; but it did not mean as much to him as it did to his father.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, in the mid-1870s through to 1890, the Tsar is seen to be, initially, a vacillating figure, torn between his loyalty to his German relatives and his inability to resist Pan-slav pressures. However, with growing German distrust and the burgeoning Pan-slav movement, not to mention the possibility of an ally in France, Alexander III increasingly fell under the enchantment of the Pan-slav nationalist cause. Also, just as Bismarck had to release domestic pressures by instigating anti-Russian policies, The Tsar's anti-German sentiments were in part intended for appeasing the Russian conservatives who had been alienated by his liberal reforms. Furthermore, his negative views towards Kaiser Wilhelm II also worsened matters.<sup>40</sup>

Another main factor that led to the eventual estrangement between Germany and Russia is the

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. pp. 57

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. pp. 30 - 32

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. pp. 172 - 172

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. pp. 179

<sup>38</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Lacqueur, *Russia and Germany: A Century of Conflict* (New Brunswick, 1965) pp. 58

<sup>40</sup> Kennan, *The Decline of Bismarck's European Order: Franco-Russian Relations, 1875 - 1890* (Princeton, 1979) pp. 398 - 399

<sup>40</sup> In his visit to Petersburg in 1889, Alexander III was even heard to have called his cousin "a rascally young fop, who throws his weight around, thinks too much of himself and fancies that others worship him." Ibid. pp. 399

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increasing possibility of France as an alternative ally for Russia. Despite being conclusively defeated by the Prussians in 1871, the French had recovered remarkably well from the war. Not only was the indemnity paid off within three years, France also underwent a second industrialisation soon after the war, allowing its population to burgeon and military strength to grow back.

Due to Bismarck's many attempts to isolate France, including the Triple Alliance and the Dreikaiserbund, France was, since 1871, consistently on the alert for potential allies. With Russia more and more alienated by Germany, Bismarck's "worst nightmare" - an alliance between Russia and France became more likely. Therefore, any publicised contact between Russia and France would certainly have antagonised the suspicious Germans.

Firstly, there was the Nouart incident in 1886, where a ceremony for unveiling a monument was taken advantage of by French chauvinists and became a demonstration in favour of a Franco-Russian alliance, while the Russian military attaché, Baron Fredericks was also involved by making a speech about Franco-Russian brotherhood.<sup>41</sup>

In addition, Deroulede's visit to Russia in 1886 was another factor which heightened the animosity between Germany and Russia. His destination cities of Odessa, Petersburg and Moscow were leading centres of Pan Slav and nationalist activity; and it was clear that the supporters of this cause were anxious to use this opportunity to demonstrate for an alliance between the two countries. This, of course, stuck in Bismarck's craw, for he believed that it was in the Tsar's and the Russian government's power to prevent this visit, and the failure to do so clearly revealed their anti-German intentions.<sup>42</sup> Later in the year, this was further compounded by Katkov's infamous journal which advocated the possibility of a Franco-Russian alliance.

Furthermore, as France became more and more conservative as a republic, the French began to realise that an alliance with the authoritarian Russia was not as daunting as once thought; while the Russians also started to come to terms that the ideals of the Third Republic were not completely in conflict with those of Russia, thus making the *rapprochement* more likely, and widening the gap between the traditional allies of Germany and Russia. An instance of the Third Republic's increasing conservative elements can be found in the rise of General Boulanger in French politics up to 1888.

Moreover, there were also the loans which France made to Russia to assist their industrialisation in 1888-9. Admittedly, this could be regarded as retaliation from the Russians after the *Lombardverbot* incident in 1887. The fact that Russia, by then, could be so blatant in their association with Germany's traditional enemy reveals the extent of the estrangement between Russia and Germany. This was compounded by the contract of 1889 for the supply of French rifles to the Russian army, which would undoubtedly have alarmed the already paranoid German foreign office and military.<sup>43</sup> Overall, therefore, it is evident that the growing Russian link to France as the century went on was a significant reason for the deterioration of Russo-German relations.

From the above analysis, one can see that the reasons for the eventual estrangement between Russia and Germany were complex and come in different levels. The decline of Turkey and the Balkan complications represent diplomatic crises on a European stage, and also circumstances which could not have been mitigated against. On a lesser scale, individuals such as Bismarck, Tsar Alexander III and

<sup>41</sup>For a more detailed description, see *Ibid.* pp. 181

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.* pp. 171 - 172

<sup>43</sup>Carr, *A History of Germany 1815 - 1990* (London 1991), pp. 160



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Focused + generally overviews, though at times appears to be listing factors which could be considered. Sources used but a shape critical sense is needed + over argument with critical debate could also be strong.

Holstein all contributed to the deterioration of Russo-German relations, and their influences on the two countries' interactions were extremely significant. The domestic situations of Russia and Germany, on the other hand, were no less important in determining the respective governments' courses of action towards each other. It is interesting, however, to note that although the antagonism had been largely mutual, Germany emerges as not only the main provocateur of the split, but also the side which worsened the situation in many cases under Bismarck's direction. Even after Bismarck's fall, it was the Germans who chose not to renew the Reinsurance Treaty in 1890, a point highly regarded as the final snap between the two European powers' ties. In conclusion, in order to account for the deterioration between Russo-German relations from 1875 - 1890, the main factors have been summarised as above; and it is evident that individuals should have been held to responsibility for the decline, and not the international diplomatic stage or the public opinions of the two countries. In particular, Bismarck's expedients in desperately trying to preserve his tottering system, compounded by his reluctance to trust his own foreign office in his policies, meant that Russo-German relations could not be salvaged in the long-term, and that the decline was merely prolonged as long as peace was achieved.

Conclusion