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SOCIAL AND HUMANITARIAN COOPERATION BETWEEN RUSSIA AND GERMANY IN THE CONDITIONS OF SANCTIONS

After the 90s, Russia and Germany are constantly building up their interaction through social and humanitarian cooperation. With the advent to power of the CDU head Angela Merkel, cooperation became pragmatic, Germany became more oriented toward the United States, then the events of 2014 followed, and Germany joined the regime of sanctions against Russia. The main question was whether this would lead to the curtailing of the complex of bilateral relations? The practice has shown that “No,” and the main obstacle for Germany was precisely the accumulated complex of social and humanitarian cooperation.

Key words: *Russia, Germany, sanctions, social and humanitarian cooperation, national minorities, civil society.*

Relations between Russia and Germany have a long history and experienced periods of rises and falls. The last period of recovery is associated with the period of Chancellor G. Schroeder, who established a relationship of real “male friendship” with Russian President V. Putin. The cooling period began with the advent to power in Germany of Chancellor A. Merkel, head of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), which traditionally recognizes the orientation toward closer cooperation with the countries of the North Atlantic Alliance as the main directions of the foreign policy. The main negative aspect in the relations between the two countries was the accession of Germany to the sanctions against Russia, as well as support of the most other unfriendly anti-Russian actions, including the expulsion of Russian diplomats after a series of poisonings in Salisbury. Such a development of events allowed some scholars of Russian-German relations to declare that Germany had long ago stopped being a Russia’s “lawyer” in Europe, as it was once called in the EU, and few people remembered the Russian-German

strategic partnership [4. P. 9-23]. Practice shows that when relations between countries deteriorate, the parties either reduce contacts as much as possible, or pin their hopes on the social and humanitarian cooperation, which, as the sphere of the greatest commonality of interests, should help restore confidence in each other again. Could this sphere become the basis for establishing Russian-German relations and, if not returning to the period of strategic partnership, then at least for withdrawal of Germany from the war of sanctions against Russia?

Social and humanitarian cooperation actively developed after the 90s, after the collapse of the USSR, when German non-governmental organizations came to Russia with a variety of projects in the field of humanitarian, scientific, cultural and educational interaction, and platforms for the dialogue aimed at strengthening Russian-German relations. Prerequisites for their arrival have already existed in Russia by that time. The first organization of this kind, the Russia-Germany Society, was established prior to the World War II, in 1922, and resumed its work in 1947. In the 90s, it actively continued its work, despite a number of financial and other difficulties.

With the beginning of sanctions, none of the large structures created for the development of social and humanitarian relations has stopped its activities. All the main institutions promoting the German “soft power” continued their work in Russia, starting from the academic exchange services and scientific societies to the political foundations closely affiliated with the German political parties. Moreover, new formats of interaction have appeared and cooperation among the civil societies has become even more active.

Why didn't social and cultural cooperation come to naught after Germany joined the sanctions regime? There are several reasons for that. Firstly, it was not government structures that were interested in social and humanitarian cooperation, but public ones, and secondly, there were a number of issues in interstate relations that arose sharply after the collapse of the USSR and the unification of Germany and remained unresolved.

Despite the fact that more than 70 years have passed since the end of World War II, the theme of historical reconciliation remains relevant. Immediately after the War, the process of searching for the missing, reburial of the bodies and the return of the remains began. Military-memorial cooperation includes dozens of organizations, thousands of activists, many cemeteries requiring care and community service to support the war veterans. The German government also understands the importance of such activities, it is proved by the fact that in 2018, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the end of the blockade of Leningrad, Germany allocated 12 million euros to the blockade survivors.

The first instrument of reconciliation between the two peoples was the movement of twin cities. 107 cities have become twin cities [7]. Each city holds dozens of cultural events, educational and scientific exchange programs per year, supports economic relations. At different time periods, the cities helped each other

in solving various problems: from the shortage of food and medicine, to the exchange of experience in conducting major international events. Such an exchange of experience took place, in particular, between Dortmund and Rostov during the 2018 World Cup. In contrast to Ukrainian cities, which broke off twinning relations with Russian cities, not a single German city terminated any such agreement; on the contrary, the establishment of twinning relations between Russian and German cities continues today. In the near future it is planned to conclude agreements of German cities with Novokuznetsk and Kemerovo.

Contacts are also being strengthened through youth exchanges. Every year, thousands of Russian students receive scholarships from the German Academic Exchange Service, Russian scientists travel to Germany to conduct research under grants from German scientific societies. Over the past decade, the Russian government has also developed a system of scholarships for German students to study at Russian universities. Russian universities began to actively cooperate with German universities in innovative fields of science. At present, more than 900 cooperation agreements have been reached between Russian and German universities [3].

The evidence that the close ties between Russia and Germany, built by numerous public structures, serve the interests of the people of both countries, was the restoration of the status of the Petersburg Dialogue forum. In 2019, the forum is supposed to be held again with the participation of the heads of two states for the first time after the cooling of relations.

Mutual interest in the development of social and humanitarian cooperation between Russia and Germany may be explained by the fact that in Russia and in Germany there are public figures, politicians and civil society representatives interested in the continuation of the dialogue. More informal meetings between German and Russian politicians and political scientists, organized on an annual basis, such as the Schlangenbad Talks and Potsdam Meetings, have been devoted in recent years to finding a way out of the crisis in relations.

The German-Russian dialogue is also important from the point of view of the fact that a large number of people with Russian and German roots live in both countries. And one of the first problems that has remained unresolved so far is related to the repatriation of Germans to Russia, maintenance of contacts with them, as well as the historical responsibility to the War victims in Russia. For the first time, an attempt to resolve the problem of rehabilitation of the Soviet Germans was made during the years of Perestroika. In 1989, the leadership of the USSR adopted the Declaration "On the recognition of illegal and criminal repressive acts against peoples subjected to forced resettlement, and ensuring their rights," which partially rehabilitated Soviet Germans, but did not resolve their socio-economic problems. Germany, on the one hand, began to facilitate their return to their historical homeland, on the other hand, began to provide support to them in Russia.

After the introduction of amendments to the USSR law “On Entry and Departure” in 1986, mass emigration of Germans began: from 1987 to 1989, more than 150 thousand people emigrated [1. Pp. 226-237]. Later on, Russia took a number of measures for the rehabilitation of Germans, a number of other documents were adopted: “On urgent measures for the rehabilitation of Russian Germans”, “Development of the socio-economic and cultural base of Russian Germans for 1997-2006,” “Socio-economic and ethno-cultural development of Russian Germans for 2008-2012 ”; in 1997, the organization “Federal National-Cultural Autonomy of Russian Germans” was created, which united the Germans in 43 regions of the Russian Federation, but failed to stop the flow of emigration. From the 90s to 2011, 612 thousand people left Russia.

And now the German government continues the policy of assistance pursued by the former leadership, which was reflected in the coalition agreement of October 26, 2009, which states: “We recognize the special responsibility to the Germans from the countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe, as well as from the countries of the former Soviet Union who came to us as immigrants or who live as a German minority in these countries. We are convinced that the German minority, as well as the expelled and displaced, can contribute to the construction of friendship bridges between civil societies in Germany and the countries of Central and Southeast Europe and some states of the former Soviet Union. Therefore, we will continue to support the German minority” [5].

In addition to the purely financial assistance, the support for the preservation of the German language and culture became the basis of the support policy for the German minority. The Government of Germany, represented by the Commissioner for Migrants and National Minorities, constantly maintains contacts with Russian Germans in places of their compact residence: Omsk Region and Altai Territory, and actively participates in various cultural and linguistic exchange events. Berlin’s economic sanctions and attempts to limit communication at the government level, in general, did not affect the number of these events and the financing of the German minority. Moreover, the German minority is the factor that has recently made the German side not to curtail economic relations with Russia. The current Commissioner for Migrants and National Minorities, Bernd Fabrizio, acts as a mediator between the governments of the Omsk Region and the Altai Territory in negotiations with representatives of the German business on launching new investment projects and increasing commodity circulation.

German business is another factor of checks for the government of Germany. From the beginning of the imposition of sanctions, Angela Merkel urged German business to abandon investing in the Russian economy and curtail their business in Russia, despite the fact that the Russian market after the 90s. became one of the most promising for it. The Eastern Committee of the German economy, German large multinational companies have repeatedly warned that sanctions will negatively affect the economy of Germany. As a result, according to research by the

University of Kiel, losses from the mutual sanctions introduced in 2014 amount to more than 100 billion euros. About 60 percent of these losses were suffered by Russia, about 40 percent – by the EU economy [2]. Since 2014, more than 1300 companies have left Russia [6], but some German companies, on the contrary, have entered the Russian market. In July 2017, the automaker Daimler and the German concern BMW announced the construction of factories in the suburbs of Moscow. The largest car manufacturers came to Russia in the period of sanctions, because in 2015 in response to sanctions, Russia banned state purchases of cars assembled abroad, which meant that full assembly factories in Russia had a chance of considerable profits when all other competitors have been ousted.

In addition to representatives of TNCs, the “left”, as well as the heads of five German lands, formerly parts of the GDR, stood up in favor of lifting the sanctions, not least, because a significant number of Russian-speaking Germans live in their territory.

If until the 2000s this essentially political force did not manifest itself in any way, then there were changes mainly because the policy of the Russian Federation towards its compatriots has changed. The authorities drew attention to the concept of “soft power” and emphasized the support of the Russian-speaking population abroad. Recently resettled Russian Germans chose places of compact resettlement of the Russian-speaking minorities and do not lose touch with their homeland. In addition to all organizations that had been created at different times during the existence of the USSR and the main of them “Fellowship of Germans from Russia”, with the government connections, in May 2002, Russian Germans in Germany created the “International Convention of Russians Germans.” This organization first showed itself as a political force after the 2016 events in connection with the so-called Lisa case. The background is such that a girl from a family of Russian emigrants disappeared, the police did not look for her as actively as her parents wanted, who suspected that migrants from the Middle East were involved in her disappearance. As a result, parents turned to the Russian Foreign Ministry and Russian public associations, which organized rallies across the country and thus announced to the German government that they were part of German society, who do not like Angela Merkel’s policy regarding migrants from the Middle East. The “Convention of Russian Germans” organized pickets all over the country, and the Chancellor herself had to answer questions about how Germany defends the interests of its Russian-speaking population at a meeting with representatives of community members. As a result, it turned out that the Russian-speaking diaspora is more numerous than the Turkish. More than 4 million Russian-speaking people live in the country, constituting 21 percent of all migrants [8. P. 47-58].

In 2017, a new association of Russian Germans “For the German Motherland” was created, one of the goals of its activity the association named full support of the opposition to the current government, that is, the “Alternative for

Germany” party. The Association entered into an agreement with the AFG party, according to which Russian Germans will fully support it, provided the party, when entering the Bundestag, fulfills the following requirements: eliminate discrimination against migrants in the pension sphere and abolish the language test. In September 2017, in the parliamentary elections, the right-wing populist “Alternative for Germany” received significantly more votes, almost twice more than the national average, in the areas where the share of Russian Germans among the local voters is especially high. For instance, in the Buckenberg district of the city of Pforzheim, immigrants constitute 44.9% of the population, the AFG received 36.9% of the vote and an average for Pforzheim was 19.3% [9].

Since 2011, there is a trend towards the return of Russian Germans back to Russia, more than 3 thousand people return from Germany annually. The German side through the media and the statements of German politicians tried to present the results of the vote and the emigration of Russian Germans as the result of “Russian propaganda.” However, the Russian “soft power” is still much less competitive, and the main reason lies in the German migration policy. However, the decision to stop further tightening of the anti-Russian sanctions and the signing of the agreements on the implementation of the Nord Stream-2 project cannot be explained by anything other than the Germany’s national interests, which include maintenance of relations with the partner who, in addition to providing the necessary energy resources and a sales market, is closely connected with Germany by a dense network of structures advocating the normalization of relations.

The general anti-Russian policy of the government was not supported by the Russian minority, which serves as a kind of connecting link between Russia and Germany, as well as politicians and businessmen who maintain close contacts with Russia. Germany’s further policy towards Russia will be aimed either at lifting sanctions or reducing them, as evidenced by the government’s decision to open new cultural centers, resume the high format of the Petersburg Dialogue forum and create new dialogue venues, one of the last opened in Novosibirsk, where In October 2018, the Russian-German Forum was held.

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