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### Форум '16

БАЛКАНИСТИЧЕН  
ФОРУМ 3



**WOMEN'S MEMORY  
OF THE RUSSO-OTTOMAN WAR 1877 - 1878**

# **Balkanistic**

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**ИЗДАВА МЕЖДУНАРОДНИЯТ УНИВЕРСИТЕТСКИ  
СЕМИНАР ЗА БАЛКАНИСТИЧНИ ПРОУЧВАНИЯ И  
СПЕЦИАЛИЗАЦИИ ПРИ ЮГОЗАПАДЕН УНИВЕРСИТЕТ  
“НЕОФИТ РИЛСКИ” – БЛАГОЕВГРАД**

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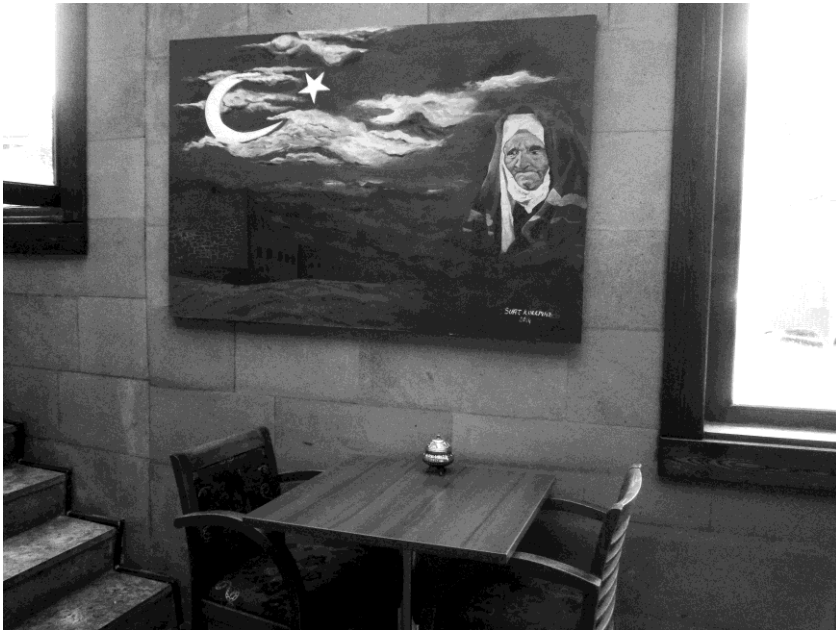
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# **WOMEN'S MEMORY OF THE RUSSO-OTTOMAN WAR 1877 – 1878**

**Editors: Evelina Kelbecheva and Milena Angelova**



**Portrait of Nene Hatun in a cafe in Erzurum, Turkey**

*The Cover Photo: **Surgery room in a hospital in Armenia.** In: Von Strantz, Viktor, *Illustrirte Kriegs-Chronik. Gedenkbuch an den Russisch-Türkischen Feldzug von 1876 – 1878.* Gezeichnet von den Artistischen Mitarbeitern der Illustrirten Zeitung. Neueste Folge der Illustrirten Kriegs-Chronik von 1864, 1866 und 1870/71., Leipzig: Leipzig Weber (1878).*



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## **Introduction.**

### **Women in War – Mechanisms of Oblivion and Remembrance**

The present volume comprises one of the scholarly outputs of the EU-funded Marie Curie project “Politics of Memory and Memory Cultures of the Russo-Ottoman War 1877/1878: From Divergence to Dialogue”. The project started in February 2012 and ended in January 2016. It is headed by the Centre for Southeast European History and Anthropology at University of Graz, Austria. The other participating organizations are: the International Seminar for Balkan Studies and Specialization, South- West University, Blagoevgrad; the Armenian Academy of Sciences, Yerevan; Bilgi University of Istanbul, Turkey; Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece; the Institute for National History in Skopje, Macedonia; North-Caucasus Federal University of Stavropol', Russian Federation; Shota-Rustaveli University of Batumi, Georgia. The volume brings together for forth time project's participants from Bulgaria, Turkey, Russian Federation, Armenia and Georgia to provide an insight into the gender perspectives of the Russo-Ottoman War in Southeastern Europe and the Caucasus region.

Politics of memory of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 is part of the formation of national narratives in the Balkans, in Turkey, and in the Caucasus in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The official politics of memory of these countries is based on symbols that unite, generalize and fix contradicting memories, which have been passed from one generation to the next. Symbolic commemorations, monuments and jubilees contribute to the sustainability of divergent national memories. Gender is one of the important dimensions of memory politics which is neglected in the research of the memory of the Russo-Ottoman war.

The present volume is a result of the research done in the frame work of the project unit "Gender and War Memory" which aims were to increase the awareness for gender aspects of the Russo-Ottoman war and its interpretation and to voice women's experience and memory of the war; to outline male domination in war memory and male strategies to filter women's experience as well as to analyze critically the construction of women as heroines, supporters, activists, and victims of the war in various denominational and cultural traditions.

It aims also to reveal and compare the mechanisms of war memory in politics, history, and culture by studying patriarchal gender relations in the Balkans and Caucasus. As a result it outlines socially acceptable models of women's behavior in the Russo-Ottoman war by analyzing the memory politics on heroines, charity women, nurses, and women supporters of the army.

In the opening interview for this volume: "Women in War – Mechanisms of Oblivion" **Georgeta Nazarska** outlines the major epistemological and methodological issues related to the study of memory from gender perspective, as well as the specificity of women's involvement in war.

**Kristina Popova** is the author who looks at the broader picture of the conditions that predetermined the beginning of the European pacifist movement and the pioneering job of women in it in her work entitled „The Pacifist Movement and the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878. Bertha von Suttner and her Memoirs“. According to her, the war was an important challenge for the peace activists in Europe: for religious war-resistance groups, for pacifists, as well as for supporters of social justice. Pacifists started new initiatives for maintaining peace. They tried to prevent the war by organization of international conferences, ways to reduce the participation in the war and to create arbitration or Inter-parliamentary union. For many of the most prominent figures of the peace movement in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: Henri Richard, Frederic Passy, Leo Tolstoy, Bertha von Suttner, the experience they completed during the war was very important for shaping their views. Bertha von Suttner (1843 – 1914) lived during the time of war in Caucasus not far from the front line. Traditionally educated to admire military virtues, she described in her memoirs how her attitude toward the war started to change as a result of her experience there. It becomes clear how she became a leading person in the anti-war movement in Europe in the next decades.

**Olga Chernyshova's** article „The Female Face of War. The Sisters of Mercy during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878“ examines the role of women during the war between the Russian and Ottoman Empires (1877 – 1878). It should be noted that the main ideological clichés about the war are still persistent in Russian historiography, like the one about the liberation role of the Russian Empire towards the other 'Slavic brothers'. The author describes the activities of the "Sisters of Mercy Communities" that have provided medical care for the wounded and sick



soldiers at both the front and the rear. The author examines the large influence of the mass participation of the all nurses in the war on the further development of nursing education in pre-revolutionary Russia. As a result, it turns out that this war has shown not only the Slavophil and patriotic feelings of Russian women but also reflected their desire to participate actively in social and political life.

The axiological axis of pacifism is also underlined in the work of **Anastasiya Pashova and Petar Vodenicharov** “Between ‘The Magic Word War was Pronounced’ and ‘The War is a terrible evil’: The Beginning of the Female War Memoirs during the Russian-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878”. The authors analyze the war experience of two Russian nurses on the Balkan front. Their attitude to the Bulgarians, to their patients, to refugees, to the hospital administration have been followed. Being both religious and patriotic the two aristocratic nurses were loyal to the official ideology of the Russian Empire and its sacred mission for “God, Tsar and Fatherland”. Yet, being women they were emotionally involved and compassionate to the sufferings of their patients – Russians, Bulgarians, Turks, and very critical to the male egotism, arrogance, cruelty and corruption at the rear of the front. Nevertheless of the prevailing religious – patriotic tone, the war experience of the two nurses was ambiguous and often contradictory. The conclusion is that they did not overstep the official framework of interpreting the War and were not able to reach to pacifistic convictions.

A comprehensive critique of the epopee of the deeds and the memory of the notorious Turkish heroine Nene Hatun is the center of the analysis made by **Bülent Bilmez** under the title „Hero Women in the Turkish Popular Memory of the Russo-Ottoman War (1877 – 1878): Presentation of Nene Hatun as an Eternal Heroine in the Popular Media“. The nationalistic mythical image of women as heroines defending the homeland alongside men during crucial battles is best illustrated by Nene Hatun (1857 – 1955) who is generally presented in the collective memory in Turkey as a woman hero playing a symbolic role in the battlefield near Erzurum. She allegedly had performed exceptional bravery during her unexpected participation in the military combat as a leader of some civilians. We have to mention that there is an important controversy in the storyline – Nene Hatun is also considered “a Turkish folk heroine, who became known for brutally massacring dying and wounded Russian soldiers left behind on the battlefield after the recapture of Fort Aziziye in Erzurum from Russian forces at the start of the war”, and she is often pictured with an axe in her hand.

The author explains the essence of the terms ‘exceptional’ and ‘unexpected’ in the framework of discussions on women heroism, on militarism, on popular memory and on construction of modern collective identities.

The co-authors **Milena Angelova and Anastasiya Pashova** looked at the Bulgarian parallel in this respect in 'The Heroine from Shipka Who Took Part in Four Wars and Helped Thousands of People.' The Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878 as Symbolic Capital in the Female Biography". Their article elaborates on the mechanism used to construct the memory and to mythologize the figure of Hristina Hranova (1851/52 – 1922) who allegedly has taken part in the Russian-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878. The major focus is on her biographical narrative, created by herself. Hranova actually had used all possible "topoi" and associated herself with the major events of the national revolutionary movement. Latter on her "biographers" used her self-constructed life story. This is still evident today. Hristina Hranova's image has been promoted in popular historical writings with more and more exotic nuances. The two authors examine how she has been tacitly institutionalized, which was the crucial step towards her mythologization.

A study of a famous British lady, known for her philanthropic work and her defense of poor and oppressed is the focus of the article by **Kristina Popova and Nurie Muratova**, „Lady' from Radilovo village". The authors present the biography and philanthropic activities of Lady Emily Ann Strangford (1826 – 1887) for Bulgarian peasants (1876 – 1877) and for Turkish refugees (1877 – 1878). Although streets and schools in Bulgaria were named after her, the memory about her as an important local historical figure is particularly strong only in some small places (like Radilovo village). The reasons of the 'regionalization' of the memory about Lady Strangford in Bulgaria are to be found in the characteristics of the memory cultures. She was convinced in her duty as a Christian, as a Victorian British noble, and as a woman to help Christian and Muslim people who suffered before, during and after the Russo-Ottoman war. Her motives for making people of both sides less suffering were not understandable for everybody. A very significant observation is made – those who expected absolute and unconditional support for their political cause were disappointed. Thus, in Bulgaria she was criticized for sympathies for the Turks. In the Ottoman Empire her active charity work in organization of hospitals and orphanages was overshadowed by other great philanthropic projects. It is stated that the official politics of memory, as well as the popular memory are similar in Bulgaria and in Turkey. They are similar in their demands of unconditional support for their national causes. It becomes obvious that both cultures of memory show higher appreciation for political than for humanitarian activities.

**Mariyana Piskova** tell the story of the making of a movie about an aristocratic Russian nurse in "Yuliya Vrevskaya" – the Other Movie about the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878". The first Soviet-Bulgarian movie devoted to the Russian-Ottoman War was created in 1954 as a Soviet model for the Bulgarian national cinema. "The Heroes of Shipka" is historical chronicle of the war whose messages were directed also to the new enemies of the Cold War. At the beginning of the

“golden years” of the Bulgarian cinema (1970 – 1980s) the Russo-Ottoman War became a subject of two co-productions with the Soviet cinematography – the two series movie “Yuliya Vrevska” (1878) of the director Nikola Korabov and the TV movie “The Road to Sofia” (1979) of the director Nikolay Mashchenko. Piskova's analysis is based on the movie archives and the reviews about it in Soviet and Bulgarian official press. She places the movie on the background of all the Soviet-Bulgarian film co-productions and on the official commemoration of historical events related to the so-called War of Liberation.

In Armenia discussions about the socio-political role of women started in the liberal press just before the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878. **Grigor Aghanyan, Karine Bazeyan, and Tatevik Muradyan** elaborated on this phenomenon in „The Participation of Women in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878. An Analysis of the Newspaper ‚Mšak‘“. To prepare Armenian public for the incoming war the participation of Armenian and foreign women in Balkan rebellions (as the Dutch lady Marcus in Bosnia and Herzegovina) received wide coverage. Different women public organizations were getting ready for the coming war. The majority of these organizations operated under auspices of the Russian authorities. Benevolent events were held by women to collect necessary facilities for military hospitals in Transcaucasia. During the war Armenian women served as nurses in the Red Cross hospitals in Yerevan and Alexandropol. Armenian media covered these activities with admiration - and particularly praised the pious attitude of the nurses working there. The conclusion is that after the war women were much more active in education and social work that were the pillars of the Armenian national enlightenment.

The last (but not least) article in this volume belongs to **Tamaz Phutkaradze and Ketevan Phutkaradze** and reflects their anthropological work among the heirs of Muhajirs both in Turkey and in Georgia. In „Muhajir Resettlement and Women's Memory of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878“ the authors deal with the oral transfer of memory of women that migrated to the Ottoman Empire (Muhajir movement) after the annexation of Muslim Ajara by the Russian Empire in 1878. The research is based on study trip in former ethnical territories, which nowadays are part of Turkey, and in the inner provinces of Turkey. From generation to generation, people from different parts of Georgia and outside of Georgia were passing the stories about the "great resettlement". The interviewed women consider the Russian oppression as a main reason for the migration. Some women blame the two rival Empires for the misfortune of the Georgians. Particularly interesting is the information about the secret writing system ‘dedabruli’ created by the Georgian women to safeguard the secrecy of the correspondence under Ottoman rule.

The present volume is the first attempt to collect the voices of and about women during one of the most important war in the knot of the Eastern Question.

The diversity of the analysis, the revelations of controversial facts and interpretations of the war experience, the innovative approaches to the sources, the richness of the narratives and the broad and open minded elucidation of these historical events and personages will make the present contributions a valuable vehicle for the understanding of how and why women came out of oblivion during the Russian-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878.

## INTERVIEW

**Georgeta Nazarska**

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### Women in War – Mechanisms of Oblivion



*Georgeta Nazarska is a Professor of Social and Cultural History at the State University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, Sofia. She had specialized in the U.S.A., Hungary and France. Member of the Bulgarian Association of University Women, the International Federation for Research in Women's History, the International Society for the Sociology of Religion, the International Association for Southeast European Anthropology. Main publications: The Bulgarian State and its Minorities, 1879 – 1885, 1999; The University Education and Bulgarian Women, 1879 – 1944, 2003; History of Religious Denominations in Bulgaria, 2009; Minority Cultural*

*Heritage in Bulgaria: Preservation, Conservation and Socialization, 2014.*

– The history of the Russo-Ottoman war is considered mainly from the point of view of the history of men. How should it be researched from the point of view of history of women? How could the history of women contribute to the overall picture of the war?



– History of women could introduce in this research the gender perspective. The identity of genders should be projected on the war as diplomacy, as military actions and as a way of life. Then the Russo-Ottoman war could be seen also as a private space, which was a generic space for women at that time. In that way - apart from the activities of the women's associations - issues like natality, sexuality, power relations in family, migrations could be explained. The history of women for sure will not change considerably the history of the Russo-Ottoman war (1877 – 1878) but could enrich it with personal stories, unfamiliar and unexpected points of views, with “silenced” and “repressed” truths.

**– How do you consider the relation of this particular Russo-Ottoman warwar to the women's movement in Bulgaria and Europe? What was the situation before the war? Did the war change the social position and the activities of women?**

– According to Virginia Paskaleva and Margarita Cholakova the Bulgarian women's movement originated in the late period of the National Revival as a result of various factors. The priority among them have the development of the urban life, the formation of bourgeois strata, the foundation of local educational and cultural institutions (girl's schools and community centers - chitalichta) and the establishment of group of women intellectuals. Important are the foreign cultural influences based on educational experience in Europe, the spread of modern ideas by the mass media and the translations of foreign authors, the example of the Catholic and the Protestant missionary schools, and the work of some foreigners in Bulgaria. In this sense the above mentioned historians claim that there is a direct connection between the women's movement in West Europe and Russia and the one in Bulgaria. This connection is especially visible in the activities of these societies – the care for girl's education has been understood as both a right and a necessity for women. Up to the Russo-Ottoman war there were 45 associations in regions where Bulgarians lived, including North Dobroudja, Macedonia and Wallachia. Girls' associations and several charity organizations acted also in Bucharest and Constantinople. The culmination of this movement was by the middle of the 1870s when the main coordinator of these societies was the Women's association in Constantinople, which focused on three issues: female education, public libraries, and supply of literature.

There is information about 21 Women's associations that have provided moral, material and medical support for the Russian army and the Bulgarian volunteers during the war. After the euphoria caused by the welcoming of the Russian army, accompanied by appeals, speeches and presenting flags, the female associations were seriously engaged with care for wounded and sick with typhus in the military hospitals around Svishtov, Gabrovo and Tarnovo; with collecting money and products for Bulgarian volunteers and Russian soldiers; with supporting the accommodation of the refugees from the Balkan Mountain settlements to Svishtov, Gabrovo

and Tarnovo regions. They also founded and supported orphanages for children affected by the war. Due to the war part of the societies in Stara Zagora, Kazanlak, Karlovo and Kalofer stopped their activities; the horizontal connections between them were interrupted, as well as their contacts with the Constantinople Istanbul Women's Association. Only the charitable organizations increased their activities.

I think that the War could not be interpreted as a watershed in the development of the women's movement. After the war it is not different from before the war, considering its directions, ideas and activities up to 1890s. For instance, after the war, both in the Principality of Bulgaria and in Eastern Roumelia the refugee question was especially crucial as it was during the war. It had engaged state and municipality authorities and non-government organizations including women's societies. In this period were founded the female high and vocational schools. They became once again the focus of public discussions in which the major role played female teachers and charity women, members of these associations.

The real watershed moment was the year 1901, when the women's associations from loose, nonaffiliated societies turned into branches of the Bulgarian Women's Union and started to function in a national network.

**– Could or must women have their own history of the Russo-Ottoman war of 1877 – 1878? Did this war mark a boundary in the history of women?**

– The Russo-Ottoman war/Turkish war is not a boundary for the Bulgarian women movement, which originated around the schools and community centers (chitalichta) and was focused on educational projects. After the Liberation in 1878 the main question became the women's right of education, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century women labor rights were discussed, and only at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – suffrage and political rights were on the agenda. Women could have their "own" history about this war only if a rich database of facts about the war was available, and if all the basic sources were published and accessible. Professionals who are familiar with the respective methodology and who have desire to work on this topic - considered even today as marginal by the professional guild - should also be present.

**– What kind of sources should be used in the historical research on women's memory about the war?**

– Obviously - the alternative sources. The sources called traditional could be useful to certain extent if enthusiasts (re)read them again from gender perspective. Up to now such efforts are missing. I think that parish registers about baptism and marriage from the time of the war could be also of use. Detailed research on memorial inscriptions of women tombs in graveyards; memoirs and testimonies of women and for women, including the reconsideration of the already published and popular

ones could be examined. As an example - the narrative of Saba Vazova about the violence in Sopot and similar accounts from the other ravaged towns – Stara Zagora, Karlovo, Kalofer clearly reveal that in crises situation namely women had organized the evacuation of their families and successfully took the role of the heads of the families. We could search and analyze correspondence (a good recent example is the published archive of Eka Karaminkova); visual sources, for instance paintings and graphics of army painters (among the 54 reproductions of Russian and Rumanian artists published in 1959 one could find paintings of the less known artists E. K. Makarov and P.O. Kovalevski who depicted Bulgarian women as housewives and nurses on the battle field).

**– What new research fields could be discovered? Should we emphasize the suffering of women as victims of war? Or we should turn to the participation of specific women in the battles? Or we should look at the women as philanthropists, charity women, nurses, doctors who tried to lessen the sufferings caused by the war?**

– Despite the different historiography schools, this Russo-Ottoman warwar poses many problems to the common reader. It seems that “outside of the frame” remained many activities of women in the Bulgarian lands (I mean not only Bulgarian women) which could be interesting - but there is no way to learn about them. I hope that various resources of the fields of demography, sociology and anthropology could be eventually added to the limited possibilities of the classical civilian and military history. I personally am curious to find an answer to various questions, for instance: What was the marriage, nativity and mortality rate of women from all nationalities during the war (such research already exists for the First World War)? Did something change in the power relations in the traditional patriarchal family, since part of women had to organize the escape of their families crossing the front line (as was the case when Stara Zagora was put in fire)? How were women included in the wartime economy and how did this inclusion further influence their self-esteem? (In this respect I would like to remind the riot of the Sopot weavers against the Jewish manufacturers in 1883). Did the war involve women in politics? (Yordanka Filaretova, a chairperson of the Sofia Women’s Association, was a valuable informer of the Russian consul Nayden Gerov, but after the Liberation devoted herself to philanthropy). What were the activities of the nuns, usually considered to be accomplice as to the revolutionaries? How were the war-time massacres transformed into traumatic memory expressed most strongly by the widows? Well known is the protest of Karlovo women in 1878 against the return of the Turkish refugees in the town and the fact that on their initiative a special Memorial Day called “The Horror” (“Strashnoto”) was introduced. This day commemorates the “widows’ dance (horo)” that Karlovo women were forced to perform around the gallows of the local leaders killed by the Ottoman Turks in the court yard of the Kurshum mosque. How did the widows use the symbolic capital of their husbands,

participants in the war, when applying for veteran pensions after the Liberation? Did they line up with the so-called reputable elites or on the contrary – they have lost their prestige?

**– How did the women in one way or another support the war efforts? Who are the "remembered women" and who are the "forgotten women"? How did the mechanisms of memory and oblivion function?**

– The Russo-Ottoman warwar is a good example of how the "mechanisms of oblivion" function in the collective memory in respect to women. I think that the women's participation in it is totally overshadowed, and even "erased" by other crucial events before and after the War – the National Revival, the April Uprising, the Serbo-Bulgarian War 1885. Even if there are some symbolic figures of national heroines (Baba Tonka and Rayna Knyaginja) or politically engaged womens (Ekaterina Karavelova), this war is associated mainly with foreigners – nurses (Baroness Julija Vrevskaja), charity women (Lady Emily Strangford, Olga Skobeleva, the mother of General Skobelev) and monarchic figures (Russian empress Maria Alexandrovna). Monuments, places, streets and schools are named after them.

In the group of the "forgotten" ones could be considered a group of women who at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century searched their rights as active participants in the war and had laid claim for veteran pensions. Such a "legend" is created around the personality of Hristina Hranova, considered to be one of the first trained midwives and a famous life-guard. According to some of her biographers she was an associate to Vassil Levski, defender of the population of the village of Batak during the massacre in 1876 and a volunteer in Shipka, Shejnovο and Stara Zagora battles in 1877/1878. In this case the "mechanism of memory" mixes up the later women participation in Macedonian-Thracian Volunteer Corps and some fighting units in the First World War with the unquestionable contributions of Hranova to the Bulgarian medicine and to the local community in the city of Varna. If we talk not about the "forgotten" personalities but rather about the "forgotten" (ignored, silenced, undermined) women's participation in the war, this has been basically the charity work of the local female societies. They have directed funds to the fellow citizens\villagers, victims of the war and the atrocities; they have organized a logistic and sanitarian help to the Russian army and doctors; they have gathered food, and have took care for sick with typhus soldiers in the hospitals. Well known is the fact that many of the first Bulgarian female doctors, including Dr. Tota Venkova, chose their future profession, deeply impressed by their experience as nurses during the war.

**– The memory of the Russo-Ottoman warwar has elaborated steady (male!) tropes in the public consciousness. "Pleven was taken!" – the phrase pronounced in relation to the local parliamentary elections in Pleven in 2015 is**

**the newest example. How gender studies could correct the established image of the war? Or this is already impossible?**

– One remark: The Russo-Ottoman warwar is hardly associated only with “Pleven was taken!”. According to me Shipka is a much more stable topos in the national memory – as a myth and as a figure of speech. It is in feminine gender and it is marked by internal dichotomy: it characterizes the war as heroism and self-sacrifice (“O, Shipka!”, a quote e from Ivan Vazov’s famous poem) but it suggests also a non-heroic background, hidden conflicts, geopolitical plots, stoicism of the participants during the winter march through the pass (“All quiet in the Shipka Pass”, a catchphrase from military correspondence).

Language is often only a marker of existing social notions. The question is - how could they be changed? And could they be changed by scholarship? I am very skeptical about its possibilities – here and now - because I see the collapse of the basic social institutions as family and education in Bulgaria and the deep value crisis in the contemporary world. The mass public should learn to think about the war not only as a competition of strength, battles, physical and mental efforts, and a game between victors and defeated. The war should be understood also as a social shock, personal tragedies, interrupted education, lost carriers, loves and lives, dynamics, diseases, violence, moral falls. For all this the public should be first well educated. To be educated means to learn to think in a critical and in a positive way, as well as in a comparative and rational way. To be brought up means that we need the religious and humanistic values to return as basis of the world view. Indeed I do not see how this could happen in present day Bulgaria!

**– Should the memory of women be studded in the school books? What should be their content?**

– If we speak in principle, of course, yes. This is a world tendency in the design of the school curricula and books since the 1960s but it did not touch our national standards. It is already an established view that the point of view of women - and of all the other groups, (“different” in respect to religion, ethnos, race, class, physical qualities and capacities etc.) who remained in the “shadow of history” is valuable to describe the past in more adequate manner and to form a pluralistic notion of the world. But writing textbooks is a result of the existing school curricula and syllabi, of their cognitive, educational and axiological agenda. But above all it is a result of the balance between them. If the cognitive aims are the leading ones, in the methodical components (text, tasks, questions, images, sources etc.) of the lessons about the Russo-Ottoman war, women could hardly “appear”.

The very character of the wars up to 19<sup>th</sup> century did not suppose participation of women, and, thus, the big narrative “excluded” women as social actors. Still, if the accents of the school curriculum are to be changed, if they are reoriented from formation of knowledge to development of skills and attitudes, then may be wars



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would be described in a different manner, including that they do not have “a woman’s face”. For this purpose one could use the so called ego documents (biographies, genealogies, and prosopography).

I remember that with my pupils years ago we exercised on analyzing memoirs of women soldiers and children from the concentration camps during World War Two. The effect was striking. One thing is to describe battles, triumphs, generals - and a totally different thing is to put yourself "in the shoes" of people of your age or common people who went through the horrors of the war.

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## **The Pacifist Movement and the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878. Bertha von Suttner and her Memoirs <sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** *The Russo-Ottoman war 1877 – 1878 was an important challenge for the peace activists in Europe: for religious war-resistance groups, for pacifists, as well as for supporters of social justice. Pacifists started new initiatives for maintaining peace. They tried to prevent the war by organization of international conferences, to reduce the participation in the war, to find new forms like arbitration or Inter-parliamentary union. For many of the most prominent figures of the peace movement in the second half of the 19th century: Henri Richard, Frederic Passy, Leo Tolstoy, Bertha von Suttner, the experience they achieved during the Russo-Ottoman war was very important for shaping their views. Bertha von Suttner (1843-1914) lived during the time of the Russo-Ottoman war 1877 – 1878 in Caucasus not far from the front line. Traditionally educated to admire military activities, she described in her memoirs how her attitude toward the war started to change as a result of her experience there. Her experience from 1877 – 1878 contributed to the change of her views which made her a leading person in the anti-war movement in Europe in the next decades.*

**Key word:** *peace activist, anti-war movement, war experience, Nobel Prize, women activities*

In 2014 a hundred years from the death of the Austrian writer and Nobel Peace Prize winner Bertha von Suttner (1843 – 1914) were celebrated. Nevertheless a century ago her literary heritage was known in Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania and other Balkan countries by many translations, today her name is almost forgotten on the Balkans. Her life in Caucasus where she spent the time of the Russo-Ottoman 1877 – 1878 war not far from the front line as well her experience during the war is also unknown to many people who are interested in the histo-



ry of this time. The break up in her views started in the months that she spent in the Caucasus - from a noble woman bred up in a traditional way in the values of glorious military victories she changed to a convinced supporter of peace. The paper presents the roots of modern pacifism, and tries to find the place of the Russo-Ottoman war (1877 – 1878) from the point of view of the validation of peace in the public opinion in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Premodern forms of antiwar movement**

The resistance against the violence of war has a long tradition. In his book „The Roots of War Resistance” Peter Brook, a famous historian of peace movement, traced the religious roots of the pacifist ideas.<sup>2</sup> He demonstrated that in the first centuries of Christianity the pacifist notion was prevailing. With the transformation of the Christianity into a state religion in the time of the barbaric invasions the radical pacifism receded being preserved only in sects or movements like the movement of Jan Hus (1369 – 1415) in Bohemia, later on in the Anabaptist, Mennonites, Quakers and other religious groups.<sup>3</sup> All of them shared the same religious-ideological basis supported by the Gospel messages about non-violence and love to the fellow-men and especially the Sermon of the Jesus on the Mountain. The attitudes against war led to contradictions with the state authorities and often caused persecution and banishing the followers of these movements.

Mennonites were the most persistent in their antiwar attitude among the other Christian sects. They were followers of the antiwar ideas of a former priest Menno Simons (1496 – 1561) who lived in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. They rejected war, military service, state service and the participation in any power structure. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Russian Empress Ekaterina II invited Mennonites to settle in Russia as industrious people leading honest way life. They lived peacefully in Russia for a century being allowed to follow there their convictions.

The Quakers were another religious group who opposed war and by their Peace testimony influenced essentially the ideas of non-violence in the centuries to come. They appeared in England in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. George Fox (1624 – 1691) is considered as the founder of the movement. In 1650 the “Society of Friends” was founded. Persecuted during the time of Oliver Cromwell a big part of them immigrated to the New World. In America the Quakers established their way of life known as the “Lamb’s War”. Unlike the Mennonites they do not opposed state and social service and many of their representatives were employed to high positions. In 1667 William Penn (1644 – 1718) joined the Quakers’ “Societies of Friends” and developed their humanitarian tradition which caused a considerable uplift of these societies. In the course of more than seven decades under the government of the Quakers the violence in the state of Pennsylvania (the state of William Penn), was considerably limited.<sup>4</sup> In England the Quakers were active in politics especially in the time after the Napoleonic wars. They were the engine of the Victorian peace movement and the first international peace initiatives and peace diplomacy.

During the Crimean war (1853 – 1856) the “Society of Friends” in London distributed leaflets against the war. It decided to send a delegation of three people to the Russian Tsar to convince him about the necessity of keeping peace and to present the values of the Quakers’ *Declaration of Peace*. This action was evaluated as one of the most successful attempts of peace propaganda during the Crimean war.<sup>5</sup> After the war the British Quakers directed their attention to the need of supporting the suffering peaceful population and initiated many charity activities for Greek emigrants and for the people in Finland, Bulgaria and other places.<sup>6</sup>

### **The modern pacifism**

To a great extent the modern pacifism is connected with the spirit of the époque of Enlightenment. In 1795 Immanuel Kant elaborated a philosophical notion of peace and gave reasons for necessity of providing conditions for overcoming the disagreements between the states in order to avoid war. His work “To Perpetual Peace” became very popular. After the Napoleonic wars “Societies for Peace” were founded in many big centers.

This was in parallel with the architecture for a new political order. In 1815 “the representatives of the Great Powers at the Vienna Peace Congress in Vienna decided to create the “Concert of Europe” as a way to prevent wars by peace conferences. At the same time “Societies for Peace” were founded in London and New York. The moderate pacifists rejected war as cruel and non-human – they believed that by international conferences and congresses the conflicts could be handled.<sup>7</sup>

In 1846 the „League of the Universal Fraternity“ – the first international pacifist organization - was founded. The moderate pacifists initiated a discussion about the acceptance of „defense war“. Unlike the moderate pacifists the radical pacifism rejected any violence. In 1838 in Boston „Nonresistance society“ was founded, which included also an impressive number of women. Later on the interaction between the radical pacifism and Women’s movement led to the establishment of International “Women’s League for Peace and Freedom”.<sup>8</sup> But the roads to the formation of a Feminist Peace Movement came also from other women activities - from the temperance and anti-slavery movements which helped women to make connections between gender and the abuse of power.<sup>9</sup>

The radical pacifists are closely related to the left wing of abolitionism – the movement against slavery in USA and to the cause of freedom in general. For the first time they promoted the idea about civil disobedience.<sup>10</sup> The radical pacifism took strong impulses by the ideas of Leo Tolstoy about non violence. Tolstoy was acquainted with the Quakers movement but further developed his own theory rejecting any form of violence.

After the Crimean war 1853-1856 the debate about war and peace intensified. In 1860s new ideas and initiatives about limiting the sphere of war and supporting war victims appeared. The idea about organizing international movement for supporting wounded and sick soldiers regardless of the fact on whose side they fought. In such a way on the initiative of Henry Dunant the “Red Cross” was founded. The

pacifists organized international congresses to discuss the fight against social injustices as well as the national-liberation efforts which spread over many parts of Europe. The question about the interrelation between the “outside” and “inside” was divided the supporters of peace. In 1860s on the Peace Congresses in Genève and Bern gradually the value of peace was substituted by the interests of revolution. The idea that the war will enforce the revolution prevailed among the Russian Revolution democrats who did not see any sense in the practice of peace congresses.<sup>11</sup>

Outside of the pacifist movement the idea about peace also gained wide importance, especially in Great Britain. The economists, followers of Adam Smith, considered that peace will be a natural consequence of the increase in international commerce and the empowerment of bourgeoisie which unlike the traditional elite would not be interested in war.<sup>12</sup> In England the liberals faced a dilemma. On one side they supported using peaceful measures and gathering international conferences for deciding disputed questions and avoiding wars, but on the other side they considered that Serbs, Bulgarians and Albanians could not be blamed for their struggle for liberation.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Russo-Ottoman war 1877 – 1878 and the antiwar movements**

When the Russo-Ottoman war 1877 – 1878 started the world peace movement already had its traditions, structures, international forums, discussions and splits. Aside with the existing religious pacifistic movements, modern pacifism succeeded to develop its ideological and organizational basis. “The London Society for Peace” which was one of the first and most active pacifist organizations reacted to the beginning of the war. Two pamphlets about the war written by Henry Richard (1812 – 1888) – the secretary of the “London Society for Peace”, member of the Parliament from the Liberal party, provoked public interest. Henry Richard was known as “Apostle of Peace”. One of the most prominent activists of the antiwar movement and anti-slavery movement, he led “The London Society for Peace” for 40 years and tried to contribute to the Treaty of Paris in 1856 by insertion of a declaration on favour of arbitration after the Crimean war. In 1876 he and John Bright headed the parliamentary delegation which delivered to the minister of inferior Lord Derby a memorandum against the British policy of supporting the Ottoman government.<sup>14</sup> In the next year Henry Richard published the book “Evidences of Turkish Misrule.”<sup>15</sup> His main concern during the Russian – Ottoman war was to avoid the possibility of both British involvement in the war on the side of Turkey and, thus eventual war between Great Britain and Russia.<sup>16</sup> His position was of strict neutrality between the “Scylla of hate toward Russia” and “Charybdis of hostility toward Turkey” in British society.<sup>17</sup> He opposed the “double standard” of Great Britain in relation to the domestic policy and the policy of Russia. After the end of the war, during the meetings of the Berlin congress, a delegation including Henry Richard, Leon Levi and Frederic Passy (later of Nobel Prize for Peace winner) appeared in Berlin to insist on the inclusion of international arbitration.



Nevertheless they were not allowed to attend the congress negotiations, the meetings they held and the press coverage were considered as a success for the delegation. At this time the idea of founding an international body for dialogue appeared and was realized 10 years later – in 1888 in Paris on the initiative of Frederic Passy.

British Women also had an important role for the formation of the public opinion in the months immediately before the Russo-Ottoman war. In the end of October 1876 a group of distinguished figures: writers, social reformers, suffragist: Arabella and Louisa Shore, Florence Nightingale, Mary Carpenter, Octavia Hill and many others declared a “Memorial” which appealed to Queen Victoria to use her Royal prerogative in directing the Government to adopt measures against the atrocities in Turkey.<sup>18</sup> According to the British gender historian Anne Summers, the “Memorial” had not been a pacifist project as such.<sup>19</sup> It did indeed insist that conflict with other powers was to be discoursed by a positive approach of framing a new policy in conjunction with them; but its main thrust was that war was more gender oriented than pacifist.<sup>20</sup>

The Russo-Ottoman war 1877 – 1878 became relevant to the antiwar discussions at that time - about the acceptance of the liberating wars and the relation between war and revolution. In the revolutionary societies and especially in the Russian revolutionary circles the war was considered as an active element lightening the revolutionary fire and because of this - desired and fruitful precondition for the revolution. In this sense the Russian revolutionary journal “Nabat” in the 1870s expressed the hope that the new Russo-Ottoman war will cause mass dissatisfaction which could help the revolution.<sup>21</sup> To the existing discussions new considerations were added related to the legality of war. The wars of defending the Slav population led by Russia posed the question about the victims and sufferings caused by these wars. The question about the legality of war and the violence related to it turned into a basic theme in the last chapters of the novel “Anna Karenina” (by Tolstoy) finished in the months of the war.<sup>22</sup>

From the second half of the 1860s militarism in Europe radicalized because of the advance of the industrial revolution, communication, and new military technology. The mass media provided powerful tools for shaping the public opinion. Since the civic society in Russia was very weak the participation in the war turned into main arena of mass involvement in the political life.<sup>23</sup> The appearance of war memoirs encouraged radical forms of national self-expression and the aggressive orientation of the Russian nationalism. The nationalists hoped that the Russo-Ottoman war 1877 – 1878 will unite the nation. The patriotic press encouraged publishing war memoirs and discussing the war themes in literature.<sup>24</sup> On the background of the increase of military pathos among the both nationalists and revolutionary-democrats, the opposition to the war became a difficult task.

In 1874 a reformed military service was introduced in Russia and the religious groups opposing the military service – Mennonites, Doukhobors, Molokans and others - faced new difficult condition. On the territory of Russia the obligatory

military service led to refusal to serve in the army motivated by official laws of the denominations.<sup>25</sup> To avoid the emigration from Russia general Eduard Totleben was sent to negotiate with the Mennonites. An agreement was reached Mennonites to take forester's and other alternative services but not to be armed to serve in the Russian army.<sup>26</sup>

During the Russo-Ottoman war 1877 – 1878 the sects of Doukhobors and Molokans who lived in the Caucasus region close to the Caucasus front supported the Russian side: they look after sick and wounded warriors, took care of soldiers, prepared rucks.<sup>27</sup> As a result of these supportive activities the Doukhobors received more than half a million rubles and in such way the wealth of their society increased quickly. According to their own evaluations in these months along with the money intolerable vices invaded their society – drunkenness and easy taste for life. Later the Doukhobors evaluated this indirect involvement into the war as imposed from outside sin - but once introduced it led to betrayal of their predecessors' legacy.<sup>28</sup>

Mennonites also took part in looking after sick and wounded warriors as they did before in the Crimean war. In 1877 they collected donations, cloths and objects and established a Mennonites' hospital in Halbstadt (today Molochansk in Ukraine). After the end of the war their representatives travelled to Simferopol to greet the Tsar with the victory. Nevertheless of the reached compromise about the military service a great part of Mennonites emigrated to USA and Canada.<sup>29</sup>

### **Antiwar ideas related to the experience of the Russo-Ottoman war and the following years: Leo Tolstoy**

The experience of the Russo-Ottoman war 1877 – 1878 was reconsidered in the spirit of “nonviolence” in the following years. It is remarkable that namely after the years of the war – in the 1880s and 1890s - the most prominent ideas and figures of the international peace movement appeared: Leo Tolstoy, Frederic Passy, Bertha von Suttner and others. They reconsidered their Russo-Ottoman war experience and draw important conclusions. As for Tolstoy, his gradually developing antiwar ideas voiced in his literary works became dominant in his works in the 1880s. Still in “Anna Karenina” his character Konstantin Levin questioned the enthusiasm about the Slav question in relation to the Serb-Ottoman war in 1876 and to war affair in general insisting that to kill is a bad thing and killing could not be justified by any reason.<sup>30</sup> His main argument is that in war one is pushed not only to defend himself but also to kill and Christians should not take such responsibility.<sup>31</sup> Later in another works Tolstoy again emphasized the manipulative essence of Slavophil movement and its relation to the danger of war. In his book “Christianity and Patriotism” written in 1894 under the shadow of the possible war between Russia and Germany he continued to think about the war and turned again to the experience of the Russo-Ottoman war 1877 – 1878.<sup>32</sup> Tolstoy warned about the use and misuse of patriotic

feelings, considering that patriotism should be exercised freely and not be indoctrinated especially in the process of education:

*“... From infancy, by every possible means — class-books, church services, sermons, speeches, books, papers, songs, poetry, monuments — the people is stupefied in one direction.”<sup>33</sup>*

He warned that the war propaganda will be followed in the case of war only by sufferings and troubles:

*“... There will be no more admirals, nor presidents, nor flags, nor music; but only a damp and empty field of battle, cold, hunger, and pain; before them a murderous enemy, behind, relentless officers preventing their escape; blood, wounds, putrefying bodies, and senseless unnecessary death”<sup>34</sup>.*

In his anonce to the letter from the Polish revolutionaries stating that there are two types of patriotism – the patriotism of the enslaved nations opposed to the patriotism of the empires, in accordance with his radical pacifism, Tolstoy rejected such difference.

***“In the year 1878, I made my first attempt as an author...”: Bertha von Suttner and her memories about the Russo-Ottoman war 1877–1878***

Beside Leo Tolstoy another person was among the most prominent figures of the peace movement by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century who also witnessed the Russo-Ottoman war in 1877 – 1878 and lately reconsidered her experience and memories from that time in her pacifist activities. This is the Austrian writer Bertha von Suttner.

She was born in Prague in 1843 in the family of the Austrian general count Franz Kinsky. Since 1864, when she visited the famous with its hot mineral water springs resort Homburg, she became closer to the family of the Georgian Princess Ekaterina Dadiani<sup>35</sup> and was accepted as “one of the children in the family”.<sup>36</sup> Through Princess Dadiani Bertha von Suttner met the Russian Emperor Alexander II who she described later as a “tall and impressive figure”.<sup>37</sup> After her family was financially ruined she decided to work as governess. In the family where Bertha served she met her husband to be Arthur von Suttner. In 1876 for a short time she worked as a secretary to Alfred Nobel in Paris. Soon after that she and her husband Arthur departed to Russia and settled in Caucasus in the family of Princess Dadiani and for a decade Bertha taught German and other languages there. In the town of Kutaisi Bertha and Arthur von Suttner went through the Russo-Ottoman war. In the beginning they were enthusiastic about the war, further they experienced the anxiety of the relatives who sent their sons to the Balkan and Caucasus fronts and the fear of the Caucasus front getting closer. They felt deep compassion to the wounded

and sick warriors they tried to help to. Both Bertha and Arthur applied to be appointed as hospital attendants. They supported the Russian position in the military conflict, but they witnessed by their own eyes the suffering and death the war caused and understood the means of manipulating the public opinion. Their experience made them reconsider the war. The two of them started to write and their first attempts brought them success and popularity in their homeland. After their return in Vienna in the mid-1880s the couple Suttner visited Alfred Nobel in Paris. Bertha was shocked by the desire of revenge against Germany in the Paris salons because of the defeat of France in the French-Prussian war sixteen years earlier. The moods in favor of war seemed to her superficial and dangerous. Here she understood that antiwar movement already existed and she decided to support it by writing an antimilitaristic novel. Her book *„Die Waffen nieder! („Lay down Your Arms!)“* was published in 1889 and quickly turned one of the most influential antiwar literary works in world literature. In her book Bertha von Suttner presented the evils of war by the life of a young woman (Martha von Tilling), educated by her family, teachers, and manuals to admire military heroism, but she lost her beloved husband in the war conflicts of Austria and became a young widow with a small son. Later her second husband also was killed in the war and she witnessed the horror experienced by the peaceful population. In her novel the writer spoke about the war in from women's point of view. She posed the question about the danger of educating the young generations in the spirit of admiring war and drew attention to the way history was taught in school as series of glorious military victories. Bertha von Suttner was brave enough to voice the truth about the damages of the hypocrite education and to defend her position against compulsory military service, armement and barrack regime life. At the end of the novel Martha decided to dedicate her life to the antiwar movement.

Through the biography of Martha von Tilling - a daughter of a military officer like the author, Bertha von Suttner described the way young generation of girls and boys was brought up and how their emotions were forced using history that thought admiration of military heroes and battlefield victories:

*“...I conceived the wish for emancipation only in one direction, viz., that women also should have the right to carry arms and take the field. Ah, how beautiful was it to read in history about a Semiramis or a Catherine II. “She carried on war with this or that neighbouring state she conquered this or that country!”*

*Speaking generally it is history which, as our youth are instructed, is the chief source of the admiration of war. From thence it is stamped on the childish mind that the Lord of armies is constantly decreeing battles, that these are, as it were, the vehicle upon which the destiny of nations is carried on through the ages; that they are the fulfilment of an inevitable law of nature and must always occur from*

*time to time like storms at sea or earthquakes; that terror and woe are indeed connected with them; but the latter is fully counterpoised, for the commonwealth by the importance of the results, for individuals by the blaze of glory which may be won in them, even by the consciousness of the fulfilment of the most elevated duty. Can there be a more glorious death than that on the field of honour, a nobler immortality than that of the hero?*

*All this comes out clear and unanimous in all school-books "readings for the use of schools," where, besides the formal history, which is only represented as a concatenation of military events, even the separate tales and poems always manage to tell only of heroic deeds of arms. This is a part of the patriotic system of education. Since out of every scholar a defender of his country has to be formed, therefore the enthusiasm even of the child must be aroused for this its first duty as a citizen; his spirit must be hardened against the natural horror which the terrors of war might awaken, by passing over as quickly as possible the story of the most fearful massacres and butcheries as of something quite common and necessary, and laying meanwhile all possible stress on the ideal side of this ancient national custom; and it is in this way they have succeeded in forming a race eager for battle and delighting in war.*

*The girls who indeed are not to take the field are educated out of the same books as are prepared for the military training of the boys, and so in the female youth arises the same conception which exhausts itself in envy that they have nothing to do with war and in admiration for the military class. What pictures of horror out of all the battles on earth, from the Biblical and Macedonian and Punic Wars down to the Thirty Years' War and the wars of Napoleon, were brought before us tender maidens, who in all other things were formed to be gentle and mild; how we saw there cities burnt and the inhabitants put to the sword and the conquered trodden down and all this was a real enjoyment; and of course through this heaping up and repetition of the horrors the perception that they were horrors becomes blunted, everything which belongs to the category of war comes no longer to be regarded from the point of view of humanity, and receives a perfectly peculiar mystico-historico-political consecration. War must be it is the source of the highest dignities and honours that the girls see very well, and they have had also to learn by heart the poems and tirades in which war is magnified...*"<sup>38</sup>

To write the novel "Lay Down your Arms!" Bertha von Suttner prepared thoroughly. She researched the history of the peace movement, the views of the

Quakers, the ideas of Kant, the establishment of the "Red Cross" societies, the attempts to avoid or to solve conflicts by negotiations and arbitrage.

Bertha von Suttner protested against the hypocrisy in respect to women of her social class. One should not speak about the horrors of war when "well educated ladies" are present. Her heroine Martha was shocked by the contrast between the sufferings of the people during the military conflict and the way the war was commented in the high society:

*"...Glitter, cheerfulness, distinguished elegance, the well-dressed ladies, the smart uniforms what a contrast to the scenes of woe, filth, and terror that I had seen so short a time since. And it is these same glittering, cheerful, elegant personages who of their own accord set this woe in motion, who refuse to do anything to abolish it, who on the contrary glorify it, and by means of their gold lace and stars testify the pride which they find in being the agents and props of this system of woe!"*<sup>39</sup>

As some relatives of Martha died during the war she insisted her father to recognize the fact that war as an evil:

*"...What comfort then has come to the country from the sufferings of you and your brethren? What comfort from the lost battles? What from these two girls' lives cut short? Father! Oh do me this kindness for the love of me! Curse war!"*<sup>40</sup>

By the novel of one (woman) life Bertha von Suttner alarmed women about their own responsibility. In her views women are not just passive victims but personalities who should take their part of the responsibility and should have independent opinion and not consider superficially the politics and war danger.

The book "Lay down Your Arms!" was translated in many languages and reprinted many times. In Bulgarian the book was translated in 1892 (from Russian). It was published again immediately after the First World War; Dr. Maria Teofilova translated the book from German during the war years.<sup>41</sup>

The book inspired thousands followers of the antiwar movement in the next decades. In 1891 Bertha von Suttner laid the foundations of the Austrian peace organization and the journal "Die Waffen Nieder" ("Lay down Your Arms!") (1892–1899), which played an important role in the dissemination of pacifistic ideas. Bertha von Suttner succeeded to convince Alfred Nobel to support financially the antiwar movement.<sup>42</sup> She was the first woman nominated for Nobel Prize for Peace. She got the Prize in 1905. In 1909 Bertha von Suttner published her memories, which are precious contribution to both the memoir literature and to the history of

pacifism. Bertha von Suttner died in Vienna in the summer of 1914, only a week before the assault in Sarajevo.

In her memoirs Bertha von Suttner described her experience during the Russo-Ottoman war 1877 – 1878, when she and her husband lived in Georgia not far from the Caucasus front. At the beginning she accepted the war as something natural as she considered the wars led by Austria in the past decades. In her own family in which the father was a general as well as in the family of the Princess Ekaterina Dadiani in Caucasus whose sons were officers, she had always been surrounded by military man. In her memoirs she described how Bertha - the aristocracy woman educated in the spirit of admiring military victories who didn't feel fear nor was against the war in the beginning gradually changed her attitude under the influence of her experience in the months of the battle conflict:<sup>43</sup>

*"...Now rumors of war began to buzz through the air. The year before an insurrection had broken out in Bulgaria. (It was asserted in other than Russian countries that this was fomented by Russian agents.) Russia demanded of Turkey reforms and guaranties for the safety of the Christians. Now the great powers met in conference from November, 1876, until January, 1877, in Constantinople; in March, 1877, in London; but their decrees were refused by Turkey. Would Russia now declare war? This portentous question was on every tongue. The troops were waiting in expectation on the border.*

*And, sure enough, on the 24th of April came the Russian declaration of war, and, simultaneously, the crossing of the Pruth and of the Armenian border. The news was the more exciting for the reason that the Caucasus itself served as one of the two theaters of the war, and an invasion of Kutais by the Turks was one of the possible dangers.*

*I do not remember that we felt anxious. Nor did I have any feeling of protest against war in general, any more than in the years '66 and '70. My Own<sup>44</sup> likewise looked upon the war that had broken out as merely an elemental event, yet one of especial historical importance. To be in the midst of it gives one personally an irradiation of this importance.*

*We received from my mother, from my sisters-in-law, letter after letter, telegram after telegram: 'we must make our escape'. We did not think of such a thing; on the contrary we wanted to make ourselves useful, and we offered our services to the governor, Prince Mirsky, as voluntary nurses of the wounded. Only one condition we made, that we should work in the same place, if possible in the same hospital. That was not possible; they wanted to use him here and me there, and so we withdrew our offer. For to separate, especially in such perilous circumstances, no price would tempt us. So we remained in Kutais.*

*Our sympathies (at that time we still had "sympathies" in war) were with the Russians. The word was: to free our Slav brethren"; that was the common talk all around us, and we accepted it in perfect faith. Moreover, a second watchword was in the air, raised by the Mohammedans living in the Caucasus, by the wild mountain tribes, Shamil's comrades: revolt "shaking off the Russian yoke". All this sounded very heroic. But no insurrection broke out; the Caucasus proved to be satisfactorily Russianized and loyal. The sons of the land, looking very handsome in their Cossack uniforms, went to the front as one man to beat the Turks. "Sotnias", as bodies of a hundred mounted noblemen were called, joined the army as volunteers, and we saw them riding away under our windows.*

*The first death announced in the war bulletins was that of a young fellow whom we knew in Kutais, the only son of a Russian general's widow.*

*Of course, in all the neighborhood everybody who remained behind was seized with the Red Cross fever: making bandages, sending off supplies of tea and tobacco, treating the regiments that went through with food and drink, collecting money, planning and executing enterprises of beneficence, "all for the good of the poor soldiers. Today it seems to me there might be something still better than this good", not to send them out. Today, too, we know from Tolstoy, the man who has the courage of truth, what the case was with the "dear Slav brethren" at that time. He writes thus in his book "Patriotism and Christianity", which came out since the war: Just as is now the case with the love between the Russians and the French, on the eve of the Turco-Russian war we had a sudden view of the love of the Russians for I know not what Slavonic brethren. These Slavonic brethren had been ignored for centuries; the Germans, the French, the English, were and still are infinitely nearer to us than these Montenegrins and Servians and Bulgarians. And at that time we began to celebrate solemn festivities and organize receptions under the puffing of men like Katkof and Aksakof, who are very properly regarded in Paris as models of patriotism. Then, as now, the talk was of nothing else than the sudden love with which the Russians were burning for the Slavs of the Balkans.*

*First "exactly as was just now done in Paris" people gathered in Moscow to eat and to drink and to talk nonsense to one another, to melt with emotion over the noble feelings which they had, and to say things about peace and harmony, passing over in silence the main point the project against Turkey. The press magnified the enthusiasm, and little by little the government took a hand in the game. Servia*



*revolted; diplomatic notes and semi-official articles began to appear. The newspapers produced more and more lies, inventions, and grew so heated that at length Alexander II, who really did not want the war, could not help giving his consent And then what we know took place: hundreds of thousands of innocent men were lost, and hundreds of thousands were reduced to savagery and robbed of every Christian feeling.*

*Well, at that time we two believed in this Slavonic brother love. My husband sent to the Neue Freie Presse at Vienna a series of letters about those events of the war of which the echo reached us. These were gratefully accepted for a time, but at length were found to be too pro Russian. The Neue Freie Presse took the side of the Turks and they were declined.*

*As far as I was concerned, since I could not take care of the wounded, at least I helped diligently in the enterprises got up by the ladies of Kutais in their behalf. I remember an evening garden-party which assembled the inhabitants of the city on the Boulevard, as a promenade in the middle of the town, shaded by trees is called. There were Chinese lanterns, orchestral music ("God save the Tsar," a potpourri from Glinka's opera "Zhizn dlya Tsarya" the Balkan March, Slavonic songs, and the like), sale booths, and a tombola. Between two trees, brilliantly lighted up, had been placed a great painting of a touching scene on the battlefield: in the foreground a wonderfully beautiful Russian sister of charity, with tears on her cheeks, bending tenderly over a wounded Turkish soldier, whose head she was raising in order to give him nourishment; in the background a tent, powder smoke, dead horses, and bursting shells. I myself shed a tear or two as I stood in front of that picture; and at the tombola, where I bought chances till my pocketbook was drained, I won a small earthen vase, which I had them raffle off again. And thus I believed that I had paid my tribute of sympathy for the tragedy of the Balkans.*

*The war took its course. We received very sad letters from the Dedopali; she was worried about her two sons, who had gone with the army.*

*Suddenly there arose the rumor that the plague had broken out in a place not far away. That filled us with real dismay. When the news came I burst out in self-reproaches. "Oh, where have I brought you? It is my fault that you came here. My Own." He comforted me: "Not for a moment have I regretted it. If only nothing happens to you I But even if we must perish now, still we have had our share of happiness. The pestilence, however did not spread. The fate of being carried off by the terrible angel of destruction, to which we had resigned ourselves, was spared us. In other respects things were going very badly with us. In*

*the disorder caused by the events of the war no one any longer thought of taking lessons, and we were fearfully pinched. There were days when we actually made the acquaintance of the specter Hunger. But everything that befell us, whether joy or sorrow, brought us closer and closer together, and later we were grateful to Fate for having enriched us with such experiences. Without doubt they were essential to the strengthening of our characters, and to educating us into that sympathy with the sorrows of humanity, with the wretchedness of the people, which in days to come formed the basis of our united work in the service of mankind, and which awakened in each of us feelings that gave delight to the other.*

*The war moved toward its end. On March 3, 1878, the Peace of San Stefano was signed. The Dedopali's two sons had come out unscathed; the older "with the rank of colonel" had fought at Plevna in the emperor's suite; the younger, then a captain, had taken part in the storming of Kars. In Kutais many families were in mourning. The returning sotnias ("hundreds") did not return as hundreds...*<sup>45</sup>

It is obvious that Bertha von Suttner started to change her attitude to war in the months of the Russo-Ottoman war in 1877. Then she noticed the suffering and mourning the war brought to families in Kutaisi, the killed young men, the influence of propaganda. She noticed also how the figure of nurse - the "*wonderfully beautiful Russian sister of charity, with tears on her cheeks*" was used by the war propaganda. Apart of this Bertha had to find a new job. There were not pupils any more and she could not support herself as a teacher. In the search of something new and under the influence of her husband who was already a known author, Bertha started to write "*In the year 1878*":

*"...Since that time, however, with the exception of letters (which I was tremendously fond of writing), I had written nothing. So now, in the year 1878, I made [...] my first attempt as an author..."*<sup>46</sup>

In the next years the couple gained experience, self-reflection and artistic success. In these years they experienced a renewal, a psychological change. The nine years they spend in Georgia made her and her husband new people: "two joyful and good people". This is how the turning point came in order to make Bertha to join actively the peace movement and to write her antiwar novel "*Lay down Your Arms!*". Sensitive to the military theme "I already hated war passionately" – Bertha von Suttner related her experience to the moods in favor of a future war between Germany and France which she faced in Paris during her visit to Alfred Nobel. In her memoirs she described this inexplicable enthusiasm in favor of war which she felt in the Paris salons:

*"He (Alfred Nobel - K.P.) still lived very much aloof from the world; the only house which he frequently visited was Madame Juliette Adam's, and he took us there.*

*The author of "Païenne" and editor of the Nouvelle Revue lived in her own house in the street named after her the Rue Juliette Lambert. As every one knows, Madame Adam was a great patriote which at that epoch signified a representative of the idea of "revanche". And I can remember that in our very first call she steered the conversation into a political channel. But just then was one of the moments when it was generally believed that the war of revanche, predicted for sixteen years, was coming. Herr von Bismarck was in want of a military law valid for seven years, and in the German parliament the method of "War in Sight" was employed as is usual on such occasions. The recipe is a sure one: with a view to this all military demands are readily granted. Furthermore, the Schnaebele incident on the frontier happened, and on the horizon, slowly mounting, appeared General Boulanger's black horse. What an outpouring of amateur political opinion there was. Wherever one went this question was asked. Will it break out? In the newspapers, and still more in the air, there was the anticipation of some great event. In the Chat noir that famous artists' Gschnas-Cafe (the ancestor of all the cabarets that now flood the world), Caran d'Ache was conducting his magic lantern "L' Épopée" Napoleonic war scenes, and "cela fait vibrer la fibre patriotique".*

*Madame Adam also vibrated. And she invited us in a most friendly way to a great evening reception which was to take place at her house within a few days. Of that soiree I have preserved a rather lively recollection.*

*The little house in the Rue Juliette Lambert was filled with guests from the first landing of the staircase to the farthest corner of the salon. On the threshold of the salon door stood Madame Adam, an imposing and captivating figure. She wore a dark-red velvet gown with long train, diamonds on the bosom, and diamonds in her white hair massed high. Her face under this white hair looked still youthful, "somewhat in the style of Marie Geistering as la belle Helene". Of course, as the duty of a hostess required, she gave each person a gracious word with a gracious smile. "Ah, dear baron", she said to my husband, "I am so much attracted toward you because the country which you describe so excellently in your books, the semibarbarous Caucasus, is so fascinating to me". Certainly, it was well known how much everything Russian fascinated Madame Adam, the glorifier of*

*Aksakof and of General Skobelef. "How can a woman ever busy herself so much with politics?" was my thought at that time. "How much that is disagreeable, and sometimes ridiculous, she brings upon herself by that! And how can one bother herself with editing a review into the bargain? "Many distinguished men" artists, authors, politicians were gathered in Madame Adam's salons, and many pretty women. Madame Napoleon Ney was pointed out to us as one of the most famous beauties of Parisian society. Unfortunately, one could not make the acquaintance of all the interesting persons present; the throng was so dense that one had to stay in his corner and be contented with talking to a few in his own vicinity. And for the most part one had to be still and listen, for "as was the custom in Paris" the guests were served with all sorts of artistic delectations: a pianist played Hungarian melodies; an author of great promise, but as yet unknown, read a few short stories; and Mademoiselle Brandos, at that time not yet engaged at the "Théâtre-Français", declaimed a poem. But even here, amid this artistic and social gayety, the dark word "War" was buzzing through the room; here and there the names of Bismarck and Moltke and Schnabele were heard, and prophecies that next spring it surely would come to something were boldly uttered, but without detracting from the spirit of cheerfulness that prevailed; these vaticinations probably aroused fine hopes in the hostess, enthusiastic for her country's glory as she was. I was no longer so indifferent in the presence of these things as I had been during my youth. I already hated war fervently, and this frivolous trifling with the possibility of it seemed to me as lacking in conscience as in common sense."*<sup>47</sup>

Here in Paris as before in Kutaisi she felt the mood of the society as "fever". By this word she distanced herself from the emotions and public opinion supporting the war. Namely here in Paris she found out that an organized peace movement already existed. She decided to join it and to support it by writing a novel to make popular her antiwar messages. She dedicated herself fully to the fight against the "mass madness" of war "by directing against it her pen".

### **Bertha von Suttner and Vasilij Vereshchagin**

After the establishing of the journal „Lay down Your Arms“ Bertha von Suttner met in Vienna the Russian artist Vasilij Vereshchagin (1842-1904) who presented his paintings from the Russo-Ottoman war. The artist knew her activities and invited her personally. The theme was close to her experience and the paintings of Vereshchagin turned her back to the time of 1877 – 1878. She described him as a "Middle size, long gray beard, vital, eloquent (he spoke French), passionate man, whose passion was muted by irony". The paintings of Vasilij Vereshchagin were in

full accord to her feelings to the war. Shipka, Plevna - these were the places where from in 1877 she and her Russian and Georgian friends expected trembling some news. Bertha von Suttner asked the painter to describe his experience and to publish them in the journal. In her memoirs she described the meeting with the Russian painter and his narrative about the war:

*„...Now I will tell about Vasilij Vereshchaginn. When I learned that the great Russian painter, who was battling with his brush against the same foe that I was fighting with my pen, was staying in Vienna, where he was exhibiting a number of his pictures, I hastened to the city to see those celebrated paintings, "All Quiet before Plevna"<sup>48</sup>, the "Apotheosis of War," and all those other variously named indictments of war. Even in the titles that he gave his pictures the artist expressed the bitterness which, next to the pain, animated his brush. The sentinel forgotten in the wilderness of snow, standing there until the drift reaches half to his breast, that was what Vereshchagin's genius saw back of the generals' well-known dispatch, "All quiet before Plevna"; and a pyramid of skulls surrounded by a flock of flapping ravens, thus he depicted the "Apotheosis of War". Even before I had managed to get to the exhibition, I received a note from the painter inviting me to come to the studio on a certain day at ten o'clock in the morning; he would be there and would himself do the honors. We were on hand punctually, My Own and Vereshchagin received us at the door. He was of medium height, and wore a long gray beard; full of animation and fluent in speech (he spoke in French), he had a passionate nature subdued by irony.*

*"We are colleagues and comrades, gracious lady"; such was his greeting. And then he led us from picture to picture, and related how each came to be painted and what idea was in his mind as he worked. At many of the paintings we could not suppress a cry of horror. "Perhaps you believe that is exaggerated? No, the reality is much more terrible. I have often been reproached for representing war in its evil, repulsive aspect; as if war had two aspects, "a pleasing, attractive side, and another ugly, repulsive. There is only one kind of war, with only one end and aim: the enemy must suffer as much as possible; must lose as many as possible in killed, wounded, and prisoners; must receive one blow after another until he asks for quarter". As we stopped in front of the "Apotheosis of War," he called our attention to an inscription in small Russian letters near the border of the picture.*

*You can't read that; it is Russian and means, 'Dedicated to the Conquerors of the Past: the Present and the Future.' When the picture was on exhibition in Berlin, Moltke stood in front of it I was by his*

*side, and I translated the words for him; the dedication was a dig at him too.*

*Another painting represented a road buried in a thick covering of snow, with here and there hands or feet sticking out of it "What in heaven's name is that?" we cried.*

*No work of the imagination. It is actual fact that in winter, both in the last Turko - Russian war and during other campaigns, the road along which the regiments were passing was covered with corpses; one who had not seen it would find it hard to believe. The wheels of the cannons, the tumbrels and other wagons, would crush the wretched men, still living, down into the ruts, where the dead bodies were deliberately left that the road might not be injured; and they were pressed way down under the snow, only the protruding legs and arms showing here and there that the road was a thickly populated graveyard.. . . "I understand," said I, " that you were blamed for depicting the most horrible things that you saw. "The most horrible? No. I found much dramatic material from which I absolutely recoiled, because I was utterly unable to put it on the canvas. For instance, I had the following experience: my brother, Sergy Vasilievitch Vereshchagin. Still another brother, Alexander Vasilievitch Vereshchagin, was wounded in the same campaign, and gives vivid pictures of the horrors of the march in his volume, "At Home" and in who was an aide to General Skobelev, was killed during the third assault on Plevna. The spot where he fell was held by the enemy, so I could not rescue his body. Three months later, when Plevna was in our hands, I went to the place and found it covered with bodies, " more correctly, with skeletons; wherever I looked I found skulls grinning at me, and here and there skeletons still wearing shirts and tattered clothes. They seemed to be pointing with their hands somewhere into the distance. Which of these was my brother? I carefully examined the tatters, the configuration of the skulls, the eye sockets, and I couldn't stand it; the tears streamed from my eyes, and for a long time I could not control my loud sobbing. Nevertheless, I sat down and made a sketch of this place, which reminded me of Dante's pictures of hell. I wanted to produce such a picture, with my own figure searching among all those skeletons "Impossible! Again, a year later, two years later, when I began on the canvas, the same tears choked me and prevented me from proceeding; and so I have never been able to finish that picture."*

*I am warranted in saying that I am repeating Vereshchagin's own words, for I urged him then and there to incorporate in an article what he had just told me, and send it to me for my monthly periodical.*

*He granted my wish, and in the seventh and eighth issues of "Die Waffen nieder" for 1893 Vereshchagin published these reminiscences and many others besides.*

*A few years later, let me here complete my personal recollections of Vereshchagin, I met him a second time. He was giving in Vienna an exhibition of his series of Napoleon pictures. It is said that Emperor William II, on seeing one of these paintings, remarked to him: "With these, dear master, you are battling against war more effectually than all the Peace Congresses in the world."<sup>49</sup>*

Retelling the conversation with Vereshchagin and his memories reflected in his heart freezing paintings of smashed by the equipment and machine guns wounded and killed soldiers among whom the painter was searching his brother, Bertha von Suttner added new aspects to her experience of the Russian-Ottoman war. They marked the beginning of the change of her attitude to war. Later to her experience in Caucasus the meetings in Paris and Vienna were added in a memory line which helped her to reconsider her war memories and to dedicate herself to the cause of peace. Bertha von Suttner made an attempt to introduce the antiwar cause also to her close Georgian friend – Andre Dadiani - the son of Ekaterina Dadiani - a Russian officer who took part in the Russo-Ottoman war.

### **Conclusion:**

The Russo-Ottoman war 1877 – 1878 faced a strong international antiwar movement which had a already long history during the course of 19<sup>th</sup> century, numerous followers, ideological achievements and organizational structures. Several religious groups in Europe and the USA rejected violence, military service and the use of arms. The war provoked the convinced pacifists and the religious groups who considered the participation in the war as sin against the fellow-men. The Russo-Ottoman war 1877-1878 urged the pacifists to search and invent new organizational structures in their efforts to keep peace. The supporters of peace tried to avoid war by organizing international conferences for negotiations and solving the problems; they fought to limit the participation in the war; to offer initiatives for dialogue and arbitration; to found International Parliament. Many of these forms, suggested then, won recognition in the international arena in the next decades.

The revolutionaries, who aimed at radical social change stopped to support the denial of war. They came to the idea that war would sharpen the internal contradictions and speed the social revolution. That is why they considered the active fight against war senseless.

For many of the prominent figures of the peace movement like Henry Richard, Frederic Passy, Leo Tolstoy, Bertha von Suttner the experience of Russo-Ottoman war contributed essentially for shaping their antiwar views. The insights of 1877 – 1878 helped Leo Tolstoy and Bertha von Suttner to realize the danger of the

war propaganda and the misuse of patriotism in war history, media, school, in educating boys and girls.

They stated the necessity of creating social opinion promoting the values of peace especially in educating the young generations. Their ideas against violence and war attracted thousands of women and men to the pacifistic movement in the following decades.

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<sup>1</sup> The interest in the memoirs of Bertha von Suttner was inspired by Prof. Karl Kaser during a research stay in Batumi in 2013. The paper is an extended version of the article “Against the Enemy or Against the War? The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 and the Peace Movement in the 1870-es – 1880-es”.

<sup>2</sup> Brock, Peter, *The Roots of War Resistance. Pacifism from the Early Church to Tolstoy*, Distributed by The Fellowship of Reconciliation, New York: Nyack, 1981, 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>8</sup> “The Womens’s International League for Peace and Freedom” was established in 1915 in Hague (Netherlands) initiated by the American Feminist, Social Activist and Pacifist Jean Addams. She received the Nobel Peace Prize for 1931. The name of the “League” at the first years was the “International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace”. It strived to achieve the widespread adoption of negotiation and reconciliation as the technique for settling conflicts.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Alonso, Harriet Hyman, *Peace as a Women’s Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women’s Rights*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993, 21.

<sup>10</sup> Brock, *Roots*, 2, 71.

<sup>11</sup> Рудницкая, Евгения Львовна, „Война и мир“ в транскрипции русской радикальной мысли [War and Peace in the Transcriptions of the Russian Radical Thought]. In: Рудницкая, Евгения Львовна (ed.), *Миротворчество в России: Церковь, политики, мыслители. От раннегосредневековья до рубежа XIX – XX столетий*, Москва, 2003. 279-302.

<sup>12</sup> Howard, Michael, *The Invention of Peace. Reflections on War and International Order*, , New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001, 44.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>14</sup> Генев, Румен, В името на хуманността, националните интереси и империята: Политическите дебати в британското общество по време на Източната криза от 1870-те години [In the Name of the Humanity , National Interests and the Empire], Годишник на департамент История, Нов български университет, т.III, София, 2008, 197-268.

<sup>15</sup> Richard, Henry, M. P., *Evidences of Turkish Misrule*, London; Paris; New York: Published for the Eastern Question Association: Cassell Petter & Galpin, 1877.

<sup>16</sup> Appleton, Lewis, *Memoirs of Henry Richard, the Apostle of Peace*, 1889, London: Forgotten Books, 2013, 154.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.



<sup>18</sup> Cf. Summers, Anne, *British Women and Cultures of Internationalism 1815-1914*. In: Feldman, David; Lawrence, Jon (Eds.), *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History*, Cambridge University Press, 2011, 187-209.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Рудницкая, Война, 11, 279-302.

<sup>22</sup> Полякова, Е.А.; Тамарченко, Н. Д., *Идея ненасилия в творчестве Л. Толстого [The Idea of Nonviolence in the Works of L. Tolstoy]*, In: Рудницкая, Евгения (ed.), *Миротворчество в России: Церковь, политики, мыслители. От раннегосредневековья до рубежа XIX–XX столетий*, Москва, 2003. 303-355.

<sup>23</sup> Maiorova, Olga, *From the Shadow of Empire, Defining the Russian Nation through Cultural Mythology*, Mellon Slavic Studies Initiative Book Series. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010, 126.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>25</sup> Брок, Питер, *Русские сектанты - пацифисты и военная служба [Russian Sectarrians – Pasifists and the Russian Military Service.]*, 1874-1914 гг. In: Павлова, Татьяна Александровна (ed.), *Долгий путь российского пацифизма: Идеал международного и внутреннего мира в религиозно-философской и общественно-политической мысли России*, Москва: ИВИ РАН, 1997, 115-122.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Иникова, С. А., *История пацифистского движения в секте духоборов (18-20 в.) [The History of the Peace Movement in the Sect of Dukhors (18-19 century)]*. In: Павлова, Татьяна Александровна (ed.), *Долгий путь российского пацифизма: Идеал международного и внутреннего мира в религиозно-философской и общественно-политической мысли России*, Москва: ИВИ РАН, 1997, 122-137.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>29</sup> Клиппенщейн, Лоуренс, *Отказ от военной службы по мотивам совести в меннонитских общинах царской России [The Rejection of Military Service in Mennonites Communities in Tsarist Russia]*. In: Павлова, Татьяна Александровна (ed.), *Долгий путь российского пацифизма: Идеал международного и внутреннего мира в религиозно-философской и общественно-политической мысли России*, Москва: ИВИ РАН, 1997, 150-172.

<sup>30</sup> The Bulgarian literature historian Svetlozar Igov argues that the famous Bulgarian writer Ivan Vazov (1850-1921) was provoked as a Slavophil by this part of “Anna Karenina”. According to Igov, Ivan Vazov gave the title “Under the joke” to his novel about the life during the time of the late Turkish rule in Bulgaria in an indirect controversion with Leo Tolstoy. Ivan Vazov wrote the novel in Odessa in the time 1889-1890 as a political refugee in Russia in the time Russophiles were persecuted by the Bulgarian government because of the Russian attempts to intervene in Bulgarian politics and the diplomatic relations between Russia and Bulgaria were interrupted. Cf. Игов, Светлозар, *Вазов спори с Толстой. За заглавието на Под игото [Vazov in Controversy with Tolstoy]*, Култура, 21, 4 Юни 2010, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Полякова; Тамарченко, 22, 303–355.

<sup>32</sup> Tolstoy, Leo, *Patriotism and Christianity*, 1894. Web. 21 June 2014.

[http://archive.org/stream/patriotismchrist00tols/patriotismchrist00tols\\_djvu.txt](http://archive.org/stream/patriotismchrist00tols/patriotismchrist00tols_djvu.txt).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ekaterina Dadiani (1818-1882), a daughter of the famous Georgian intellectual Count Alexander Chavchavadze, wife of the Georgian Prince David Mingreli, after his death she is often in Europe because of the education of her children.

<sup>36</sup> Von Suttner, Bertha, *Memoiren*. Web. 28 December 2015.

<http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/M/Suttner,+Bertha+von/Autobiographisches/Memoiren/Zweiter+Teil+%281862-1872%29/6.+Eine+Saison+in+Homburg+v.+d.+H%C3%B6he>.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Von Suttner, Bertha, *Lay Down Your Arms*. The Autobiography of Martha von Tilling, Authorized Translation by T. Holmes. Revised by the Authoress, Longmans, Green and Co., New York, London and Bombay, 1908, 4-5. Web. 29 December 2015.

<http://www.berthavonsuttner.com/ldya.pdf>.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 307.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 321.

<sup>41</sup> The translator of the book in Bulgarian, Dr. Maria Theofilova (1878 - 1931) was a Historian and women's movement activist. She was a PHD student in Bern (Switzerland) during the WWI. The translation was published in Sofia (Hemus Publishing House) in 1920. In the same year another important for the peace movement book: "Toward Perpetual Peace" by Immanuel Kant was also published in Bulgarian translation.

<sup>42</sup> More about the correspondence between Alfred Nobel and Bertha von Suttner: Irwin Abrams Abraham, *Bertha von Suttner and the Nobel Peace Prize*. Web 23 December 2015. <http://www.irwinabrams.com>.

<sup>43</sup> Von Suttner, *Memoiren*, 36.

<sup>44</sup> Arthur von Suttner

<sup>45</sup> Von Suttner, Bertha, *Memoirs*. The Records of an Eventful Life, Volume I, London, 1910, 230-236. Web. 22 December 2015.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 278 (291)- 281 (294)

<sup>48</sup> This is a mistake. The title of the picture is "All Quite on the Shipka".

<sup>49</sup> Von Suttner, *Memoirs*, 45, 9 (20) - 14 (25).

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## **The Female Face of War. The Sisters of mercy during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878**

**Abstract:** *The article examines the role of women during the war between the Russian and Ottoman Empires (1877 – 1878). The author describes the activities of the Sisters of mercy Communities that have provided medical care for the wounded and sick soldiers at both front and rear. The structural and quantitative management of the Sisters of mercy Communities as well as their administrative and legal position are analyzed. The author examines the large influence of the mass participation of the Sisters of mercy in the war on the further development of nursing education in pre-revolutionary Russia. As a result, it turns out that this war has shown not only the Slavophil and patriotic feelings of Russian women but also reflected their desire to participate actively in social and political life.*

**Key words:** nurses, war, Sisters of mercy Communities, pre-revolutionary Russia, Russian women

The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 was the consequence of the Balkan people struggle for national liberation. This war received a wide public resonance in Russia. Many prominent members of the Russian intelligentsia, including doctors (S.P. Botkin, N.I. Pirogov, N. V. Sklifosovsky) participated in this war. S.P. Botkin said, “It is every man sacred duty to contribute to this cause”.

*Sisters of Mercy Communities* rendered medical assistance to injured patients and wounded soldiers during the war. *Russian Society of Care for the Wounded and Sick Soldiers* has also played an important role since resources possessed only by *Sisters of Mercy Communities* were not enough for such large-scale military campaign. This Society assumed training of sisters of mercy for the front help. Competences of this society were extensive. It was engaged in the organization of mobile sanitary groups and field hospitals, evacuation of wounded people, as well as providing military hospitals with female sanitary staff. Due to society activities nursing movement became widespread.

This war allowed Russian women to gain a better self-exposure. *Women's Committees* were created to collect funds and necessities for the front. By February, 1878 81 such committees in Russia<sup>1</sup>. Along with *Sisters of Mercy Communities* there were sisters of the Red Cross specially trained for military operations. Red Cross sisters preferred to give up regular life for the sake of nursing. The war correspondent Vasily Ivanovich Nemirovich-Danchenko wrote:

*"The mistresses who were still famous for their birdbrain and chicken bents suddenly began see things clearly. Red Cross work made many women get up from the familiar spots."*<sup>2</sup>

The legal status of the *Sisters of Mercy Communities* was determined by "Rules for the Red Cross Sisters" (1875) and the principles that were created for the persons interested in becoming Red Cross sisters only during wartime.<sup>3</sup> Temporarily working sisters of mercy were typically called "volunteer sisters". *Sisters of Mercy Communities* accepted predominantly unmarried women or widows of any religion from 20 to 45 years old. Initially novices of monasteries became sisters of the Red Cross because they were easy to be organized and they were accustomed to a communal life. Although the majority of the sisters of mercy were Orthodox, forty seven Protestant deaconesses served on the rear and in hospital trains. Training courses for "volunteer sisters" were initially organized in *The Medical Community* (St. Petersburg). The first group of female volunteers received training from February to May, 1877. Only 117 of the 500 trainees successfully passed exams and, respectively, obtained certificates. Later on, such courses were opened in Kursk, Poltava, Saratov, Chernigov and in other cities. The necessity of such courses was obvious, because besides moral qualities sister of mercy had to have at least basic skills and knowledge of nursing care for the sick and wounded. Certainly, it was impossible to learn everything during the semi-annual period. These "volunteer sisters" got basic knowledge of physiology, anatomy, surgery, pharmacology, hygiene and different bandage application techniques and practiced as assistants during surgery.

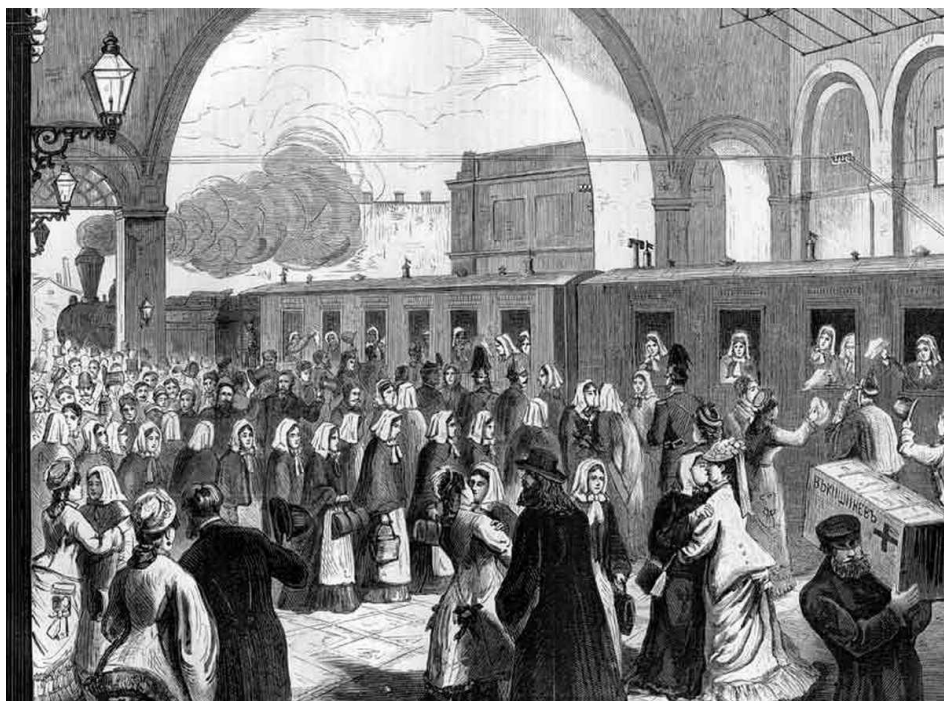


Figure 1: Nurses' departure. 1877<sup>4</sup>

During the war the *Sisters of Mercy* were under double subordination and had to report both to the *War Department* and the *Red Cross Society*. It caused some difficulties as representatives of these departments often didn't get along together. *Red Cross Society* had considerable money, because at the time there was an incredible rise of the national spirit in Russia and millions of rubles were donated for medical and sanitary needs of the 'liberation war'. Sergey Petrovich Botkin (Russian doctor who initiated the female medical education in Russia) wrote:

*"The Moscow city Duma has brought to the "Red Cross Society" million of rubles and the "Moscow Merchant Society" spent another million today".<sup>5</sup>*

Meanwhile the *Red Cross Society* controlled only a tenth of the medical facilities during the war. More favorable situation developed at the Caucasian front where disagreements of these organizations were less tense. Probably, the reason was the fact that in the Caucasus the *Red Cross* didn't seek to create their own hospitals and just helped hospitals of the *War Department*, and thus, by the way, saved huge amounts of money. As an example - from the charitable donations collected by *Red Cross Society* of 9 million rubles, 1 million was not even spent. One should

also mention the cases of tension inside the nurses' community. There are some reports informing about the feud of the "communal nurses" with the "volunteer sisters".<sup>6</sup>



**Figure 2: Field hospital in Zimnitsa. Bulgaria. August 1877<sup>7</sup>**

The nurses arrived in combat zones in Romania and the Caucasus in June and July, 1877. The first assistance and help to the wounded and sick soldiers has been carried out by thirty two sisters of the largest nurses' community in Russia – the *Community of Exaltation of the Holy Cross*. The head of the community was N. A. Schehovskaya. Before leaving for the combat zones the sisters were given a special reception by Emperor Alexander II, who expressed them his "royal best wishes".<sup>8</sup> *Sisters of the Holy Cross* worked in the mobile military hospital near Bucharest, the first military medical train, and have served at Zimnitsa, where Russian troops had crossed the Danube. After the war, the sisters have been decorated. Those who have acted in the armed forces were awarded with the "Light Bronze Medal" and those who have served in hospitals - with the "Dark Bronze Medal". Those who helped the wounded in the military medical train have received the award of the *Russian Red Cross Society*.

Soon sisters of the *St. George's Community* of St. Petersburg united with the sisters of the *Holy Cross Community*. Twenty seven nurses and another twenty female volunteers have joined the acting army and the *Red Cross*. Under the supervision of Head Physician of the community – N. P. Bogoyavlenskiy – they worked in field hospitals along the Romanian Railway lines. Later on, on the territory of Bulgaria, they assisted the wounded right under the front line fire. Sisters of the *St. George Community* were among the few who have been allowed to the front line near the besieged Plevna. This was done despite the opposition of Nicholas Sklifosovsky, one of the leading Russian doctors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and an ardent opponent of the presence of women and civilians on the front lines. During the siege, the sisters worked in a mobile field hospital of the 5th Infantry Division in the vicinity of the military operations. Nurses of *St. George Community*, led by Elizabeth P. Kartseva (Kartsova) have crossed the Danube, have gone through the Balkans, and have participated in the crossing of the Shipka Pass along with the Russian troops. During the passing of Shipka, Sergey Botkin (the organizer of the “School for Nurses” in 1874 and “Women' Medical Courses” in 1876) wrote:

*"The air at the Shipka Pass, due to a few thousand corpses of Russian and Turkish rotting at a depth of breaks in gorges, became extremely heavy, and, of course, might be very dangerous".<sup>9</sup>*

Botkin apparently meant that the bodies had been not buried, but dropped into the gorges. On Shipka Pass, August 1877 has brought 3000 thousand injured, while there were only 4 nurses. Sisters of the *St. George Community* assisted 40 000 wounded and sick people.

Groups of nurses of the Moscow Community of “*Soothe My Sorrows*” (the title of the icon, which Russian Church considers miraculous) were located near Braila and Galati in Romania, as well as in the region of Plevna in Bulgaria. 118 sisters of the community under the leadership of its founder – Princess Natalia Shakhovskaya (who donated all her fortune to the organization of the hospitals) treated the sick and wounded. The princess and her 36 sisters have been in the Balkans also during the Serbian-Turkish War of 1876. Then she was awarded the “Order of the Cross of Takovo of I degree for Military Merit”. After the war, in 1877 – 1878 Emperor Alexander II began to patronize the community, and it was, consequently, renamed after his name.<sup>10</sup>

The patients of the *Red Cross* medical trains from Frateshti to Iasi in Romania were treated by the representatives of the *Annunciation Sisters' Community*. 90 nurses under the supervision of Martha Sabinina (the founder of the *Russian Red Cross*) were transported to the territory of Romania from Crimea.

The memories of Sabinina's friend M. P. Fredericks disclose a lot of interesting facts about the everyday life of the nurses. In particular, the memories describe the case when the medical train transported the captured Osman Pasha from Plevna.

The Ottoman marshal was very happy with the conditions in the train and even left the note of thanks for Sabinina.



**Figure 3: Field hospital of the Russian army in the Balkans. 1877<sup>11</sup>**

The outbreak of the war triggered the organization of two groups of nurses, both from the *Holy Trinity Community*. Since June 1877 the first group including 11 nurses and 9 female volunteers, led by the abbess Elizabeth Kublitskaya acted in the evacuation barracks in Iasi. Among these sisters there was Baroness Julia Petrovna Vrevskaya, one of the most outstanding figures of the nursing movement of the time, who had also a medical training. After investing her own funds (from the sale of the family estate in Orel region) in the organization of a sanitary unit, Baroness together with the other nurses from the *Holy Trinity Community* came to the battle-front. Yulia Petrovna worked at aid stations in the combat zone and in field hospitals of the *Red Cross*. Getting infected with typhus, she passed away near the town of Byala, Bulgaria. In his book "Memories of Julia Petrovna Vrevskaya" her friend Ivan Turgenev wrote a prose poem, and Yakov Polonsky published the poem "Under the Red Cross" also in her honor.<sup>12</sup>

The second group of the *Sisters of Holy Trinity Community* served in the hospital of the *Saint Petersburg Ladies Committee*, located in Capriana monastery in Bessarabia. All the sisters of the community were awarded medals and signs of



the *Red Cross*. As a sign of appreciation for their diligence Empress Maria Alexandrovna donated them the icon of Christ the Savior, which became the main relic of the *Holy Trinity Community*.

Medical and sanitary logistics of the Russian army in the Caucasus were inferior to that on the Balkans front due to shortcomings in the work of the Military Department and in the organization of the *Red Cross* there. In the end, 1869 people out of 13266 wounded on the Caucasian front died of wounds in hospitals. Hence, the death rate rose to 14.1% with the total loss of 5531 people. In the Balkans the range of injured people was 43,368 people, while the death rate was approximately 11.5%.<sup>13</sup> This comparative analysis proves the fact of the lower effectiveness of the organization of health services in the Caucasian front.

In July 1877, following the request of the *Russian Red Cross*, one of the most experienced hospital organizers Ekaterina Michailovna Bakunina went to the Caucasus. In May 1877, Ekaterina Michailovna visited St. Petersburg for an audience with the Grand Duchess, where she was introduced to Princess Catherine Maximilianovna Oldenburg. The latter has organized and sent sanitary units to the battlefields. Soon after this warm-hearted reception in St. Petersburg Ekaterina Bakunina went to the Caucasus with a group of 28 nurses. By the order of the Grand Duchess Olga Feodorovna, the Head of Presidency of the Caucasus department of the *Red Cross Society*, Ekaterina Bakunina became to supervisor of the work of the temporary hospitals from Tbilisi (Georgia) to Alexandropol (Armenia). She coordinated all activities out of Delizhan (modern Dilijan, Armenia), located in a valley at an altitude of 4200 feet above sea level. In the XXI century the name of Ekaterina M. Bakunina is still not forgotten. The *Society of Orthodox Doctors* in Tver (Russia) and the *Tver Regional Prenatal Center* are called after the name of Bakunina. A charity fund named after Ekaterina Bakunina was organized in 2011.

Nurses worked in the hardest possible conditions at the front:

*"... The hospital rolls on a ploughed field, the dirt is so sticky that after a few steps you feel like you're hauling terrible shackles; and during the slightest rain the ground become so slippery that you move in constant fear. In winter time the tents of the hospital become snow covered".*<sup>14</sup>

Eyewitnesses described that time:

*"Sisters are pinched with cold in yurts, because the walls are wind-blown, rain and snow are always their unexpected guests".*<sup>15</sup>

The working day of the sister of mercy began at 6-7 o'clock in the morning and came to an end at 21-22 o'clock in the evening.

One of the first reasons which inspired women and girls to go to the battlefields was the particular popularity of this war. Still, some contemporaries suggest-

ed that women went to war to relieve their boredom, seeking for something new or following the adventurous spirit. This is what some priests in the army said about nurses:

*“With a cross on a breast, they had no cross in their hearts and treated that act of mercy as a fashionable thing”.<sup>16</sup>*

In other words, female participation in the war was perceived ambiguously and often women were blamed for light-mindedness.

By the end of 1877 the continuous inflow of sisters of mercy and volunteers stopped. It was agreed in St. Petersburg that military hospitals were well equipped with medical and nursing staff. However, at the beginning of 1878, when a typhus epidemic broke out, the military command wasn't absolutely ready to deal with it. Shortly all the hospital were filled with patients. Almost all the nurses had typhus. The military authorities were not ready for carrying out anti-epidemic actions and decided to restart again the influx of newly-trained sisters of mercy. In general, the Russo-Ottoman war of 1877 – 1878 was very adverse in terms of epidemiological situation. The following statistics show that within 1439 new cases of diseases occurring among 1000 war participants, only 69 cases were caused by battle wounds.<sup>17</sup>

It is difficult to quote the exact number of Russian women who participated as medical and sanitary staff during the war. Perhaps their number was approximately 1300, yet thousands of women responded to a call from the *Red Cross Society* to join its ranks.<sup>18</sup> There were representatives of almost all parts of Russia among sisters of mercy and volunteers. They were members of all levels of society who got the full training of the nursing programs. On June 29, 1877 (the day of Sts. Peter and Paul) the *Stavropol Women' Committee* of the *Red Cross Society* sent at its own expense to Tiflis (now Tbilisi, Georgia) ten sisters from the Ioanno-Mariinsky monastery at the disposal of the Caucasian District Administration of the *Red Cross*. The *Women' Committee* provided them with travel money, certificates for the free pass to Tiflis and sent 1800 rubles to the District Administration of the *Red Cross Society*, thereby ensuring their annual budget.<sup>19</sup> Materials cost for every sister during the service in the military hospitals was about 15 rubles per month. Sisters of mercy were brought to the Nevinnomyssk railway station at the expense of the *Stavropol City Society* that had rented the vans. Before leaving the sisters listened to a solemn liturgy in the Stavropol Trinity Cathedral and the words of severance in the presence of Chief Executive Officer of the Province, his wife (presiding the *Women' Committee*), other members of the *Stavropol Red Cross Society*, abbesses, nuns and a numerous public.

During the war of 1877 – 1878 the Russian health service applied a system of “dissipation of patients” which was offered by Doctor Nikolay Ivanovic Pirogov. The essence of it was that the wounded (after being provided with the first-aid)

should be immediately transported back to Russia. Thus, there were not many stationary medical institutions at the front. This evacuation system worked effectively even under difficult circumstances. During the war about 900 000 wounded passed through the hands of 200 sisters of mercy that had served in the evacuation centers. In Stavropol the wounded passed further medical treatment in the Ioanno-Mariinsky monastery. Nuns looked after wounded and the sick men. Also, sisters prepared everything necessary for the equipment of the military hospitals.

Woman medical doctors worked together with the sisters of mercy. However, there were very few of them due to the lack of systematic medical female education in Russia.

More than 3000 nurses were trained during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878. About 1100 served in hospitals, infirmaries and sanitary trains. Unfortunately not all of them returned home safe. Women who ended courses of sanitary preparation often sought to continue nursing care training in order to pursue a career in this sphere.<sup>20</sup> After the signing of the Preliminary Peace Agreement of San Stefano of 1878 six sisters of mercy, giving help to the wounded on the battlefield were awarded the medals “For Courage”. Female doctors, working in the place of fighting, have been awarded the medal “For Diligence”. Emperor Alexander II reconsidered his attitude towards women after the war and allowed them to be engaged in private practice in peacetime and granted them the right to be medical doctors.

Thus, the Russo-Ottoman war of 1877 – 1878 not only inspired qualities as kindness and mercy of the part of women vis à vis sick and wounded warriors, but eventually enhanced the social activity of Russian women, which led to a significant rise of their public work.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Белова, Елена Е. Сестры милосердия в период русско-турецкой войны 1877 – 1878 гг. [Nurses in the Period of the Russian–Turkish War], Ярославский педагогический вестник, 2, 2010, 33-37.

<sup>2</sup> Немирович-Данченко, Василий И. Боевая Голгофа [The Fighting Calvary], Санкт-Петербург, 1911.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Илинский, Петр А. Русская женщина в войну 1877 – 1878 гг. [The Russian Woman in the War 1877 – 1878] Санкт-Петербург, 1879.

<sup>4</sup> Сайт Благотворительного фонда имени сестры милосердия Екатерины Бакуниной [Website of the “Charity Named after a Nurse Yekaterina Bakunina”]. Web. 25 August 2014, <http://bakunina-fond.ru/?p=5054/>.

<sup>5</sup> Боткин, Сергей, Письма из Болгарии. 1877 г. [The Letters from Bulgaria. 1877], Санкт-Петербург, 1893, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Пастернак, Александр В., Очерки по истории общин сестер милосердия [Outline of the history of the nurse communities], Москва, 2001, 151.

<sup>7</sup> Сайт, 4.

<sup>8</sup> Крестовоздвиженская община сестер милосердия [The Holy Cross Community of the Sisters of Mercy]. Web. 23 August 2014, <http://encblago.lfond.spb.ru/showObject.do?object=2824182532/>.

<sup>9</sup> Боткин, Письма, 5, 29.

<sup>10</sup> Максимова, Людмила Б., Княгиня Наталья Борисовна Шаховская и основанная ею община «Утоли моя печали» [Princess Natalia Borisovna Shahovskaya and Her Community "Soothe My Sorrows"], In: Шамина Ирина Н., (ed.), Вестник церковной истории, Москва, 4, 2006, 237-240.

<sup>11</sup> Сайт, 4.

<sup>12</sup> Полонский, Яков П., Под Красным Крестом [Under the Red Cross], In: Полонский, Яков П., Полное собрание сочинений в 2-х т., Т.1, 129-130.

<sup>13</sup> Суворов, Владимир П., Сестринская деятельность Екатерины Михайловны Бакуниной в годы Русско-турецкой войны 1877 – 1878 гг. [Activity by Sister Catherine Mikhailovna Bakunina during the Russian-Turkish War of 1877 – 1878]. Web. 12 August 2014, <http://bakunina-fond.ru/?p=5054/>.

<sup>14</sup> Пастернак, Очерки, 5, 143.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>17</sup> Романюк Валерий П.; Лапотников Виктор А.; Накатис, Яков А., История сестринского дела в России [The History of Nursing in Russia], Санкт-Петербург, 1998, 118.

<sup>18</sup> Пастернак, Очерки, 5, 151.

<sup>19</sup> Отправление сердобольных сестер на места их санитарной деятельности [Departure of Sisters of Compassion to the Places of Their Medical Activities], Ставропольские губернские ведомости, Ставрополь, 27, 1877, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Белова, Сестры, 1, 36.

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## **Between *The magic word “war” was pronounced* and *The war is a terrible evil*: The Beginning of the Female War Memoirs During the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878**

**Abstract:** *The authors analyze the war experience of two Russian nurses on the Balkan front. Their attitude to the Bulgarians, to their patients, to refugees, to the hospital administration have been followed. Being both religious and patriotic the two aristocratic nurses were loyal to the official ideology of the Russian Empire and its sacred mission for “God, Tsar and Fatherland”. Yet, being women they were emotionally involved and compassionate to the sufferings of their patients – Russians, Bulgarians, Turks, and very critical to the male egoism, arrogance, cruelty and corruption at the rear of the front. Nevertheless of the prevailing religious – patriotic tone the war experience of the two nurses was ambiguous and often contradictory. Still, they did not overstep the official frames of interpreting the War and were not able to reach to pacifistic convictions.*

**Key words:** *war experience, Russian nurses, Balkan front, women’s memoirs*

### **Introduction**

During the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878 for the first time women with special training in medicine were allowed to take direct part in the war to care about wounded and sick soldiers and officers. For the first time in the Russian history with the permission of the Tsar 36 women graduated from the *Course of Women Doctor* were sent to the front to work as doctors and paramedics in the army. Around 1514 nurses were mobilized to work in the military hospitals and in the hospitals of the Red Cross.<sup>1</sup> Their duties, functions and activities during the war were described by Ilinskij whose book was published immediately after the war – in 1879<sup>2</sup>. This was the first documentary book devoted to the participation of women in this war. In Russia after 1991 the problems concerning the history of the activities of the nurse communities of the Red Cross were researched in details. In this research the participation of women in the wars including the Russo-Ottoman War

1877 – 1878 was analyzed.<sup>3</sup> But in the Russian scholarship the women's memoirs about the Russian – Ottoman War have not been an object of a special interest. In the course of the War and immediately after its end memoirs, correspondence, and diaries of the participants in the war were published. This is the first war in which war correspondents were present to reflect the battles specialized journals like "Newspaper Europe", "Russian antiquity", "Russian newspaper" and others. Authors who took direct part in the war published their materials. The social position of the authors was different – from common soldiers, officers to the representatives of the General Staff of the Army.<sup>4</sup> Unlike the enormous amount of male memories about the war (hundreds of volumes) the published female memories are only 17. They were not edited in a separate volume or book. Most of these memories were in a form of correspondence to the relatives and friends or diaries written during the course of the war. Especially interesting are the notes of N. Dragnevich, who was a doctor in 63 field hospital and assistant of the world famous surgeon N. V. Sklifasovski around Pleven<sup>5</sup>. The earliest female memoirs are from 1878<sup>6</sup> and they are only 5, the latest is the memoir of Sofija Alexandrovna von König published in 1916 in the "Historical newspaper"<sup>7</sup>. The rest were published on occasion of the anniversaries of the war.<sup>8</sup>

Still after the end of the war no unified ideological discourse was adopted for the war memoirs. This explains the fact why women's memoirs were published mainly during the first years after the end of the war. Later a male, heroic and nationalistic narrative about the war became dominant in Russia, which was in contrast with the different female memory.

In Russia after 1917 these female memoirs were further marginalized, they were not published again, they were not translated in other languages which is explainable since the war was considered an imperialistic one of Tsarist Russia. In Bulgaria the memoirs were not translated despite the fact that most of them concern the life of the nurses and doctors on Bulgarian territory. After the democratic changes in Russia the female memoirs about the Russian – Ottoman war were again silenced – they are not republished, not made popular by various art forms, nor were they included in the school textbooks. Only couples of specialists of the war episodically mention them as illustration of certain aspects of the national war narrative. These memoirs have never been object of a separate research.

We would like to address two issues:

How in the memories of two nurses was the war narrated?

How were the various faces of the war – heroism, faith, suffering, death, cruelty, corruption – perceived and expressed in the various narratives?

### **The memoirs of two nurses on the Balkan front**

The first memoir is the memoir of Sofija Alexandrovna Engelhard,<sup>9</sup> the second one – of Olga Nikolaevna Juhantseva<sup>10</sup>. Why are we dealing with these two memoirs?

They are among the first female memoirs published immediately after the end of the War – in 1878. Only 5 female memoirs were published in this year, two of them were the memoirs of the senior nurses from two communities of the Red Cross – Grivtseva and Bakunina.



**The nurses Sofia Engelhard, Olga Juhantseva and their associates<sup>11</sup>**

The memoir of Engelhard was published as one of the two female memoirs in the first volume of the collection of memoirs written by senior military officers and published in two volumes (700 pages each) immediately after the end of the war; the second one – of Juhantseva, was published in the same year in the “Russian newspaper” whose circulation was huge. It is worth mentioning that the two nurses preferred to stay anonymous, and we identified them by other memoirs related to the same places and events.

The two authors have been writing their memoirs on the spot and from the position of direct witnesses. They were able to localize correctly the events that they referred to. They were not tempted to ideologize, to take the posture of historians; they didn't not overstep the boundary of their own personal experience; neither they did tell somebody else's stories. From the context of their stories it is obvious that they have been close friends, they spent together the war, and took part in the same events.

The two of them were awarded a medal for bravery, a medal awarded only to 5 women from 1500 nurses from the two fronts: on the Danube and on the Caucasus. This makes them an exceptional case. The names and the contributions of the two nurses were included in the first *Reference Book* about the heroes of the war of 1877 – 1878.<sup>12</sup> In the *Reference Book* data could be found about 3000 heroes of war among which 23 nurses from the two fronts and one female doctor from the Caucasus front.

The two memoirs describe in details the route of the sanitary team - from Chisinau, Iasi, Tarnovo, Drjanovo, their stay in Gabrovo, and then further to San-Stefano. They have recorded everything that they experienced on the route – accommodation, meetings and conversations with the local population, their impressions from the settlements, their work in the hospitals, their critical attitude to the administration and their assessment of the corruption in the hospitals. Prevailing are the stories about the sufferings of their patients.

The memoir of Engelhard nevertheless designated by herself as "letters" is a diary where in chronological order she described her participation in the war. In the stories exact dates and places were mentioned. The first story is from 29<sup>th</sup> of May 1877 – Chisinau and the last is from San Stefano, 24<sup>th</sup> of June 1878.<sup>13</sup>

The other memoir was written by Juhantseva as a diary describing her war experience: "*I seat in the yard and write these lines*".<sup>14</sup> Like the memories of Engelhard the dates and places are precisely localized. After an introductory text the first mentioned date is 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1877 and the last is 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1878 when she got sick with typhus and was compelled to "*leave everything which was so precious and so passionately loved*".<sup>15</sup> The diary was entitled "*Travelling notes of the nurses 1877 – 1878*". At the end she signed her memoir by the first letter of her personal name: "*O*" (Petersburg, 17<sup>th</sup> of September).

### **Motives for joining the war**

Juhantseva started her memoir with a pathetic introduction revealing her motives to engage in the war:

*"The magic world "war" was pronounced. Russia was shaken, donations were cumulated, and everybody who was able joined the lines of the defenders of the sacred mission. I wanted to pay tribute to the common mission. But how and where? This question disturbed me*



*during the winter of 1877. At the end I have the chance to be included in the 'Nurse Community of St. George'. The time before the beginning of the war I spend in practical and partly theoretical training on all which should the nurses learn".<sup>16</sup>*

But she is honest enough to describe the contradictory feelings of fear and confusion at the very beginning of the war:

*"Strange is human nature. At the beginning I could not wait the minute of my departure, but when it happened it seems my heart was hurting. I felt pity to leave my native home, to leave my family, my old mother. I remember everything which happened yesterday, in a foggy mood I wandered all the morning of my departure; I remember the farewell tears, the usual cries and the hurry on the railway station; I still hear the last ring of the bell. ... I was scared when thinking of what might happen. Will I be strong enough for the mission I am going to join"?<sup>17</sup>*

In the memoirs of the two nurses there were not introductions allowing us to understand the social background they were coming from; no information was provided about their age and education. The texts were not ego-centered. The two authors wanted to stay anonymous; their modesty was part of their Christian ethics and part of being women writing the first war memoirs. This does not mean that they underestimated the work they were doing – they did underline their contributions to the war efforts. They considered their experience as nurses to be much more valuable to be recorded and remembered than their personalities.

We succeeded to identify the names of the two authors from other written sources comparing places and dates.<sup>18</sup> Engelhard did not mention the motives to join the war. The two nurses only mentioned that they came from the "St. George Community". It is known that this Community was situated in Petersburg and sent 17 nurses to the Danube front of the war.

The beginning of the Engelhard's memoir is almost formal:

*"Chisinau, 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1877. Our military life began. More than two weeks we, 17 nurses, live in one room and sleep on bad beds, no furniture. We do not have our personal things except small sacks; our baggage is in the wagons."<sup>19</sup>*

At the end of the day she also confessed her contradictory feelings – the war is a "great job" but she feared the unknown:

*"When we heard that we, the nurses, will be divided to live two by two we got excited – who with whom will be. All of us strived to be*

*on the Danube, all of us wanted to witness the great event, to take part in the great job... We hardly succeeded to take our baggage and to say goodbye and the train left, we stayed on the platform alone among the unknown. Truly, at this moment my heart was beating, I was so scared what will happen with us. Our doctor B was supposed to be with us but he did not appear. What to do, where to go?"<sup>20</sup>*

### **Female friendship at war time**

Probably at that time Engelhard was introduced to Olga Juhantseva and they became friends. Certain phrases in the memoir of Engelhard allow us to guess about the personal relationship. The first time she only mentioned her: *"I and O. JU. were responsible for the building."*<sup>21</sup> A month later Engelhard revealed her personal feelings to her friend:

*"In the night of our departure we did not sleep and got up early in the morning. Inexpressible pain hunted me just thinking about the leaving of nurse Ju. On the farewell we did not cry, but I was so depressed, very depressed since I got used with her." <sup>22</sup>*

Later in Pavlovo the two friends met and succeeded to stay together:

*"On the other day in Pavlovo came O. Ju. and another nurse who were assigned to the hospitals of 14<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> divisions. When she saw me so sad (O. Ju) started to convince me to depart with her and to submit my place to another nurse who wanted this. Thank God, everything was arranged and our common desire was fulfilled. I quickly put in order my baggage and we took the long road...The commander of the division General Dragomirov had understood about our arrival and came to meet us and to invite us for a cup of tea. While talking with him he ordered and provided us with accommodation".<sup>23</sup>*

The two nurses often meet superior officers, mostly noblemen; they speak fluent French and judge themselves and the people around them by high moral standards. Thus, one can suppose that they were of aristocratic origin:

*"You cannot imagine my joy when I saw prince Nakashidze, but a despair was added to my joy when I remembered that again I have to pack all my things, beds, suitcases, etc. Gathering the baggage took me one hour. I take with me only my handbag – the bed and the big suitcase I leave here... The same day the owner of this horrible place appeared – young Rumanian with arrogant outlook – that we did not like at all. He immediately perched on the bed without asking for permis-*

*sion and started a conversation in a broken French dialect. We could hardly understand him. He started to describe the beauties of Ploiesti, to ask if the Russians are impressed by the richness of his country, to exaggerate the bravery of the Rumanian soldiers. I felt so disgusted that I had to force myself to answer his questions and was so happy when he left... Prince Cherkaski came to tell us that he departs with the General Staff and he will give us a sign when to move on to the Danube. Soon we received the sign and decided to move on to the Danube".<sup>24</sup>*

The two friends spent the war together and Juhanceva more often mentioned her tender feelings towards Engelhard. To survive in the severe male condition of the war the female friendship played an important role.

*"The nurse E., such good and precious creature, had to depart with me; she won my heart. At this moment of happiness something made me sad: I had to say good bye to nurse E. who I loved so much. She was sent to the detachment of the brother of the Tsar and the date of her departure was 30<sup>th</sup> of June. I felt so sad and depressed when I had to see off my dove. I did not want to be separated."<sup>25</sup>*

But soon they were again together:

*"We went to Pavlovo, where the hospital of the brother of the Tsar was situated and I met my precious E.; at once a daring thought came to my mind to take her with me and to leave there another nurse who came with me. I asked the doctor and he was not against this combination; in the morning we took the road."<sup>26</sup>*

### **Meeting Bulgarians**

Their common route continued through Tarnovo to Drjanovo and Gabrovo where they stayed from 9<sup>th</sup> of July 1877 to 30<sup>th</sup> of April 1878; on 4<sup>th</sup> of May they arrived in San Stefano. They stayed in Gabrovo almost 10 months and described the everyday life at the rear of the military actions. They commented emotionally the meeting of their sanitary unit in Tarnovo, Drjanovo and Gabrovo:

*"The road from Tarnovo to Gabrovo is admiring. We stopped in Drjanovo, a small town between Gabrovo and Tarnovo. I cannot find a proper words to describe the delight of the Bulgarians when seeing the first Russian women. The crowd surrounded us and everybody suggested to stay with him. We entered the closest house. You have to witness the joy of the hosts: youngsters and older ones came in our room to greet us and to say their "Welcome!" They wondered how to suit us*

*and to feed us. They covered the floor with carpets and cushions and many other things but I could not write more: a bell was ringing, I heard noise on the street, people were speaking. I went to the window and saw our Bryansk unit to go to the peak "St. Nikolas" to help our poor Orlovtsi. Our soldiers quietly passed by the church where from the bell was ringing, they took off their hats and made the sign of the cross many times. So solemn was this moment that involuntarily tears shed on my eyes."*<sup>27</sup>



**Gabrovo monastery where nurses lived. Next to the monastery was the hospital where they worked<sup>28</sup>**

The two nurses described the nature beauty of the places they were passing through, which reveals the particular sense of the splendor of the landscape. Arriving in Gabrovo they preferred to live in the small monastery at the very center of the town. Engelhard's description of the monastery is especially poetic and speaks about her romantic nature:

*"Several minutes after our arrival all the people of the town knew about it. The nuns of Gabrovo approached us and started to plead to stay with them in the monastery. The district commander offered us accommodation in the town but we preferred to live in the female monastery, the more so as it is situated on several steps from the hospital. Satisfied, the nuns with shining faces took us to their lodging.*

*All of the people went out to meet us, they spoke and shouted something but we could not understand anything. The monastery is not big but very beautiful. In the middle of the yard there is thick, fresh, green grass covered by splendid flowers, in the center – not big but a lovely church with a silver dome. How many times after that in the moonlight nights we admired the miraculous look of this dome. Around our room there is a small fountain covert by vine. The noise of the water falling day and night stilled our souls. The monastery buildings surrounded the yard. The doctor and the student were accommodated also in the cloister because of the war.”<sup>29</sup>*

The Nurse Engelhard was impressed by the abbess of the monastery who shared the religious and the patriotic expectations of the Bulgarians:

*“We met the abbess – a good, unforgettable granny, and started a warm conversation. Our interpreter was the mother of the coachman, who spoke a comparatively good Russian (she has lived a half a year in Kiev). For a long time the granny talked about the Turkish atrocities and at the end she said with trembling voice: The Heavenly Savoir came to save the human race, the Emperor Alexander came to save us, poor Bulgarians – He is our earthly savoir”.*<sup>30</sup>

### **Work in the hospitals**

Most of the stories concerned their everyday work as nurses. They described the good condition in the military hospital situated in the Gabrovo high school that was founded before the arrival of the Russian with the donations of the Gabrovo people and the “Women’ Association” led by Gavrilitza Ganchovata. The members of the Association and the teaching stuff of the school helped as nurses in the hospital:

*“We had to work in a big two floor stone building where according to the words of the Bulgarians the hospital was situated. Soon the superior division doctor Anuchin arrived and suggested to go to see the hospital. I liked the hospital at once: nothing was spoiling the impression as it usually happen in the military hospitals; the air was pure and fresh. There was plenty of space for the patients, 25 persons, lying in separate beds with pure household linen and under warm blankets. In each room big bunches of flower were placed on the tables. The Bulgarian ladies managed successfully their work as nurses; small boys stayed around the beds and chased away the flies, another boys provided water in clay cups and plates to the ones who wanted to drink”.*<sup>31</sup>

Still, even experiencing one and the same events, the two nurses often gave different account of them. Johantseva was probably older than Elgerhard and more experienced therefore she was more self-confident and less sentimental. She was almost patronizing Engerhard. Engelhard was more sensitive to the reception form the local people:

*"I was deeply moved by one Bulgarian granny. Breathless she run to me with flowers in her hands and started to caress my face; she took my head in her arms, made a cross and said: "So young, God helps you!" Such moments you could never forget."*<sup>32</sup>

Soon after the Shipka battles (9<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> of August) in the Gabrovo hoslital arrived the famous surgeon Sklifasovski and Juhantseva became his surgery nurse which she appreciated as great chance and honor. Her younger friend Engelhard was scared even to attend the operations:

*"On 15<sup>th</sup> of August professor Sklifasovski arrived with two assistants and several doctors from the Red Cross. With their arrival the work did not decrease, but our hospital having up to now the temporary character of big aid station turned into real hospital... With the appearance of the professor from early in the morning to the late in the night poor victims were brought into the surgery room. After the chlorophyll they started to work with knife and scalper. I could not listen to the sound of that scalper on the bones and could not watch all these cut limbs. I should admit that I was happy not being supposed to attend all these terrible operations"*<sup>33</sup>

Most of the stories of the two nurses were the stories about their patients. With empathy and affection they recalled their sufferings. A big part of the patients were mentioned with their names, even with diminutives. Fully devoted to their work, the nurses did not think of themselves as heroines, despite the fact that they work hard day and nights in most difficult conditions: of terrible sufferings of the wounded and permanent danger of infection:

*"We just leaved Petro and saw carts full with wretches. O my God, O my God, I was deeply moved and angry of myself that we are late, we are not providing fully our help. At that moment I wanted to have wings to fly to Zimnitsa..."*<sup>34</sup>

*"One of our patients, wounded in the head, was very difficult. He laid with no memory and nevertheless of our efforts he did not take any food and groaned without a break. The doctor said that the agony has already started. He obviously suffered terribly: it was so pity to see*

*his pale, good, martyr face and to feel that you don't have a strength to help him, to console him. In such pain this martyr lived three days...*"<sup>35</sup>

*"O my God, how terrible was the look of the patients: hungry, tormented, they brought more than 500. We put on the beds only the weakest ones, the rest just laid on the floor of our big hospital. All the corridors were full of people. After making them feel as comfortable as possible we started to feed them. We brought two big caldrons, one with soup and the other with tea, and started to distribute them..."*<sup>36</sup>

*"I took off the bandage and saw a wound as a small plate and two smaller ones around it all full of small worms. Seeing this frightening picture I was about to faint. I have never seen something similar. I have heard that in the wounds worms could survive but such enormous quantity I could not imagine. For a long time I could not believe my eyes – but the more I saw the more I realized the pity truth. I did not know how to clean up the mess and asked doctor Pelshinskij for a help. He was also terrified not less than me but showed me how to get rid of the uninvited guests. I worked more than two hours. I was seized with despair but thanks to my patience I succeeded to exterminate all the worms. You had to see the joy of my soldier, tender word of gratitude as a true reward for my work".*<sup>37</sup>

### **Turkish patients**

Following their Christian and medicine ethics the nurses treated in a humane manner also the sick and wounded Turks. They considered the Turks as enemies only on the battlefield but not in the hospital. The nurse Engelhard felt even affection to the captured Turks:

*"Before I go to the war I told to myself that I will never take care of the Turks, but here I should admit I became attached to them with all my soul. They seemed to me so unhappy, helpless, looking wildly as if scared of something. At the beginning they did not trust me and reluctantly allowed me to bandage their wounds but the tobacco I was carrying to them soon made us friends. You have to witness their joy when seeing the tobacco. They got up from their beds and joyfully said: "Midhamed – Badzhu" (nurse). Among them there were some very weak especially one who was very young. He laid silently and even the look of the tobacco did not make him happy; he did not want to eat anything except chocolate. Generally speaking the Turks love anything sweet and even when I was carrying to them pieces of sugar they took them with great enthusiasm."*<sup>38</sup>

When a young Bulgarian priest protested that they should leave the Turks to die instead of caring for them, the nurse Engelhard reminded him the Christian ethics of love:

*"You should not speak like that, remember what our Savoir demanded, how we should treat our enemies!"*<sup>39</sup>

### Refugees

At the same time the nurse Engelhard was very compassioned to the sufferings of the Bulgarian refugees and gave an account of the atrocities committed by the Ottoman army.

*"Indeed, you get very depressed when listening to the stories of the poor Bulgarians about the atrocities of the Turks. At that moment a young girl approached us; she is hardly alive, saved by a miracle from the Turkish volunteers who cut off the heads of 400 Bulgarians on the field during a harvest..."*<sup>40</sup>

*"A crowd of Bulgarian women surrounded us trying to explain their hopeless situation, everybody searched help and some even suggested to take their children with us in order to save them from starving. Everybody had a killed father, mother, brother or sister. But they spoke about them without a particular pain and without tears. It is unexplainable how a nation could get accustomed to such pain which makes your heart bleeding..."*<sup>41</sup>

*"We could not close our eyes all night. How to sleep when your soul is suffering; I was about to cry. In the yard the noise did not stop – the loud speech of the refugees could be heard, the cry of the babes – poor babes, our soldiers have found them on the road, embraced them and took them to the monastery. In a touching manner they caressed and cradled them but the little ones did not soothe..."*<sup>42</sup>

The saved from the Russian soldiers Bulgarian and Turkish children and the orphans of refugees were accommodated in a special well-appointed orphanage found by the *Slavic Committee* and the *Women's Association* "Maternal Care" of Gabrovo. Enlgerhard became a godmother of a six year old Turkish girl.

*"In the last days of August in a village close to Shipka in the maize Bulgarian women found a six year old Turkish girl. Her mother and father were killed by Bulgarians but the women took pity on her and took her. After several days the girl express desire to convert to Christian faith. The village priest where she lived reported about that to the district governor (Maslov) and ask him to become her godfather.*



*Major Maslov was happy to accept it and offer me to become her godmother. They decided the Turkish girl to be brought to Gabrovo. For several days a priest who spoke Turkish taught her several prayers and explained her the sacrament of baptism and how to make a cross. By that time we do our best to dress her. We cut out a beautiful blue dress welted with golden laces; we prepared a white Russian shirt with large sleeves and several more dresses. At the end on 5<sup>th</sup> of September we had to baptize her. We dressed her from the head to the legs with new cloths and took her to the church. A crowd gathered. She looked scared, her face so young, good, but her eyes sad. Two priests served the ceremony – one Russian priests from the Orlov's detachment and the other from Gabrovo, the priest Stefan. Our soldiers sang the prayers. After the baptizing we dressed her and braided her hair on Russian manner. Her new outlook was very good. After that I took her in my room. The two priest also came to hold a service for the two of us and the girl. We called her Maria. During the service she looked lost in thought and often made the sign of cross. After the service my room was full of people".<sup>43</sup>*

### **The life in the hospitals**

The two nurses described in details the difficult and dangerous condition of their hard work, but they never complained:

*"All days long from 7 o'clock in the morning to 11 in the night I am in the hospital or more correctly running from one hospital to the other. In the middle of October the hospital of the 9<sup>th</sup> division came to us from the Balkan and settled in seven or eight big Bulgarian houses and in six tents situated in a beautiful valley at the very foot of the mountain. In the two hospitals – of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> divisions I was the only sister. My room-mates had left me and more than two weeks I lived alone. But I am not bored at all – during the day I have plenty of work and in the night I feel so terribly tired that I only dream to go to bed and get asleep. In the last days it was absolutely forbidden to leave Gabrovo because of the danger of spreading the infection of typhus which has just started. Our Gabrovo turned into a big hospital. In each house sick people were accommodated, a big part of them were frozen – victims of the Balkan coldness. The number of these victims increased considerably with the arrival of 24<sup>th</sup> division from the Irkutsk, Krasnoyarsk and other detachments. Between 40 to 60 people were accommodated. By the evening in the two hospitals there were 2600 people. It is terrible to think about it! How did we manage I do not have idea! I don't have physical possibility to care about all patients and I started to look only after the weakest ones."*<sup>44</sup>

Johantseva also described her hard work which turned her into a “machine” sometimes not even realizing what she was exactly doing.

In the two memoirs the attitude to the wounded Bulgarian soldiers was not only the one of compassion but also patronizing – this attitude was is probably due to the aristocratic origin of the two nurses. It should be noted that the lack of hygiene habits of Bulgarians impressed them deeply as nurses and women:

*“The Red Cross was informed us about the misfortune of the Bulgarians running from the Balkan mountain towns to settle in Gabrovo and supplied us with money, linen, bandages. Thanks to this help our hospital was well laid out. In all rooms there were beds covered with clean linen and nice warm blankets. But to teach Bulgarians to hygiene was not an easy task. So much appeals to convince them to take off the dirty cloths and the worn out shoes and to lie down in the clean beds. They were used to sleep on the floor without taking off any cloths and not complaining of anything. Later we taught them to wash themselves and to comb their hair. Even Doctor Hristov and father Stefan, every time when seeing our washed patients – smiled with mockery considering it our caprice and amusement. But soon our patients realized the advantage of cleanness and with gratitude they eagerly waited for water and comb. Just seeing us on the door they shouted “i mene, i mene” raising from the beds and asking to start washing them, something they experienced as terrible suffering up until recently. Now they asked about it almost crying.”<sup>45</sup>*

### **Courage in the condition of mass panic**

Especially dramatic were the stories of the two nurses during the three days August battles on Shipka. The nurses kept self-control and courage in the condition of mass panic when the danger of Turkish invasion had shaken Gabrovo:

*“In 2 o'clock I served the lunch in my premises and went to my room because I felt sick during that day. But my rest was very short. A terrible cry and motion in the monastery yard made me to jump up and run to see what has happened, what is all that terrible stir about. I saw my nuns with bags and bundles in hands to run, to stir around, to saddle horses and donkeys. When one of them saw me she run to me and with a harsh of emotion voice with great difficulty pronounced: “Nurse, nurse, we must run away, Turks are coming!” I did not start to console her. I could not calm her down since I did not know what was really happening. It was not for a first time I witnessed the fears of our nuns. I did not consider too much their intention to run away and*

*told them to wait until I go to see what is happening. But I was about to lose my self - confidence when I saw the Gabrovo streets. They were full with people. It was obvious that everybody was thinking only about what to take and where to go – but where to run to – nobody knew. The air was trembling with desperate sobs and cries. In the Bulgarian hospital all beds were empty. Poor patients, hardly alive with great efforts crept up to the streets hoping that the healthy Bulgarians will feel pity to them and will not leave them in the hands of the advancing Turks. As a strong wave they run away so the guard on duty was not able to stand up to their pressure. This time may be it is true that Turks were coming to Gabrovo. There was nobody to ask about, in the hospital nobody of our staff has left. Coming back I saw a new picture – a group of armed Bulgarians, almost a company, ahead was the famous father Stefan, who was speaking something with zeal. His cassock is raised up to the belt, his face is excited, on his shoulder a big gun with a bayonet. I was very happy to meet him since I could ask him about the reason for this unrest:*

*- Father, what is all that panic about? Is that true that Turks are coming here?*

*- Nothing of the sort! – he answered in broken Russian – these people are guilty for all that panic – and he pointed to the group of refugees – they run through the Balkan where Turks are chasing them and spread false rumors. That is why I and my heroes are going to appease them.*

*Hearing that consoling words I run to our hospital to inform our patients. But to my horror my hospital was also empty even locked; in the yard hospital carts in harness full of people. Between them there were two officers from the Bulgarian unit:*

*- What is that? Where are you going? – I asked them.*

*- You do not know that we are in danger; Turks are nearby and are coming straight to Gabrovo.*

*I tried to calm them but they did not want to hear me, crying they repeated:*

*- In the God's name do not hold us back. We still have the chance to save ourselves reaching Tarnovo; here Turks will kill us for sure.*

*And they took the road. The last of my patients had left and I stayed absolutely alone”.<sup>46</sup>*

Similar were the memories of Juhantseva about these days.

### **The attitude to the doctors**

The two nurses considered their work both in religious and in professional terms. They were very critical about the doctors they worked with, being self-confident themselves. The memories of nurse Engelhard about the first doctor she met were quite negative:

*"On the railway station we met our doctor M. From the first minute our doctor drove me to despair with his unabashed calmness. When I saw that nothing was arranged for the reception of our patients, absolutely nothing was prepared in advance, I got furious. I started to talk to the doctor but he did not pay any attention to my words and only repeated: "Why you are in a hurry, what will be will be". At the end we pressed the doctor to move around and in the afternoon we started to prepare the storage and to arrange the medical materials".<sup>47</sup>*

The doctor she worked with in Gabrovo she considered as coward because he advised her to run away from Gabrovo:

*"I seriously advise you to depart from Gabrovo as soon as possible. You live in danger here and I did not sleep all night expecting the enemy. I am leaving with the patients for Tarnovo and do not know if I will come back. I will go closer to Romania".<sup>48</sup>*

Very different was the attitude of the two nurses towards Bulgarian doctor Aleksi Hristov who impressed them by his altruism and professionalism. They told stories about him with sympathy and respect. He is the only doctor mentioned in their memoirs with his two names. As women the two nurses were very critical to male egotism and arrogance. The sister Elgerhard recorded an incident with doctor Pjasetski.<sup>49</sup>

*"I had to prepare for leaving 28 patients. To make for one evening 28 bandages of which 6 on the hips was impossible and I talked about this with the doctor I worked with. He agreed with me but he called a student to help me and did not take any part in this job. He sat on the bed, absently watched how I was doing the bandages, and in a broken French he asked me questions not related to my job. His laziness and full indifference made me so angry. Suddenly on the corridor male steps directed at our room could be heard. My doctor rushed, throw down the cigarette, he took off the bandage from my hand and said loudly: "Permit me to take the bandage, because our boss is coming" and started to bandage eagerly. At that very moment the door*

*opened and doctor Sklifasofski entered the room and asked: "Is there a lot of work?" Not embarrassed at all our doctor started explaining that this is the seventh bandage he is doing and 20 more are left. I was so surprised of his words and could not understand how a man could lie so arrogantly in the presence of sanitarian staff, patients, and nurses." <sup>50</sup>*

### **Religion and patriotism**

Most typical for the two memoirs was the religious spirit interwoven with patriotism. The narrative scheme "God, Tsar, Fatherland" of the official propaganda was present in the two memoirs as a basis of the heroic evaluation of the war as a "Just War for Liberation of the Orthodox Slav Brothers" Still, they experienced mostly the terrible side of the war with so many sufferings, death and despair. The two nurses wrote often about their everyday religious experience - prayers, liturgy, thanksgiving services, lament in the case of death and funeral:

*"At the end at 9 o'clock a common parade started and the whole division of 12 000 people sang mightily "Our Heavenly Father". The singing flowed as a fascinating wave; each soul was trembling and spontaneously joined the common prayer..." <sup>51</sup>*

*"It happens now – when seeing a dying man you stay in front of him and unwillingly ask questions: Who is this man? Where from? Does he have a wife and children who loves? Did he manage in his thought to say good bye to them in his last hour? Poor martyr. There is no loving person around him to take his blessing and last words. The hero dyes after he had honestly served his duty far away from everything native and precious. Nobody will feel pity for him, nobody will pray for the serenity of his soul. Just closed his eyes and the hospital attendants come; they put him in a stretcher and bring him to the church. There he lines up with another similar victims. On the other day the priest will served dirge. If there is a grave they will put him in it, if not they will take up him to a cart where eight more corpses lie and bring him to the graveyard, where they bury them in a big common grave." <sup>52</sup>*

All the campaigns of the soldiers are accompanied by songs, music and military priests. Each detachment and division has a military brass-band helping the priests to perform their religious ceremonies. The nurses shared their mystical religious experience hearing the soldiers' songs:

*"In the midnight I hear how our detachments advanced with loud music and songs. The night is silent, warm, and starry, their voices sing so vigorously and concerted native Russian songs. Our patients*

*hearing familiar sounds raise from the beds and want to see again their friends, to bless them and to admonish them with: "Let Jesus will be with you, let God helps you!" You watch these heroes with amazement. All of them aim at one purpose, so cheerfully they go to sacrifice their lives for "Faith, Tsar and Fatherland". I could not write anymore today; the music of the marching soldiers moves me so much. My pen is naughty and so unclearly expresses the deep feelings of my soul at this solemn moment."*<sup>53</sup>

### **The Red Cross and the Military Office**

In the memoirs the two nurses often mentioned the contributions of the Red Cross with gratitude and blessings:

*"On the second day of the Shipka battles the representative of the Red Cross V. P. Glebov came to us and brought everything we needed so we were supplied with enough linen and bandage materials. Thanks to the activity of Glebov the Red Cross helped us a lot. Many thanks!"*<sup>54</sup>

On the same occasion the nurse Engelhard wrote:

*"At the same minute we talked and thought: what we should do without linen and bandage materials and the representative of the Red Cross V. P. Glebov appeared and brought us everything in abundance. Honor and glory of the Red Cross! God bless them."*<sup>55</sup>

The nurses were very critical about the work of the Military Office, they commented on the chaos and the disagreements between the "Red Cross" and the Military Office.

*"I do not know why the Military Office is against the Red Cross but it seemed to me they have intention to remove us from the job. The order to move to Zimnitsa we received at the very day of crossing the river, the military hospitals were on the beach of the river since the morning. The nurses from St. George Community were not allowed in the military hospitals and only pro forma 15 patients were placed at their disposal. The Military Office rejected the offer of the Red Cross to help when we desperately needed it. How much, here in Zimnitsa, the Red Cross would have helped our martyrs with its enormous resources!"*<sup>56</sup>

It is obvious that the nonregulated relations between the two institutions obstructed their mutual work. The Red Cross was not subordinated to the Military Office and often acted independently which caused chaos in the cares of wounded and sick warriors. The two nurses felt sore about the fact that in February when in Gabrovo a mass epidemic of typhus spread around and many houses were devastated, the Red Cross left the town in panic:

*“Much to my regret I understood that the Red Cross almost ceased to work. Its representative V. P. Glebov was ordered to close the store in Gabrovo and to carry out all the materials. But Glebov seeing our terrible, catastrophic situation avoided the order to destroy the materials and promised me to supply us with all we needed. The resources of the Red Cross were absolutely necessary for our patients. Alas! The Red Cross considered that it is obliged to care only about wounded soldiers and our sick patients were fully forgotten.”<sup>57</sup>*

Unlike the Red Cross staff, the two nurses stayed in the division hospital and continued their noble mission to provide care not only for the wounded and sick warriors, but to the civilians as well.

In their memoirs Engelhard and Juhantseva reacted sharply to the negligence and indecencies of the Military Office.

*“How many orders we were forced to hear each day. Every half an hour a new representative appeared with new orders from prince Cherkaski. At one moment we had to stay in Tarnovo, at another one they sent us back to the detachment of the Tsar’s brother where it turned out that 5 more sisters were needed, at another moment they sent us again to the hospital of the 14<sup>th</sup> division.”<sup>58</sup>*

### **Corruption at the rear of the front**

The nurses were very critical about the corruption of the commissars supplying foods and cloths to the patients, and about the cases of robbery, cruelty and drunkenness of the Russians and the Bulgarians:

*“The rest of the tents were in charge of the hospital attendants; I had to look after the hygiene and the strict implementation of the doctor’s prescriptions. I often had to quarrel with the commissars – at times about the shortage of the rations, at times about the lack of the special rations for the weakest patients who were provided only with milk and boiled rice.*

*And yet in the hospital of the 9<sup>th</sup> division the food was sufficient, but to my opinion for a soldier recruiting his health stronger food was needed and I asked doctor Anuchin for beef cutlets to distribute them*

*at my discretion. Often I had to complain about the corruption in distributing the meat rations – instead of  $\frac{3}{4}$  pounds only half pounds were provided and sometimes even less. Doctor Anuchin usually called the commissar and after a difficult conversation the commissar started to swear and to make cross promising that this disorder will not continue – but after several days the same story was repeated.”*<sup>59</sup>

The nurse Engelhard even sent a telegram to the chief representative prince Cherkaski, in which: *“I described the horror of our situation and asked him for a help; the answer was not late.”*<sup>60</sup>

The two nurses were very sensitive to the cases of drunkenness, robberies and atrocities of the part of Russian and Bulgarian soldiers and reacted harshly to such cases.

*“We walked on the burned streets and faced an outrageous picture: what the fire and the Turks were spared; now our soldiers and our Bulgarian brothers were taking away. Everybody robs what he can. At some remains our guards saved from robbery the rest of the grain and maize so needed for the starving population of the town. Passing by one kiosk we were surrounded by a crowd of Bulgarians who loudly spoke and argued about something and pointed to the kiosk. We went and saw - in the middle of the kiosk, on the floor a barrel with wine was situated and by the barrel a soldier was lying with blue face, hardly breathing and still continuing to drink from the barrel. We took him away by force and gave him to the guards.”*<sup>61</sup>

Deeply grieved were the nurses from the battle places they were passing through – strewn with dead bodies of people and horses surrounded by hungry dogs. Facing these scaring pictures they assessed the war as “horrible evil”:

*“We went out of the valley and now we are close to Elena. But to reach the town we have to pass through the places where our brave soldiers desperately defended themselves from the enormous Turkish army. Here it is, this famous field where the bloody drama has taken place. Everywhere scattered haversacks, unburied corpses and many killed horses, zealously wandering dogs! It was for the first time I witnessed such picture, I hope it will be the last; even now I could not remember it without sobbing. Hard time we had then. The war is a horrible evil.”*<sup>62</sup>



**The rewards**

The two women did not consider their work only in religious terms of self-sacrifice for the martyr warriors. They referred to it with professional dignity too. They preferred to stay anonymous, but they considered their experience as nurses as valuable enough to be shared and documented for the future generations. The best reward for their heavy work was the gratitude of their patients:

*“I am not going to describe all days, I would only say that from 9<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> of August we work so hard, feeling no pity for ourselves at all. The best thing was that our work was not in vain and our patients adored us. They felt that there were no more superior and better nurses for them than ourselves. I hardly succeeded to go to my friend Nikita who was dying. When he recognized me he embraced me and with a voice mixed with tears he spoke to me: “Nurse, thank God you came, why did you leave me, I am dying my dear sister, my dove, don’t go away, stay with me, help me.”<sup>63</sup>*

The nurse Engelhard wrote several times about the confidence and love of her patients expressing her empathy to them as “native, close friends”:

*“There were many unpleasant and heavy moments I had to experience but I was rewarded by the love and confidence of my patients. I got used so much to them that I started to worry about the hour of our parting. I did not think that this minute was so close. I went to the hospital and understood that today transport is provided and they waited only for an order. I hardly seized not to cry parting from my good soldiers. To each of them I gave a tobacco pouch and a Bible, crossed them and help them to lift up in the carts and returned with tears in my eyes. What will happen with them, where they will go? Many of them are crippled, some without an arm, others without a leg. They promised to write when arriving at home... One soldier took me aside and put something in my hand and whispering told me: “Sister, I have nothing to thank you, I have only this icon, I prayed at it eagerly every day. Let it bring happiness to you! Jesus to be with you, I will pray for you to my last breath”.<sup>64</sup>*

Especially touching was the story of the nurse Juhantseva about a dying patient who left her his St. George’s military cross which he received risking his life.

*“The last of my Gabrovo patients spent too much time in the hospital, his wounds were dangerous and he suffered terribly. Feeling that the last hour has come, he called me and gave me his money asking me to send them to his old mother and his brother. He wanted me*

*to write a letter to them asking them not to cry but to pray because he had died for a sacred mission. Then he turned to me and said: "To you, sister, I leave this cross, it is mine, I could not keep and carry it anymore" and with trembling hands he gave me St. George's military cross... I will never forget these eyes and these words. I wanted to escape from the tent, tears choked me."*<sup>65</sup>

### Conclusion

In December the nurse Engelhard got sick with typhus and spent one month in Gabrovo. On 14<sup>th</sup> of March the two nurses left Gabrovo and departed for Tarnovo where they stayed till the end of April. At the beginning of May they left for San Stefano.

At the end of her memoir the nurse Engelhard commented the reason to join the war:

*"24<sup>th</sup> of June. Tomorrow I will leave for Russia ... I have to thank God that He directed me to His right way and give me the possibility to satisfy my passionately desire to serve to fellow man, to help and console our sacred martyrs. Nevertheless of all difficulties and privations I will bring with me the most precious memory about my military life."*<sup>66</sup>

The nurse Juhantseva got sick with typhus on 15<sup>th</sup> of May in San Stefano and was compelled to go home one month earlier. She ended her memoir expressing her regret that she had to leave not finishing her work:

*"I quickly carried myself away in the remote native North but in my thoughts I was still on the beach of the warm blue sea. For a long time I could not console myself that because of the disease I could not bring my work to an end; a work related to the most precious and bright memories in my life."*<sup>67</sup>

Being religious and patriotic the two aristocratic nurses were loyal to the official ideology of the war as a "sacred mission for liberating the East Orthodox Slavic brothers". Yet, as women they were emotionally involved and compassionate to the terrible sufferings of their patients – Russians, Bulgarians, Turks -- and very critical to the male egotism, arrogance, cruelty and corruption at the rear of the front. Despite of the prevailing religious – patriotic tone their war memoirs, the experience of the two nurses was ambiguous and often contradictory. Still, they did not overstep the official discourse of interpreting the war to express pacifistic convictions.

<sup>1</sup> Беляева, Мария, Российское общество Красного креста в истории России 1867 – 1921 [The Russian Society of the Red Cross in the History of Russia 1867 – 1921], диссертация, Ставрополь, 2002, 98.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Илинский, Пьотър Алексеевич, Русская женщина в войну 1877 – 1878 г. Очерк деятельности сестер милосердия, фельшеры и женщин-врачей [Russian Woman in War 1877 – 1878. Outline of the Activities of the Nurses, Paramedics and Women Doctors], Санкт-Петербург, 1879. The author is doctor and writer who took part in the war. In the book he pointed out to the information sources he used and shared his personal experience.

<sup>3</sup> Подгаецкий В. Д., Из медицинского бита в прошлую турецкую войну 1877 – 1878 [The Medical Everyday Life in the Past Turkish War 1877 – 1878], Русская старина, 10, 1893, 90-112; Иванова, Юлия. Н., Храбрейшие из прекрасных. Женщины России во войне [The Bravest Among the Splendid. Women of Russia in War], Москва: Российская политическая энциклопедия, 2002; Пастернак, Александр В., Очерки по истории общин сестер милосердия [Outline of the History of the Nurse Communities], Москва, 2011. Белова, Елена Е., Сестры милосердия в период русско – турецкой войны 1877 – 1878 гг. [Nurses in the period of the Russian-Turkish War], Ярославский педагогический вестник, 2, 2010, 33-37; Попова, Кристина, Милосердное сестринство в женской биографии [The Experience of the Nurses in the Female Autobiographies], International Science Conference Dedicated to 135th Anniversary of Returning Ajara to Motherland, South-West Georgia (History, Archaeology, Ethnology) Conference materials, Tbilisi, 113 – 123.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Сборник военных рассказов [Collection of Military Stories], Санкт-Петербург, т.1, 2, 1878.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Абаза, Николай С., Красный Крест в тылу действующей армии в 1877 – 1878 гг. [The Red Cross at the Rear of the Army in 1877 – 1878], Санкт-Петербург, т. 1, 1880; т. 2, 1882; Боткин, Сергей П., Письма из Болгарии 1877 г. [Letters from Bulgaria 1877], Санкт-Петербург, 1893; Немирович-Данченко, Василий И., Годы войны (Дневник русского корреспондента) 1877 – 1878 гг. [Years of War (Diary of a War Correspondent) 1877 – 1878], Санкт-Петербург, т. 1, 1878.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Иванова, Екатерина, Поездка во Фратешти, [A Trip to Frateshti], Слово, 5, 1878, 151–172; Anonymus, Из пережитого вчера [From our Yesterday Experience], Русский Вестник, т. 138, 12, 1878, 913 – 942; Бакунина, Екатерина, Год на Кавказе при военно – временных госпиталях [A Year on Caucasus Military Hospitals], Сборник военных рассказов, т. 2, Санкт-Петербург, 1878; Anonymus, Из путевых записок сестры милосердия 1877 и 1878 гг. [Travelling Notes of Nurses 1877 – 1878], Русский Вестник, т. 139, 2, 1879, 553 – 601.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Фон Кениг, София Александровна, Воспоминания сестры милосердия [Remembering the Nurses], Исторический вестник, 10, 70 – 106; Исторический вестник, 11, 339-368; Исторический вестник, 12, 1916, 617 – 637.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Духонина, Екатерина, Мирная деятельность на войне [The Peace Activity During the War], М. 1894; Петриченко, Елисавета, Записки сестры “Красного Креста” [The Notes of the Red Cross nurses], Колосья, 7 – 8, 1884, 320 – 358; Арендт, София, Воспоминания сестры милосердия. 1877–1878 гг. [Remembering Nurses 1877 – 1878], Русская старина, т. 55, 7, 1887, 85 – 122; 8, 377 – 418; Фредерикс, Мария Петровна, Из воспоминаний [From the Remembered], Русский архив, 2, 1900, 110–111; Хрушова, Вера Дмитриевна, Кружок “Круглой башни” [The Circle “Round tower”], Вестник Европы, 1, 1901, 240–284; 2, 1900, 618–650; 3, 1900, 249–282; 4, 1900, 553–602; Алчевс-

кая, Христина Д., Раненые в Харькове [The Wounded in Harkov], In: Алчевская, Христина Д., Передуманное и пережитое [The Thought over and the Experienced], Москва, 1912, 43 – 62; Фон Кениг, Воспоминания, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Енелхард, София Александровна, Письма сестры милосердия, [The Letters of Nurses], Сборник военных рассказов, Санкт-Петербург, т.1, 1878, 67. The memoir was published anonymously.

<sup>10</sup> Юханцева, Ольга Николаевна, Из путевых записок сестры милосердия 1877 и 1878 [From the travelling notes of nurses 1877 – 1878], Русский вестник, т. 139, 1878, 553–601. She has signed her memoir only with the initial of her personal name “О”.

<sup>11</sup> Арсеньева С. Д. Царствующий дом Романовых. [The Tsar’s House of Romanovs], СПб., 1903 – 1912. Вып. 10 : Царь освободитель. 1912, 206.

<sup>12</sup> Старчевский, А. А. Памятник Восточной войны 1877 – 1878 [A Monument of the East War 1877 – 1878], Санкт-Петербург, 1879. In alphabetic order the author provided biographical outlines of all distinguished generals, officers, doctors, nurses and soldiers.

<sup>13</sup> Сборник военных рассказов [Collection of Military Stories], Санкт-Петербург, т.1, 1878, 67.

<sup>14</sup> Юханцева, Записок, 10, 572.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 601

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 553

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 554.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Старчевский, Памятник, 11, 261; Пясецки, Павел, Два месеца в Габрово. (Вспоминания на войната в 1877 – 1878) [Two Months in Gabrovo. Memories of War], Пловдив, 1879, 54.

<sup>19</sup> Енелхард, Письма, 9, 67.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 67-68.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 69-71

<sup>25</sup> Юханцева, Записок, 10, 555.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 565.

<sup>27</sup> Енелхард, Письма, 9, 78.

<sup>28</sup> Изложба "Габровски девически манастир "Свето Благовещение" и Шипченска епопея. [Gabrovo Female Monastery Exhibition]. Web. 20. December 2015.

<http://www.gabrovo.bg/bg/news-article/1792>

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 101-102

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 91

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>49</sup> Doctor Pyasetski also wrote memoir about the War. Cf. Пясецки, Месеца, 17.

<sup>50</sup> Енгелхард, Письма, 9, 99.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>54</sup> Юханцева, Записок, 10, 579.

<sup>55</sup> Енгелхард, Письма, 9, 90.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 100.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>60</sup> Юханцева, Записок, 10, 585.

<sup>61</sup> Енгелхард, Письма, 9, 109.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>63</sup> Юханцева, Записок, 10, 580.

<sup>64</sup> Енгелхард, Письма, 9, 103.

<sup>65</sup> Юханцева, Записок, 10, 581.

<sup>66</sup> Енгелхард, Письма, 9, 140.

<sup>67</sup> Юханцева, Записок, 10, 581.

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## **Hero Women in the Turkish Popular Memory of the Russo-Ottoman War (1877 – 1878): Presentation of Nene Hatun as an Eternal Heroine in the Popular Media**

**Abstract:** *The nationalistic mythical image of women as heroines defending the homeland as an auxiliary power alongside men during vital battles can be best illustrated by the example of Nene Hatun (1857-1955) who is generally presented in the collective memory in Turkey as a woman hero playing a symbolic role in the battlefield near Erzurum during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878. She had performed exceptional bravery during her unexpected participation in the military combat as a leader of some civilians. One of the aims of this essay is to explain the essence of the terms ‘exceptional’ and ‘unexpected’ in the previous sentence in the framework of discussions on women heroism, on militarism, on popular memory and on construction of modern collective identities.*

**Key words:** *women heroism, mythologization processes, Nene Hatun, popular memory, collective identities*

### **Theoretical and methodological framework**

The story of Nene Hatun with its several versions, her place in the popular memory and different presentations of this ‘myth’ in the historiography, popular media, school books, etc. offers us very rich material for discussing issues like women, war, militarism, heroism and nationalism on the one hand,<sup>1</sup> and popular memory on the other.

In my previous works on Shemseddin Sami (1850-1904) I have dealt with a ‘hero as a man of letters’<sup>2</sup> who played a decisive role in the discursive construction of the both Turkish and Albanian nations as a ‘modern myth maker’. Later in the twentieth century in Turkey and especially Albania he was himself mythologized.<sup>3</sup> I have also dealt with heroism and treason in the modern Turkish history focusing on contradictory images of a military leader, Çerkes Ethem (1886–1948), in Turkish historiography<sup>4</sup> and a heroine war pilot Sabiha Gökçen in popular memory.<sup>5</sup>

In this paper, I am focusing on a 'heroine' also in the service of the continuous construction of the Turkish nation. Her (rather blurry) life story might be quite 'ordinary', but the construction process of her mythologized image is much more complicated and her image in the popular memory is certainly more confusing. Apart from timelessness as one of her popular image's characteristics (which is shared by many heroes and heroines and discussed below), there are several other differences (alongside many similarities) between the two hero(in)es in question.

It is important to state, however, that the basis for common features in the mythologization processes of these two modern heroes in the twentieth century was the instrumentalist manner of nationalist discourse to abuse 'historical facts' to the extent of manipulation, distortion and even fabrication. I will attempt to present this in the case of the Nene Hatun's mythologization. However, I would like to state that the use of her image as a (fabricated) heroine is not exceptional, as the role of heroes and heroines (as mythologized personalities) in the discursive construction of the collective identities in general throughout history is well known fact. In the process of discursive construction of 'ethnocentric nations' as *modern* collective identities, the modern versions of these heroes and heroines (as modern myths) have constantly played a similar role. Still, their compounds and construction processes were understandably different from the pre-modern ones. Starting with the print and press and culminating with the current popular media, the new mediums of their production and (wider and deeper) proliferation among the masses have been strongly determinant of these differences.

In this essay I will focus on the popular media in order to demonstrate the (both confused and confusing) characteristics of Nene Hatun's mythologized image as war heroine in the popular memory. As popular media does not only reveals/reflects the images in the collective memory, but it simultaneously (re)constructs them or contributes in one way or another to their continuous (re)construction.

I am using the term 'popular memory' without in-depth elaboration on the conceptual discussions on collective, cultural or social memory. I apply the term 'popular memory' similarly to the usage of 'cultural memory' adopted by Jan Assman, but rather with an emphasis on the popular media as the creator and reflector of cultural memory.<sup>6</sup> My focus is on the popular audio-visual materials (documentary and feature films, monuments, stamps, etc.) that are both popular memory makers and transmitters.

### **Nene Hatun as a historical and mythological figure in audio-visual materials**

In a short section of their article written in the framework of the same EU-funded Marie Curie project<sup>7</sup> as the one this essay is written for, my colleagues Bayram Şen and Sinan Çetin have previously summarized the image of Nene Hatun in popular historiography.<sup>8</sup> I will focus exclusively on Nene Hatun's mythologised image in the popular memory in Turkey, in order to exhaustively examine the discourse of heroism in popular media. I am elaborating on the audio-visual sources and the presentation of Nene Hatun on more popular level. I will analyse feature films, documentaries, stamps, monuments, a TV interview and a popular song sung by a female Turkish singer.

As stated by Şen and Çetin:

*"There is no monographic study about Nene Hatun based on verifiable historical facts. The bulk of the material readily available is literary in nature, and mainly aimed at children. The historical knowledge concerning Nene Hatun depends on general works on the role of women in the Turkish Independence War.<sup>9</sup> These compilations usually underline the significance of women's participation in the war as a precursor to their role in the newly founded Republic. They usually set up a prototype of a female heroine instead of an actual figure who lived and died in a historical setting."<sup>10</sup>*

There are generally ambiguous stories about the life of Nene Hatun, specifically about her child(ren), the position of her husband or her brother during the war period. According to the common story, her husband participated in the defence of the city and warned her to stay at home to look after their child or two children. She took a part in the battles organizing the other women in the city too. There is also ambiguous and conflicting factual information on the story of her fighting as a war hero, starting with the weapon she had carried. Many other concrete details (like her clothing in the war) continue to be narrated by different myth tellers.

### **Description of materials analysed**

The place of Nene Hatun's mythical image can be observed in many places and many forms in Turkey including names of neighbourhoods, parks and schools, and even a state-owned ship named after her in 2014.<sup>11</sup>

The sources analysed in this essay, include audio-visual materials regarded as popular mediums for transmission or representation of the image of Nene Hatun in the popular memory and its continuous (re)construction. These materials consist of historical feature films, documentary films, monuments, official post stamps, TV interviews and a popular song.



The first feature film in question (**Feature film 1**),<sup>12</sup> which was initially titled ‘Nene Hatun’ and was supposed to be exclusively on Nene Hatun’s heroic story, was later titled *Gazi Kadın* (Veteran Woman) and was produced in 1973. The first version of the scenario, which was titled “Nene Hatun” was found inappropriate, contradictory with the historical facts and, as a result, banned by the *Commission for the Control of Moving Pictures*. As a practical solution, Safa Önal changed the scenario's main protagonist to Gazi Kadın, who was also part of Aziziye battle, but stayed anonymous in the following years. Moreover, some conservative/nationalist criticism combined with local reaction prevented the crew from shooting the film in Erzurum.<sup>13</sup> Alternatively, the film was shot in Gerede. Both the script writer, Sefa Önal, and the director, Osman F. Seden, tried later to distance themselves from the fact that the film had been planned as a movie about the life of Nene Hatun. They did it because of the negative reactions during parliamentary sessions which had questioned the use of the Beylerbeyi Palace to shoot scenes.<sup>14</sup>



The film starts with the map showing the establishment of the Ottoman Empire as a world power and the highest civilization of the world after the conquest of

Constantinople. It is stated that the Empire had been experiencing a decline in the decades preceding the Russo-Ottoman war 1877 – 1878, since the Ottoman Empire had started to lose its lands because its non-Muslim subjects had started demanding reform and national independence. This has been done because of the provocation of the Great Powers! Remembrance of this great empire and its loss of power were emphasized by Abdülhamid II's on his words after the declaration of war by the Russians in 1877: "I would have liked to solve this issue with politics rather than by war". Specific symbols and scenes were used in order to describe the Ottomans as both Muslim and Turk and the "others" as Christian and constant enemies of the Turks/Muslims. While Abdülhamid was praying in a mosque, the Russian commander was depicted praying in a church.

As stated by Şen and Çetin:

*"The film was shot as a story of a Muslim/Turkish heroine; nevertheless, the movie was in fact more of a love story and was different from the usual narratives about Nene Hatun. In the film Nene Hatun was named Zeynep; immediately after her wedding she has been left alone by her husband Ahmet who leaves for war together with her brother. During the film, we never hear the name Nene Hatun."*<sup>15</sup>

While the brother of Zeynep returns from the war-front, Ahmet doesn't. Zeynep is told that her husband was killed, but she refuses to believe this. Consequently she starts looking for him as she crosses the Russian front. There she is captured at one point by the Russian soldiers who made an attempt to rape her. During her days of captivity she catches typhus and the Russians send her away. Two Muslim Cossacks rescue her and inform her that they were also Turks and Muslims. After her recovery, she leaves them to find her husband Ahmet. Then, Ahmet is shown as a spy in the Russian army named Seydikof. He is in love with a Russian princess named Katyuşka. Finally, Zeynep and Ahmet meet at the Russian front. Ahmet takes her to his room and hides her there. Nevertheless, a vicious Russian officer is suspicious of Ahmet and finds Zeynep in his room. Waiting together for their execution by a firing squad, they are rescued by Princess Katyuşka. During their escape towards Erzurum, Ahmet is shot by Russian soldiers and gives a letter to Zeynep to be conveyed to Gazi Muhtar Paşa – this is a holy duty for the motherland. Zeynep accomplishes her mission arriving at the Ottoman side of the front, where she tries, at the end of the film, to convince the wounded and exhausted Ottoman soldiers to return to the front and fight to the death against the enemies.

Another feature film titled *Nene Hatun: Aziziye* (**Feature film 2**) was created in 2010 and it was broadcasted on October 29, 2010 on the 87<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Turkish Republic.



The film was directed by Avni Kütükoğlu who was also its scriptwriter. It was produced by Kat Productions with a budget of 3 750 000 TL. Nene Hatun was played by Açılya Elmas who is known for her roles in contemporary TV series.<sup>16</sup> The film can be assessed as a failed attempt to utilize the “history craze” of popular Turkish cinema in recent years. The film had an abysmal record at the box office with 34 679 viewers and 244 254 TL revenue in total during its 14-week-long screening in cinemas throughout Turkey.<sup>17</sup>

The announced plot of the film tries to connect contemporary issues, and initially, as it is stated in the press release of the film makers, the heroic act of Nene Hatun was intended to be connected in the script with the story of a contemporary girl in today’s Turkey who is a good student and a talented skier. She was about to go to Erzurum for a ski contest. Having found out about the serious illness of her brother she is devastated and abandons the contest. Then her teacher tells her the story of Nene Hatun (also from Erzurum) to give her the message that one should not be discouraged by the demoralising and overwhelming difficulties that life presents. The film, surprisingly, left out this moral and focused on the historical event of the Aziziye Battle emphasizing the heroic role of Nene Hatun. In this film Nene Hatun’s place among other civilians participants in the battle is actually not as exaggerated as in all other stories in popular media that present her as the leader or initiator of this civilian participation.

However, this attempt to depict Nene Hatun as a historical figure, and as one of the many “heroines”, plus the overemphasis on the war itself, failed to correspond, or at least resonate, with the popular imagination that emphasizes the uniqueness of her extraordinary deeds. As one of the commentators on an online cinema platform underlines:

*“Nene Hatun was a significant figure for Turkishness [...] (However) we had been left with a film that hooks onto the Ottoman Russian War, for reasons that escape me, and moves away from what it actually needs to show. We were expecting it to tell how Nene Hatun underwent such a transformation to become a heroine and her deeds by focusing on her. As such, Nene Hatun here becomes no different from thousands of others in Erzurum.”*<sup>18</sup>

Not in the same vein, but, nonetheless, all of the critics converge on the fact that its cinematography was not satisfactory, acting was not fit for a historical story and representation of the historical events was not authentic enough.<sup>19</sup> Combined with this harsh criticism were the response of certain nationalist conservative groups. They clearly condemned both the producer and the director for representing Nene Hatun as woman whose headscarf comes and goes from scene to scene and the fact that the lead actress had a prior career as a model.<sup>20</sup>

There are several documentary films on internet glorifying the role of Nene Hatun in Ottoman and/or Turkish history, most of which are amateur works based on pictures and texts taken from other sources without proper references. The characteristics of these films play, paradoxically, an important role in my analysis of popular memory because these films are not only made for a popular audience. They are also made by common people proliferating Nene Hatun’s popular image with slight changes reflecting some nuances according to diverse ideological interpretations. It may be difficult to call some of them ‘documentary’ films, but here I am using the term to indicate their ‘non-fiction’ aim.

Only one film (**Documentary 1**)<sup>21</sup> is professionally produced and approximately 25 minutes long. It was funded by the Ministry of Youth and Sports (*Gençlikve Spor Bakanlığı*) in 2013 as a part of series of educational documentary films entitled “No Future Without Forefathers” (*Atasız Atı Olmaz*).<sup>22</sup> The film was made for use in schools and was apparently indeed shown all around the country.<sup>23</sup> Providing a detailed life story of Nene Hatun, the film tries to increase its credibility through interviews with some ‘experts’ like the author of a book on Nene Hatun, Talat Uzunyaylı<sup>24</sup> and the director of the Centre for Armenian Studies at Erzurum University, Erol Kürlçüoğlu.

The second documentary published on the Internet (**Documentary 2**)<sup>25</sup> and titled Rally of Heroes – Nene Hatun (*Kahramanlar Geçidi – Nene Hatun*) is also a professional (13-minute-long) film made by Murat Keskin for Mehtap TV. Another

(6-minute- long) documentary film on the Internet (**Documentary 3**)<sup>26</sup> is simply a form of slide presentation with some pictures and texts accompanied by music. The producer and director of this work is unknown, but it was uploaded on the Internet by 'arasbarlas' on 30. 05. 2012. The last documentary film discussed in my essay (**Documentary 4**)<sup>27</sup> titled Nene Hatun (1857-1955) was made by Cem Reis in 2013.

The first monument for Aziziye<sup>28</sup> was already erected in 1952, when Nene Hatun was alive. It depicted Nene Hatun on one of the engravings.

The opening ceremony was held on 30 August as part of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1922 victory day celebrations, although the famous defensive attack on Aziziye was on 8-9 November 1877.<sup>29</sup> Nene Hatun herself was present at the ceremony. In fact, Nene Hatun served as a 'living monument' of the historical moment that everybody gathered to commemorate, according to a prominent newspaper.<sup>30</sup> The monument was a simple construction that depicts the deeds of the civilians as well as soldiers at the time of Aziziye battle alongside the names of the fallen during the Erzurum Battle. Later, the monument of Aziziye was expanded and re-organized after the death of Nene Hatun for the centennial of the Erzurum Battle in 1977. Nene Hatun's tomb (**Monument 1**) was erected immediately after her death, on 22<sup>th</sup> of May 1955, and the re-organization the Aziziye Bastion as touristic attraction, first in 1970s and later in 1990s inscribed Nene Hatun's tomb as the central piece of the Aziziye monument with the addition of a statue (**Monument 1**), that had been removed from the city centre and replaced on top of the fountain in Aziziye Bastion in 2004. Furthermore, all of the bastions were later re-organized once more under the umbrella of Nene Hatun Historical National Park, in which not only the Aziziye monument of the 1950s and 1970s but also other republican commemoration sites were included.<sup>31</sup>

On the tomb of Nene Hatun (**Monument 1**) constructed in 1955, the year she died, there is an inscription presenting her image in popular memory:

*"Al-fatiha to the soul of heroic Turkish mother Nene Hatun who represented Turkish women's belligerent spirit and nobility to the world by fighting against Russian soldiers hand to hand at Aziziye Bastion during the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-78 when she was a young girl."*<sup>32</sup>





The greatest and best-known statue of Nene Hatun (Monument 2) is to be seen at Aziziye Tabyası (bastion). This 2,5-meter-long statue was initially erected in 1997 at the busy Tebriz Intersection in the town centre of Erzurum. Later on it was removed because of its supposedly non-authentic way of portraying Nene Hatun with a rifle in her hand and wearing an ammunition belt. In 2004 it was re-established at its present place at the top of a fountain dedicated to Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Paşa in Aziziye monument site.<sup>33</sup> (In the meantime, a statue (Monument 3) holding a meat cleaver instead of a rifle next to a man carrying a huge flag, (which will be discussed below), was erected in 2000 at the initial place of the Monument 2). The kind of discussions about specific features of statues of historical figures are not limited to Nene Hatun. Just like the rifle discussion, a statue erected for the local hero of Aydın, namely Yörük Ali Efe, was harshly criticized for not having a moustache.<sup>34</sup>



Nene Hatun is seen in the statues in Aziziye (Monument 2) not only with a rifle in her hand, but also with a munitions-belt around her belt, giving the impression of a soldier woman or a member of the (irregular or even regular) army, although such information cannot be found in any source about her.

Another monument of Nene Hatun in Erzurum was erected in 2000 at a crossroad in the town centre (Monument 3) instead of the statue of Nene Hatun with a rifle in her hand, which was later re-established in Aziziye. (**Monument 2**)



This monument was, however, also recently removed because of construction work around it. A photograph of the plinth of the statue without the statue on it appeared in the local media to reflect the ambiguity about the whereabouts and future of the statue and to complain that its disappearance "undermined the honor of the town".<sup>35</sup>





The statue depicts Nene Hatun with a kind of meat cleaver in her right hand lifted up almost ready to attack. The man next to her seems to be a civilian as well, holding a huge flag with his right hand and a sword with the left one.

Nene Hatun statues can be found all over Turkey in different cities, mostly in parks and public areas. A recent example (**Monument 4**) was inaugurated in Bahçelievler in Istanbul.<sup>36</sup>



In this statue by the sculptor Remzi Taşkiran, Nene Hatun is depicted (**Monument 4**) not only with a rifle in her hand, but also with a munitions-belt around her body, giving the impression of a *soldier* woman or a female member of a *militia*.



One report suggested that ‘some people from Erzurum’ were outraged by the depiction of Nene Hatun and viewed it as ‘a historical mistake’ attributable to the fact that the sculptor was not from Erzurum but from Adıyaman.<sup>37</sup>

The last example of Nene Hatun’s statue analysed in this essay is her bust (**Monument 5**) instituted on 13 March 1966 in front of her house as part of the 48<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Erzurum’s liberation.



The deplorable state of both the bust and the museum reportedly became a source of complaints among civil society and local media,<sup>38</sup> and one article posed the ironic question: “Does this show your respect for Nene Hatun?”



In general, the bust erected in front of her house and numerous others, plus engravings and statues to her, reflect the same rhetoric as that in the inscription on her tomb, emphasizing her stature as a role model for being a Turkish woman alongside being a Turkish mother.

There are two post stamps used in this analysis, but the first one (**Stamp 1**) released on 09 November 1952 and entitled “The 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Erzurum” is not directly and exclusively about Nene Hatun. It depicts, however, a

metaphorical Nene Hatun, or Gazi Kadın, or a woman without a name who participated in Aziziye fighting with an axe in her hand attacking a (Russian) soldier with a rifle.



Although this stamp is not a direct reference to Nene Hatun, it is hard not to think of Nene Hatun as soon as we recognize on the stamp the axe in the woman's hand. (In fact, whether it is authentic or not, the substitution of this axe for a rifle and ammunition belt was the main criticism directed at a statue of Nene Hatun (**Monument 1**) discussed earlier)

The second stamp in question was exclusively designed for Nene Hatun (**Stamp 2**) and published in May 1996 as part of a series titled "Europe's Famous Women". The design on the stamp by Mahmut Soyer resonated with the often-used popular image of Nene Hatun captured by Rahmi Pehlivanlı's portrait in 1952. There Nene Hatun is an old woman wearing a traditional headscarf.



On a web page titled 'Famous Women on Stamps' Nene Hatun is described as "a Turkish folk heroine, who became known for brutally massacring dying and



wounded Russian soldiers left behind on the battlefield after the recapture of Fort Aziziye in Erzurum from Russian forces at the start of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878.”<sup>39</sup>

The most expressive piece analysed in this essay is the Interview on TV with the head of the Association of Women Entrepreneurs in Erzurum, Zekiye Çomaklı, who claims to represent the people and especially the Turkish women (**TV Interview**) of Erzurum.<sup>40</sup> The interview, broadcasted on the local television channel Kardelen TV in December 2012 focuses on a campaign led by Zekiye Çomaklı against another Show TV broadcasted in April of the same year during which a popular contest show host reportedly commented to a participant that she was dressed in distasteful a way as Nene Hatun. This comment was then made the subject of a complaint to Turkey’s broadcasting watchdog, the Radio and Television Higher Council (RTÜK), by a lawyer (Muhammed Sait Ören) in the north western Anatolian town of Balıkesir. Çomaklı was interviewed on the Kardelen TV program because she and her association had organized a protest against the Show TV host’s comments after finding out about the incident almost 6 months later.<sup>41</sup>

Nene Hatun has apparently also been a topic in Turkish pop music: A well-known Turkish pop singer Seyyal Taner (b. 1952) released in 1974 a single record (Song – Seyyal Taner)<sup>42</sup> titled “Nene Hatun”. It was recorded in 1974 as the B side of her second LP, alongside the “Yalnızlığı Bir de Bana Sor” (Ask Me About Loneliness). The songs on the LP were written by Ali Kocatepe, Doğan Canku and herself.



Lyrics of the song “Nene Hatun” (1974) by a woman singer Seyyal Taner:

Turkish lyrics	Literal translation	Free translation
Her ağustos gelişinde Estergon Zaferi'nde Dumlupınar önlerinde söylenecek türküsü	When (every) August comes At the Estergon Victory <sup>43</sup> In front of Dumlupınar <sup>44</sup> Her song will be sung	In every August Her [Nene Hatun's] song will be sung At the Estergon Victory In front of Dumlupınar
Bin dokuz yüz küsurlarda Kahraman Türk Kadını'na Önder oldu NENE HATUN BACILARIN BACISI yiğitlerin yiğidi HATUNLARIN HATUNU NENE HATUN	In the nineteen hundreds <sup>45</sup> the hero Turkish woman She became the leader, Nene Hatun Sister of sisters, gallant of gallants Lady <sup>46</sup> of ladies Nene Hatun	Nene Hatun became the leader For the hero Turkish woman Sometime in the twentieth century  Sister of sisters, gallant of gallants Lady of ladies Nene Hatun
Bir ağustos gecesiydi Gelen düşman çizme- siydi Beni yakan nefesiydi Karşı koydu NENE HATUN	It was an August night The enemy boots were coming Her breath was burning (me) Fought back Nene Hatun	When the enemies were getting closer On an August night Nene Hatun's breath was burn- ing Nene Hatun defied the enemy

Seyyal Taner is a pop-singer whose career started as an actress and took a turn towards music alongside acting. In 1970s she recorded a series of LPs of which the third one released in 1976 was a huge success and put her on the stage for the following years. Though her popularity experienced up-and-downs throughout her career, her resurgence as a singer, and her appearance on the stage of the Eurovision Song Contest twice in the late 1980s, shone a light on her early works. “Nene Hatun”, in this sense, should be considered as a song that was recognized after her success.

### Main characteristics of audio-visual materials

One of the important characteristics of Nene Hatun's mythologized image in the popular media and hence in popular memory appears to be its ‘timelessness’. What I mean by this term s of the heroic image here is both the (usually deliberate) lack of clarity about the time period in question and the validity of the same image in and for different periods.

Regarding ‘timelessness’ in the context of ambiguity, which can be unintentional due to bad quality of the work, or could be that the reason for empirical mistakes is just the ignorance about historiographical works. ‘Timelessness’ in terms of validity of an image in different time periods is a characteristic of *myths*. Hannoun describes a myth as characteristically being “an object of strong belief and as such it

has an extraordinary power of survival. It dies only to emerge in another form, functioning in different circumstances.”<sup>47</sup>

Nene Hatun is represented as one of the main figures of the nation-building process of Turkey, although she fought during the last period of the Ottoman Empire in a war between two empires. Nene Hatun is presented in many audio-visual materials as a women hero supposedly playing a role in the foundation of the later Turkish Republic (nation state). The date deliberately chosen for the release of the feature film ‘Nene Hatun Aziziye’ (**Feature film 2**) on 29 October in order to correspond with the Republic Day celebrations is an important act in the same direction. Nene Hatun is often presented in the popular media as a heroine of the “Independence War” of Turkey! What is generally understood by the “Independence War” is the 1919-1922 regional war between Turks and Greeks after WWI in the framework of the complicated process of establishment of the post-war new order in the Ottoman territories as a part of global power struggle. This deliberate ahistorical discourse based on vague and timeless narrative of her story helps the narrators to combine several unrelated ‘historical’ events. One of the best examples for this is the song by Seyyal Taner (Song) combining “Turkish” military victories of Estergon in August 1543 and Dumlupınar in August 1922 with the Aziziye battle in November 1877, (with a clear factual distortion to claim that all three battles took place in August!).

The abuse of history is not based only on this kind of empirical distortion, but also ahistorical equation of totally different events in totally different periods and circumstances (pre-modern imperial 16<sup>th</sup>, modern imperial 19<sup>th</sup> and modern nation-state of 20<sup>th</sup> centuries) by means of a primordial understanding of an ‘ageless’ enduring ‘nation’.

The discussions around the conquest of Constantinople and the ‘heroic’ deeds of certain characters, such as the discussions revolving around whether Ulubatlı Hasan planted a so-called Turkish flag or not, and moral tales associated with these deeds, were for a long time incorporated in popular educational materials in Turkey without proper historical references. The recent feature film about the conquest of Constantinople, “Fetih 1453”, repeated the same “ageless” story in which Ulubatlı Hasan plants the “Turkish” flag on the city walls.. In line with the same strategy, the anniversary of Battle of Malazgirt was celebrated as the precursor for today’s Turkey. In recent years, this has also been imbued with religious connotations. The celebrations for the 942<sup>th</sup> anniversary, for example, were opened by collective prayer, in which an actor wearing a historical custom acted the part of Alp Arslan.<sup>48</sup>

The identification of classical (pre-modern) imperial collective identity of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the modern imperial Ottoman “nation” and the modern ethnocentric Turkish nation may be explained (in a deliberately confusing and confused way) with the common nationalist myth of ‘eternalness’ and endurance. The problem about the story of Nene Hatun in the popular memory becomes even more complicated because of the Islamic element in it. On one hand, the classical rather abstract and vague Islamic group allegiance (*ümmet*) is incorrectly identified with the one

intended to be constructed by the modern(ist) Islamists of the late Ottoman Empire, which can be discussed in the same framework of “ahistorical” understanding discussed above. On the other hand, the continuous use of Islamic discourse (or rhetoric) in the construction of the modern ethnocentric Turkish nation makes the place of Islamic rhetoric in the popular media a rather complicated issue, which will be discussed below.

From the beginning of the national mythologization process on, one interesting feature of the dominant discourse was the arbitrary use of the ethnonym for different actors of the war of 1877 – 1878 especially in the Turkish nationalist narratives. A common mistake is to call this war the Russo-“Turkish” War, as (leaving aside the Russian side) the latter state fighting was, by no means, a Turkish one, but an empire run by the Ottoman dynasty and the modern bureaucracy which had emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although the multi-ethnic characteristics of both the state apparatus (rulers) and the subjects of the empire has usually been acknowledged by international Ottoman historians, even some established scholars mistakenly sometimes apply the term ‘Turkish’ when referring to the state, the country and/or its people. In the case of the discursive construction (and continuous reconstruction) of the Turkish nation, however, the choice is not due to a mistake but a clear primordial ideology: One of the synthetic versions of Turkism claiming and/or advocating direct continuity between the Ottoman Empire and the modern Turkish Republic, perceive and present as Turkish the Ottoman Empire, many other earlier states and today’s Turkey. It is not surprising, in this context, to observe an ethnocentric image of the war and its actors, including Nene Hatun, up to the 1950s in Turkey when secularist ideology was predominant, although sporadic and eclectic use of Islamic rhetoric was also embedded in it. From the 1950s on, however, the Islamic characteristics of the Turk-Islamist synthesis as state policy were emphasized. Consequently, greater attention was paid to the Islamic character of the Russo-Ottoman war 1877 – 1878, the Aziziye Battle as heroic episode in this war and its Ottoman actors. The abovementioned celebration campaign in 1952 seems to be a turning point, although the shift then was not radical because the secularist Turkish army played the leading role in the commemorations. The shift tied to general political changes in Turkey since then can be observed more clearly in the popular media in the last decade during which Islamist discourse has become gradually more dominant in Turkey and finally determinant of today’s state politics.

In line with these changes, was this year’s official invitation by the governor of Erzurum to break the Ramazan fast collectively at the Aziziye Fort in honor of the fallen soldiers at the Aziziye battle and Nene Hatun.<sup>49</sup>

In spite of these changes and shifts in the discursive construction of Nene Hatun’s image in Turkey, we can observe a kind of a continuously multi-layered discourse making rather random and opportunist use of ethnic and religious discourses. In the popular memory and in the audio-visual materials reflecting it, Nene Hatun and her associates/comrades would fight for the defence of their ‘nation’,



which could mean the ethnocentric collective identity Turkishness (*ulus* = ‘Nation’ in Turkish) or religious collective identity Muslimhood (*ümmet/ummah* = ‘Nation’ in Arabic). The fact that the term *millet* is used for both collective identities in Turkish language has provided a good basis for the usually deliberate vagueness in the presentation of Nene Hatun as a part of the multi-layered discourse. Another way of manoeuvring in this multi-layered discourse was emphasizing that Nene Hatun and her comrades fought for the defence of their motherland (*vatan*), which can be understood as the Islamic, Ottoman or the Turkish homeland. Ottomanist characteristics in the image of Nene Hatun, as a weak part of the discourse, can be observed only in this framework. Apart from this more general patriotism (with reference to different *patri*) there is another (rather supplementary) feature of this discourse hinting at local patriotism (or local chauvinism) referring to Erzurum as the hometown (*memleket*) they fought for without rejecting the above-mentioned general patriotism. (It is interesting to note that the Turkish word *memleket* meaning the hometown is often used also for motherland.)

One more piece of the multi-layered discourse that makes some narratives sound rather confused and confusing is the presentation of Nene Hatun as a model for the modern Turkish woman that Kemalist regime wanted to create/construct. One of the best examples of this kind of modern Kemalism in the mythologized figure of Nene Hatun is a theatre drama performed by a young woman as a kind of one-woman show during the international women’s day celebrations in 2013.<sup>50</sup> Oddly enough, the narrator tells her audience that Nene Hatun was in such a desperate situation in 1943 (20 years after the foundation of the Turkish Republic) that she had to write a petition to ask for government aid. The narrator does not, however, question the reasons for the lack of interest in her conditions from the government.

Another problematic issue, which can also be discussed in the framework of the identity question, is varying presentation of the enemy Nene Hatun and her comrades fought against. The main enemy univocally demonised is Russia, which is usually not presented as a multi-ethnic empire ruled by the dynasty of Romanovs but rather a mono-ethnic state of the ‘Russians’, supposedly the arch-enemy of the Ottoman Empire, which had gradually been carving bigger pieces of land from the latter. It is not a coincidence, therefore, that some feature or documentary films start with a dynamic chronological map depicting the loss of territories to the Russians. Talat Uzunyaylı, talking in the **Documentary 1**, also underlines people’s hatred towards the Russians they fought against at the Aziziye battle. The director of the Centre for Armenian Studies at Erzurum University, Erol Kürlüoğlu also underlines the Russian threat and enmity as important motives for people’s enthusiastic participation in this battle. A woman interviewee in the same documentary also indicates the Russians as the main enemy. The illustration on the Stamp 1 also depicts an armed Russian soldier attacked by Nene Hatun with an axe in her hand.

The emphasis on the Russians as an arch-enemy invading ‘our’ homeland, leads to a more general and abstract element in this discourse, which is related to a

kind of patriotism: Nene Hatun and her comrades' fight against the *invaders* is presented as the honourable duty for every citizen. Based on this general and abstract image of the enemy as an the invader in the popular memory, the lesson or morale (principle) of the narratives is that one should be ready to leave his or her family in order to wholeheartedly fight against the invaders.

An important feature of the arch-enemy – the Russians, often-named *Moskofs* ('Muscovites', a term used in Turkish rather with a pejorative tone) is 'their' religion, Christianity, which has been represented as the 'other' in the Turk-Islamist ideology. It is stated in the Documentary 3, for example, that the people of Erzurum responded to the call for the fight against the 'Moskofs' who had invaded the Azziye Fort. According to this essentialist 'ahistorical' anti-Christian approach believing in the continuity of the same enmity from the time of the Crusades through all those centuries until today, the Russians, who had invaded the lands of the Muslims in Asia, desperately aimed to reach the 'warm waters' of the Mediterranean through invasion of the Muslim lands of the Ottoman Empire.

Related to this deep-rooted and usually fanatical anti-Christian mentality, an anti-Armenian sentiment has also been evident because the Armenians of the region did supposedly play a crucial role in the invasion of the Aziziye fort in the first place. There are different versions of this betrayal story in the audio-visual materials and in popular media in general, but there is a consensus about some local Armenians helping the Russians through their indigenous geographic and linguistic knowledge. In the Documentary 1, for example, Armenians from three villages in the neighbourhood are accused of approaching the Turkish guards around the fort to learn the Turkish soldiers' watchword or countersign, which they transmitted to the Russians. In the **Documentary 4**, which opens with the statement that Nene Hatun was 'a woman who fought against the Armenians with her brother's sword', Armenians are shown as the main enemy in this battle! It is later stated in the same documentary that the Armenians of the region had killed the Ottoman soldiers at the Aziziye fort when the latter were asleep in order to amplify, in a way, the level of the sedition of the former.<sup>51</sup> The number of the Armenians she killed at this battle, which is alleged to be seventeen, is quoted at the end of the film. An indicative story about the hostility against the Armenians among the local people can be found in a news report by a local journalist who implicitly praises this enmity. The film maker of the Feature Film 2 could apparently not find local people to play the role of the Armenians in the film shot in 2010 in Erzurum, and consequently he decided to offer higher payment to convince some to participate in the movie.<sup>52</sup> It is stated in the description of the Moment 2 on an Internet page that Armenian gangs from two villages in the region did sneakily enter the Aziziye fort and have killed the Ottoman soldiers.<sup>53</sup> One of the boldest expressions against the Armenians can be found in the TV interview with Zekiye Çomaklı, who regards the Armenians as the main enemy not only in the Aziziye battle but also today. She even hints at the possibility of the fact that the Show TV host (against whom she was protesting) could be a

'crypto-Armenian' because only an Armenian could do such a thing as denigrating Nene Hatun's clothing.

The place of the anti-Armenian element in the multi-layered discourse on Nene Hatun is very peculiar because the Armenians do not easily fit into the rhetoric of invaders because the Armenians of the region had been there for a longer time than the Turks. The question of why the Armenians as Ottomans would support the Russians and fight against the Ottoman state or against other Ottoman people is never raised. Instead, they are presented as essentially betrayers hating the Turks and/or Muslims. It is usually not very clear in these narratives whether the Armenians are treated as locals (one of 'us') or outsiders ('them'). Whenever they are presented as locals of the region, it is done so only to emphasize their treachery.

While praising a woman volunteering in a war to defend her holy motherland or blessed 'nation' as the model conduct of the citizen conscious of his/her duties, those who mythologize Nene Hatun nevertheless display a sexist bias: Nene Hatun is usually praised for defying the female norm which ascribes no heroic and leading role to women. She is presented to the male citizen as demonstrating that *even* a woman takes initiative to defend the motherland and the nation. The implicit message given in this narrative is that such a virtue could and should actually not be expected from a woman!

It is interesting to know that there is no term like 'fatherland', but only 'motherland' (*anavatan*) in Turkish language; and this is the 'holy and sanctified motherland' which is supposed to be defended by its sons. A *mother* taking part in the defence of the *motherland* in *exceptional* times is praiseworthy but does not destabilize conventional gender roles. The role of women in normal times is rather to raise citizens (sons) in a correct way and to prepare them to serve their nation as soldiers, politicians, entrepreneurs, teachers, etc. Motherland is to be defended and run by fathers and sons!

Another sexist dimension of Nene Hatun's story in popular media is about her secondary role in the war, which is a men's job! According to this discourse, not only the participation of women in battles is abnormal, but also the way they could and should participate must be unconventional. Even under exceptional circumstances when women do take part in fighting, they can at best be given a secondary role in the battle as a member of irregular or provisional auxiliary forces. One of the best examples of this discourse can be seen in Documentary 4, where Nene Hatun is portrayed as a helper to the men fighting for the motherland also after the war. As a woman she can participate not as a soldier or officer but as a civilian to supplement men only for a certain period, because such noble characteristics like bravery, boldness, strength, etc. are not expected from women. It is openly stated in the Documentary 1 that men are supposed to be brave, whereas women are supposed to protect their sexual honour (*namus*).

The discussion about extraordinary and subordinate characteristics of "woman warrior" in popular discourse would lead us to the problematic issue of women and military service in general, at the crossroad of militarism and feminism.<sup>54</sup> I

want to elaborate here on the militaristic dimension of the image of Nene Hatun in popular memory through the study of the same audio-visual materials.

Most of the audio-visual materials of this analysis (usually with an inherited macho or masculinity discourse) were produced by men. The narrator of the Documentary 1, for example, emphasizes that the usual focus of historiography is the elite and men in which women like Nene Hatun are neglected. One song and one TV interview among the materials are two important exceptions in this framework that need to be analysed separately, from which we can expect to hear the voice of women. What we hear, however, in Seyyal Taner's song (1973), the text of which was written by her and two men, does not present a different version of Nene Hatun. The song repeats the same sexist discourse although a woman sings it. Even more interesting example in this framework is the TV interview with Zekiye Çomaklı, the head of the *Association of Entrepreneur Women* in Erzurum, in which she emphasizes her gender, but repeats the masculinity stereotypes of the existing discourse on Nene Hatun as a heroine.

One of the prevalent features of the discourse on Nene Hatun is militarism within the context of nationalist discourse and the appraisal of institutionalized and un-institutionalized armed struggle (war) for motherland or fatherland. The peculiarity that differentiates this militarism from the "general patriotism" is the direct reference to military and war in the framework of the defence of one's fatherland and especially to the militaristic characteristics of the Turkish nation based on the Turkish myth of "soldier nation" or "military nation"<sup>55</sup> ready to fight against any enemy. It is important to note that Nene Hatun's enemy in Seyya Taner's song is not even clear. The director of the Centre for Armenian Studies at Erzurum University, Erol Kürlüoğlu states in the Documentary 1, for example, that the victory at Aziziye fort was won through the union of the army and the nation. In this film blind obedience of the Turkish nation to the orders of the army is praised.

Accompanied by propaganda images and poetic texts, all the documentary films have a kind of military music as a background. Seyyal Taner's song on Nene Hatun itself sounds like a military march and there are also sounds of military boots and galloping horses in the background. All documentary films end with Nene Hatun's statement to an American general claiming that she would fight even at that age for the motherland if necessary – in order to show the constant willingness and readiness of the Turkish nation (and even its women) to join or help the army to fight against the enemies.

It is very interesting to read in the press release of one feature film (feature film 2) that it was initially intended to go beyond narrow militaristic rhetoric and offer a more general lesson or morale by using Nene Hatun's heroism to teach Turkish girls that one should not despair in extraordinarily difficult times. As is stated in the press release of the film makers, the heroic act of Nene Hatun was intended to be connected in the script starting with a contemporary school girl and talented skier in today's Turkey.

Having found out about the serious illness of her brother she is devastated and finds it difficult to take part in the contest but her teacher tells her the story of Nene Hatun to instill the moral about the possibility of overcoming overwhelming difficulties at any time. The film, surprisingly, left out this moral, and instead focused on the historical event of the Aziziye Battle emphasizing the heroic role of Nene Hatun whose place among other civilian participants was actually not exaggerated as in all other stories in popular media which often presented her as the *leader* or *initiator* of the civilian participation. In the above-mentioned song by Seyyal Taner, for example, it is stated that “Nene Hatun became the leader”. In the Documentary 1, on the other hand, Talat Uzunyaylalı talks about her as *one of many* participants of this campaign by children, elderly, women and men. One of the women interviewees in the Documentary 1 states that she wished she were as good as Nene Hatun, without telling in what respect.

### **Multi-layered discourse of mythologization**

This essay does not address local accounts of Nene Hatun told by her family, or by the people from her neighbourhood or the town of Erzurum. We know, however, that as one of the women taking part in the battle against the Russian forces on 9 November 1877, together with the regular Ottoman army, to recapture Fort Aziziye in Erzurum from Russian forces. Nene Kırkgöz (Hatun) achieved little recognition in the country until her deeds were extolled to serve the discursive construction of the Turkish-Islamic nation in the twentieth century. There had hardly been a widespread image of Nene Hatun as a heroine in Turkey before that. The well-known image of Nene Hatun in the popular memory (‘cultural memory’ in Assman’s term) was constructed and spread by the Turkish media and state institutions. As stated by Kutluata, “...as far as the sources that could be reached ..., she became popular not during the Ottoman period, rather during the Republican period.”<sup>56</sup>

The role of the Istanbul-based Turkish journalist İsmail Habib Sevrük, who interviewed her in 1937, is important in the re-discovery of Nene Hatun.<sup>57</sup> It is not clear whether he was able to popularize her legacy, because in 1943 Nene Hatun complained herself that she had been neglected by the state.

Two events contributed to the mythologization of Nene Hatun as a heroine (while she was still alive in 1952). The first one was the celebration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “Aziziye Victory” during which the Aziziye Monument with Nene Hatun engravings was inaugurated.



The second development that played an important role in the popularization of her image as a heroine was her second appearance in the Turkish press together with the American General Matthew Ridgway, who was visiting Erzurum after the Korean War as the NATO commander in 1952.<sup>58</sup>



Both of these events and the stories transmitted about them were used to disseminate widely the mythologized image of Nene Hatun in Turkish popular memory. Nene Hatun's legacy as a woman who fought the Russians was brought once again into service in the context of the Cold War. .

In this respect, another important visit was the one in 1954 (one year before she died) by General William Fechteler who was the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces in Southern Europe.<sup>59</sup> This visit was also reported in the USA with a photograph of General Fechteler visiting Nene Hatun – a picture on which he “shakes hands with Nene Hatun, 99-year-old heroine of 1877”.<sup>60</sup>



In the same year (1954), Nene Hatun was declared as the “Granny of the Third Army” by General Nurettin Baransel, the Commander of the Third Army based in Erzurum. (Sometimes it is claimed that she was pronounced as the “Granny of the Turkish Armed Forces” in general.)

The year 1955 was significant in the process of mythologization of Nene Hatun and especially of her popularization as a heroine (warrior woman). Most importantly, her death on 22 May of that year and her official funeral on 24 May 1955 were widely covered by the press of that time and her reputation extolled in laudatory terms.<sup>61</sup> She was buried in 1955 next to the Aziziye Monument within a military zone and her monumental tomb (**Monument 1**) has become an important site for visitors.

Another important event of the year 1955 that had taken place just two weeks before Nene Hatun died was the fact that she was declared on 8 May 1955 the “Mother of the Year” by the *Union of Turkish Women (Türk Kadınlar Birliği)*. The

Union had decided earlier in the same year to start to nominate one Turkish mother as such every year. Hence Nene Hatun was the first person chosen as the “Mother of the Year” in Turkish history and she was again lauded in the press as a heroine.<sup>62</sup>

In 1959, Tevfik Fikret Karagözoğlu published a popular book titled “Nene Hatun: The Heroine of Aziziye”, which the author dedicated to the fearless and virtuous Turkish women full of love for the homeland.<sup>63</sup>

Nene Hatun’s image as an abstract (“timeless” and “placeless”) Turkish heroine continued to spread since streets, schools and places in different towns of Turkey were named after her. As the relevant historical context gradually faded away, Nene Hatun as a historical figure and her “museum house” and bust inaugurated in 1966 outside the house where she died, fell into neglect. Nene Hatun started mistakenly to be accepted rather as a heroine during the so-called Turkish Independence War (1919-22). Seyyal Taner’s song (1973) can be seen as a culmination of this development where Nene Hatun had become a symbolic figure present at diverse times and places and “recycled” at different moments.

Nene Hatun as a historical figure within its correct context, i.e. in Aziziye Battle in Erzurum in 1877, was popularized again both by the state through commemorations especially in Erzurum and a documentary film in 2013 (**Documentary 1**) prepared to be screened in schools in different towns and through the inauguration of statues (**Monument 2, Monument 3 and Monument 4**). It was also popularized through professional documentaries prepared by TV channels (**Documentary 2**) or individuals (**Documentary 3 and Documentary 4**), and through media, Internet and a feature film (**Feature film 2**). Popular literature played an important role in this process as well.<sup>64</sup>

Observing the recent interest in this mythologized figure, it is important to remember that it was only in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that she was “re-discovered” during the Cold War era as a surviving witness and an actor of the “Aziziye Victory” against the Russians (who represented in that time the “communist threat” for both the Western world and its ally Turkey). An interesting testimony to the fact that she was an unknown personality living unrecognized under very difficult conditions during the Second World War is her petition dated 18 August 1943 to the president of that time, İsmet İnönü, asking for urgent financial aid.<sup>65</sup> In the theatre drama performed by a young woman on international women’s day as a kind of one-woman show, the narrator reads this letter sent to the state authorities by Nene Hatun in 1943 to complain about her living conditions and ask for state support.<sup>66</sup> This shows that Sevük’s discovery of Nene Hatun and the interview with her in 1937 did not lead to a long lasting recognition of Nene Hatun.

Finally, it is important to note that the glorification of Nene Hatun’s role in a military campaign can also be seen a way of turning the story of a disastrous military defeat into an honourable victory through exaggeration of a minor battle victory. In reality, this Russian - Ottoman war and especially the battles on its eastern fronts (Southern Caucasus – North-eastern Anatolia) had all ended in humiliating



defeats for the Ottoman Empire. As a diversion from the disaster, a small victory on the battlefield was romanticized and the facts behind it were distorted by adopting a narrative in support of nationalism and militarism. The story of Nene Hatun as a kind of particular (micro) heroism within a more general (macro) defeat is recast as a vital step which prevented the further advance of the Russians into Anatolia to preserve the town of Erzurum ('the key to Anatolia': Document 2) from invasion. The myth leaves out the question of why the Russian armies should stop advancing after the recapture of just one fort by the Ottomans. The much more complicated reasons for the end of the war and the cessation of the advancement of the Russian troops against the beaten and exhausted Ottoman armies are not part of the questions addressed in popular discourse.

This essay attempted to analyse the constructed discourse of Nene Hatun's mythologization in popular memory by focusing on audio-visual materials. I tried to show that the instrumentalist and opportunist characteristics of the discursive construction and continuous reconstruction of a nation, especially through the use of mythologized figures, is based on the abuse of 'historical facts' to the extent of manipulation, distortion and even fabrication. Sometime they even lead to absurdity and eccentricity. Nene Hatun, who was apparently *one* of the voluntary civil participants of the Aziziye Battle, was elevated through this process to being the *leader* or *initiator* of the civilian participants or even at times treated as if she were the only fighter. One simple reason for this might be the fact that she lived long enough to be "discovered" by nationalist journalists and by particular military officials decades after the event. The main reason was, however, that the constructed image of the heroine was very useful in the construction (and continuous re-construction) of a modern (Islamic and/or Turkish) collective identity in the Turkish Republic, which continues today with an even more emphasized Islamic character.

<sup>1</sup> Yuval-Davis, Nira, *Gender & Nation*, London: SAGE, 1997; Vince, Natalya, *Our Fighting Sisters. Nation, Memory and Gender in Algeria, 1954-2012*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015; Kandiyoti, Deniz (ed.), *Women, Islam & the State*, London: Macmilan, 1991, 30-32.

<sup>2</sup> Carlyle, Thomas, *On Heroes, Hero Worship, and The Heroic in History*, Echo Library, 2011, 178-224.

<sup>3</sup> Bilmez, Bülent, *Mythologization of an Ottoman Intellectual in the Modern Turkish and Socialist Albanian Historiographies based on 'selective perception': Sami Frashëri or Şemseddin Sami Bey?*, *Balkanologie*, Vol. VII, 2, 2003, 19-46; Bilmez, Bülent, *Şemseddin Sami ve 'Sakıncalı' bir Kitapla ilgili Tartışmalarda Milliyetçi Retorik*, *Müteferrika*, 1, 2006/, 45-87; Bilmez, Bülent, *Modern Türkiye ve Sosyalist Arnavutluk Basınında Şemseddin Sami Frashëri İmaji*, [The Image of Shemseddin Sami Frashëri in the press of modern Turkey and socialist Albania], *Balkanlarda İslam Medeniyeti*, II. Milletlerarası Sempozyumu Tebliğleri, İstanbul: IRCICA, 2, 2006, 71-125.

<sup>4</sup> Bilmez, Bülent, A Discourse of Heroism and Treason: The Conflicting Images of Çerkes Ethem (1886–1948) in Turkish Historiography. In: Singer, Amy; Neumann, Christoph K.; Somel, SelçukAkşin (eds.), *Untold Histories of the Middle East: Recovering Voices from the 19th and 20th Centuries*, London & New York: Routledge, 2011, 106-123.

<sup>5</sup> Bilmez, Bülent, Mitleri, Tartışabilmek: Sabiha Gökçen Mitosu ve Tanışma Ortamı [Being Able to Discuss the Myths: The Myth of Sabiha Gökçen and Discussion Atmosphere], *Toplumsal Tarih*, 124 (Nisan), 2004, 50-56.

<sup>6</sup> For my article on memory politics in Turkey, written in the framework of the same MEMORYROW Project as this one, see: Bilmez, Bülent, *Memory Politics and Cultures in Turkey*, *Balkanistic Forum*, 1, 2013, 133-148.

<sup>7</sup> *Politics of Memory and Memory Cultures of the Russian – Ottoman War 1877/1878: From Divergence to Dialogue (MEMORYROW)*.

<sup>8</sup> Şen, Bayram; Çetin, Sinan, Nationalist Narratives on the Aziziye Bastions and Nene Hatun: A Place to Remember the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878?, *Balkanistic Forum*, 1-2-3, 2014, 14-37.

<sup>9</sup> Şen and Çetin suggest at this point the following sources: Bakanlığı, T. C. Milli Savunma, *Milli Mücadele’de Cumhuriyetin İlk Yıllarında Kadınlarımız* [Our Women during the War of Independence and the Early Years of the Republic], Ankara, 1981; Mısıroğlu, Aynur, *Kuva-yı Milliye’nin Kadın Kahramanları* [The Heroines of Nationalist Forces], İstanbul, 1976; Alagöz, Osman, *Milli Mücadelede Kınalı Eller* [Nennaed Hands in the Nationalist Struggle], İstanbul, 2006; Şahin, Cemile; Şahin, Mustafa, *Osmanlı Son Dönemi ile Milli Mücadele Yıllarında Türk Kadınının Sosyal, Siyasî ve Askerî Faaliyetleri* [Turkish Women’s Social, Political and Military Role in the Late Ottoman and Nationalist Struggle], *Nevşehir Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 2 (2013), 53-72.

<sup>10</sup> Şen, Çetin, *Narratives*, 9, 14.

<sup>11</sup> İşte Nene Hatun [Here Nene Hatun]. Web. 28 December 2015.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJJKGsJtvKw>.

<sup>12</sup> *Gazi Kadın – Türk Filmi*, 1973 [Gazi Kadın Turkish movie]. Web. 21 December 2015.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwtCuRqn1ls>.

<sup>13</sup> Gürkan, Turhan, Nene Hatun’dan ‘GaziKadın’a, *Cumhuriyet*, 23 February 1974, 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>15</sup> Şen, Çetin, *Narratives*, 9, 28.

<sup>16</sup> For detailed cast members and crew see: *Nene Hatun film*, *Türk Sinemaları Araştırma Merkezi (TSA)* [Research Center for Turkish Cinema]. Web. 17 December 2015.

<http://www.tsa.org.tr/film/filmgoster/3003/nene-hatun>.

<sup>17</sup> For a detailed break-down of box office performance see: *Boxoffice, Turkey*. Web. 17 December 2015. <http://boxofficeturkiye.com/film/nene-hatun-2010729?filmop=hafta>.

<sup>18</sup> Tolga Şen, Murat, *Beyazperde Eleştirisi*, *Beyazperde*. Web. 18 December 2015.

<http://www.beyazperde.com/filmler/film-186875/elestiriler-beyazperde/>.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Köçer, Suat, *Nene Hatun*, *Film Arası*, 6, 2011, 15.

<sup>20</sup> *Nene Hatun’un Başını Açtılar*, *Timeturk*, 12.11.2010, Web. 15 December 2015.

<http://www.timeturk.com/tr/2010/11/12/nene-hatun-un-basini-actilar.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Web. 10 December 2015.

[http://ebilgi.gsb.gov.tr/EXPIRE/20140601/NENEHATUN\\_BELGESELI\\_2013.zip](http://ebilgi.gsb.gov.tr/EXPIRE/20140601/NENEHATUN_BELGESELI_2013.zip).

<sup>22</sup> Within the context of this project, Ministry of Youth and Sports funded the following documentaries (1) “Akshamsaddin” (Akşemseddin) who was a guide of Mehmed II (Conqueror), (2) “The Youth is On the Trail of Martyrs: Sarıkamış” (Gençlik Şühedanın İzinde: Sarıkamış) which was an incogitable war between the Ottoman army commanded by Enver Pasha and Russian army in 1914, and (3) “Nene Hatun”.

<sup>23</sup> "Atasız AtıOlmaz" Adlı Proje Kapsamında, Nene Hatun, Akşemsettin Hazretlerine Gençlik Şühedanın İzinde-Sarıkamış Belgesellerin Gösterim Programı. Web. 13 December 2015. [http://yukarikaleilkokulu.meb.k12.tr/meb\\_iys\\_dosyalar/58/08/703306/icerikler/atasiz-ati-olmaz-adli-proje-kapsaminda-nene-hatun-aksemsettin-hazretleri-ve-genclik-suhedanin-izinde-sarikamis-belgesellerin-gosterim-programi\\_927576\\_gorme\\_engelli.html](http://yukarikaleilkokulu.meb.k12.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/58/08/703306/icerikler/atasiz-ati-olmaz-adli-proje-kapsaminda-nene-hatun-aksemsettin-hazretleri-ve-genclik-suhedanin-izinde-sarikamis-belgesellerin-gosterim-programi_927576_gorme_engelli.html).

<sup>24</sup> Uzunyaylalı, M. Talat, Efsane Kadın Nene Hatun, İstanbul: NesilYayınları, 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Mehtap Tv – Kahramanlar Geçidi: Nene Hatun. Web. 21 December 2015. [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xyiejt\\_mehtap-tv-kahramanlar-gecidi-nene-hatun\\_shortfilms](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xyiejt_mehtap-tv-kahramanlar-gecidi-nene-hatun_shortfilms).

<sup>26</sup> Nene Hatun. Web. 20 December 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tX1RcidbJ9c>.

<sup>27</sup> Nene Hatun'u ne kadartanıyoruz? Web. 17 December 2015.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNfPbuiOxIM>.

<sup>28</sup> Aziziye Tabyası - Nene Hatun Mezari. Web. 15 December 2015.

<http://www.360cities.net/image/aziziye-tabyasi-2#0.00,0.00,70.0>.

<sup>29</sup> The year 1952 was important for the simultaneous celebration of the anniversaries of two different events both to emphasize the idea of continuity and to reinforce the image of a ‘military nation’: The year 1952 was the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ‘Aziziye Victory’ of the (civil and military) Ottomans against the Russians (and supposedly against the Armenians!) in 1877 in Erzurum and it was also the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ‘Dumlupınar Victory’ of the Kemalist Ankara government against the Greek Army (and supposedly also against western imperialism!) in Western Turkey. This opportunity seemed to be used by the Turkish state and especially by the Turkish army as in can be seen in the following publication: Aziziye’lçin [For Aziziye], Ankara: Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, 1952.

<sup>30</sup> Aziziye Abidesi Törenle Açıldı, Cumhuriyet, 03 September 1952, 1, 4.

<sup>31</sup> For the official site of national park: Nenehatun Milli Parkı. Web. 21 December 2015.

<http://www.milliparklar.gov.tr/mp/nenehatun/index.htm>.

<sup>32</sup> Original text in Turkish: “1877-78 Osmanlı-Rus Harbinde Aziziye tabyada genç kız iken Rus askerleriyle göğüs göğüse çarpışarak Türk kadınının savaşçılık ruh ve asaletini dünyaya tanıtan kahraman türk anası Nene Hatun'un ruhuna fatiha. Vefatı 22 Mayıs 1955”.

<sup>33</sup> İpek, Turgay, Nene Hatun Heykeli Aziziye Tabyalarında, Hürriyet, 28 April 2004. Web. 17 December 2015. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/nene-hatun-heykeli-aziziye-tabyalari-nda-221187>.

<sup>34</sup> Ata, Yalçın; Duyar, Hilmi; Hikmet, Sepet, Efe Kösemyidi, Bıyıklımyıdı?, Hürriyet, 23 December 1997. Web. 22 December 2015.

<http://webarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/1997/12/23/20917.asp>.

<sup>35</sup> Sabuncuoğlu, Kadir, Uçtu Uçtu Nene Hatun’un Heykeli Uçtu, Erk Haber, 20 February 2015. Web. 20 December 2015. <http://erkhaber.com/tr-TR/kose-yazilari/18204/uctu-uctu-nene-hatunun-heykeli-uctu>.

<sup>36</sup> Nene Hatun Anıtı Açıldı, İstanbul Times Haber Merkezi, 18 October 2012, Web. 19 December 2015. <http://www.istanbultimes.com.tr/ilceler/bahcelievler/nene-hatun-aniti-acildi-h17689.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Nenehatun AnıtındaTarihi Hata, DoğuTürk – Doğu'nun Haber Portalı, 25 December 2012. Web. 17 December 2015. <http://www.doguturk.com/guncel/nenehatun-anitinda-tarihi-hata-h4606.html>.

<sup>38</sup> Bu Mu Nene Hatun'a Saydiniz! Erk Haber, 17 April 2014. Web. 18 December 2015. <http://erksaber.com/tr/haberler/9002/bu-mu-nene-hatuna-sayginiz>.

<sup>39</sup> Famous Women on Stamps. Web. 16 December 2015. <http://www2.arnes.si/~bcebul/st-galer-h-desna.htm>.

<sup>40</sup> Comakli, Zekiye, Nene Hatun Gerçeği. Web. 20 December 2015.

<https://www.facebook.com/Erzurumyolculari/videos/138563146296748/>.

<sup>41</sup> Nene Hatun'la İlgili Haberimiz Geniş Yankı Buldu!, Erzurum Haber Gazetesi', 15 December 2012. Web. 23 December 2015. <http://www.erkhaber.com/37795-nene-hatunla-ilgili-haberimiz-genis-yanki-buldu>.

<sup>42</sup> Taner, Seyyal, Nene Hatun Song. Web. 20 December 2015.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=quCk2Mw4D4>.

<sup>43</sup> The Siege of Esztergom (Turkish: Estergon) occurred between 25 July and 10 August 1543, when the Ottoman army, led by emperor Suleyman the Magnificent, besieged the city of Esztergom in modern Hungary. The city was captured by the Ottomans after two weeks.

<sup>44</sup> The Battle of Dumlupınar (Turkish: Dumlupınar (Meydan) Muharebesi or Başkumandanlık Meydan Muharebesi, literally "Field Battle of the Commander-in-Chief") was the last battle in the Greco-Turkish War (1919–1922) (part of the so-called 'Turkish War of Independence'). The battle was fought from 26 to 30 August 1922 near Dumlupınar, Kütahya in Turkey.

<sup>45</sup> 'Nineteen hundred something' (twentieth century!).

<sup>46</sup> Hatun also means 'wife', 'woman', 'esteemed woman'.

<sup>47</sup> Hannoum, Abdelmajid, Colonial and Post-Colonial Memories. The Legend of the Kahina, A North African Heroine, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Hannoum, 2001, 137.

<sup>48</sup> Malazgirt Zaferi Kutlamaları Sabah Namazıyla Başladı, Sabah, 26 August 2013. Web. 28 December 2015. <http://www.sabah.com.tr/karadenizdoguanadolu/2013/08/26/malazgirt-zaferi-kutlamalari-sabah-namaziyla-basladi>.

<sup>49</sup> Aziziye Tabyası'nda şehit Yakınları ve Gazilerle İftar, Doğan Haber Ajansı, 10 July 2015. Web. 28 December 2015. [http://www.dha.com.tr/aziziye-tabyasinda-sehit-yakinlari-ve-gazilerle-iftar\\_976593.html](http://www.dha.com.tr/aziziye-tabyasinda-sehit-yakinlari-ve-gazilerle-iftar_976593.html).

<sup>50</sup> Web. 20 December 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPznBtQ2fU4>.

<sup>51</sup> This is repeated also in the description of the Monument 2 on an Internet page: Nene Hatun Heykeli. Web. 20 December 2015. <http://www.360cities.net/image/nene-hatun-heykeli#93.80,-8.20,70.0>.

<sup>52</sup> Akan, Tevfik, 'Nene Hatun' Filmi İçin 'Ermeni' Bulunamıyor, Milliyet, 28 April 2010. Web. 23 December 2015. <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/-nene-hatun-filmi-icin-ermeni-bulunamiyor/gundem/gundemdetay/28.04.2010/1231085/default.htm>.

<sup>53</sup> Web. 21 December 2015. <http://www.360cities.net/image/nene-hatun-heykeli#93.80,-8.20,70.0>.

<sup>54</sup> For the discussions about women and military service, in the broader framework of militarism, war propaganda and feminism, see: Altınay, Ayşe Gül (ed.), Vatan Millet Kadınlar, [Motherland, Nation, Women], İstanbul: İletişim, 2004; Kancı, Tuba, Imagining the Turkish

Men and Women: Nationalism, Modernism and Militarism in Primary School Textbooks, 1928-2000", PhD Thesis, Sabancı University, İstanbul, 2007.

<sup>55</sup> Altınay, Vatan, 54.

<sup>56</sup> Kutluata, Zeynep, Gender and War During the Late Ottoman and Early Republican Era: The Case of Kara Fatma(s), MA Thesis, Sabancı University, 2006, 32.

<sup>57</sup> Sevük, İsmail Habib, Aziziye'nin Bugün de Yaşayan Şahitleri", Cumhuriyet, 2 Mart 1937, 3.

Başkomutanın Mühim Beyanâtı, Milliyet, 11 September 1952, 7. After the interview, Sevük tried to give some money to her, she refused to get the money and asked for a job to look after her family.

<sup>58</sup> Başkomutanın Mühim Beyanâtı, Milliyet, 11 September 1952, 7.

<sup>59</sup> Gl. Fechteler Nene Hatunla Görüştü, Milliyet, 07 September 1954, 3.

<sup>60</sup> Santa Cruz Sentinel from Santa Cruz, California, 16 September 1954, 11.

<sup>61</sup> Annelerin Annesi Nene Hatun Öldü, Milliyet, 23 May 1955, 1; Aziziye Kahramanı Nene Hatun Bugün Askerî Merasimle Aziziye Şehitliğine Defnediliyor, Akşam, 23 May 1955, 1; Nene Hatun Erzurumda Hayata Gözlerini Yumdu, Hürriyet, 23 May 1955, 1; Nene Hatun Öldü, Cumhuriyet, 23. May 1955, 1.

<sup>62</sup> Nene Hatun 1955 Yılı Anneler Annesi Seçildi, Hürriyet, 07 May 1955, 1.

<sup>63</sup> Karagözoğlu, Tevfik Fikret, Nene Hatun: Aziziye Kahramanı, İstanbul: Dağarcık Çocuk Yayınları, 1959.

<sup>64</sup> Kaplan, Sadettin, Esra ile Nene Hatun, İstanbul: Alioğlu Yayınevi, 1993; Turgut, Suat (ed.), Erzurumlu Kahraman Nene Hatun, İstanbul: Mavi Medya Yayıncılık, 2009; Özdemir, Ahmet (ed.), Anaların Anası Nene Hatun, İstanbul: Bordo Siyah, 2010.

<sup>65</sup> Nene Hatun'un Ölüm Yıldönümü. Web. 21 December 2015.

[http://www.uydukurdu.com/forum/showthread.php/nene\\_hatunun\\_olum\\_yildonumu-206557.html?s=7d8dd0aa7b8c366c2fe9e0322f9595f5&amp;](http://www.uydukurdu.com/forum/showthread.php/nene_hatunun_olum_yildonumu-206557.html?s=7d8dd0aa7b8c366c2fe9e0322f9595f5&amp;); Yildirim, Orhan, Nene Hatun Yaşamının son Döneminde Yardım İçin İnönüye Mektup Yazmış, Zaman, 1 June 2004. Web. 16 December 2015. [http://mobil.zaman.com.tr/sehir\\_nene-hatun-yasaminin-son-doneminde-yardim-icin-inonu-ye-mektup-yazmis\\_54487.html](http://mobil.zaman.com.tr/sehir_nene-hatun-yasaminin-son-doneminde-yardim-icin-inonu-ye-mektup-yazmis_54487.html).

<sup>66</sup> Web. 18 December 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPznBtQ2fU4>

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### ***“The Heroine from Shipka Who Took Part in Four Wars and Helped Thousands of People.” The Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878 as Symbolic Capital in the Female Biography***

**Abstract:** *The article elaborates on the mechanism used to construct the memory and to mythologize the figure of Hristina Hranova (1851/52 - 1922) who allegedly has taken part in the Russian-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878. The major focus is on her biographical narrative, created by herself (and latter on used by her "biographers" during different historical periods since 1878 until today. Hristina Hranova's image has been not only promoted in popular historical writings with more and more exotic nuances. Lately she has been also tacitly institutionalized, which is a significant step towards her mythologization.*

**Key words:** *Russian-Ottoman War (1877 – 1878), women heroism, popular historical writing, mythologization processes, collective identities*

There are hardly any cases from the war of 1877 – 1878 which present women as direct participants in the battles. One exception is Hristina Hranova. The goal of this paper is to trace the mechanism used during different historical periods to construct the memory and to mythologize the biography of Hristina Hranova (1851/52 – 1922) who allegedly has taken part in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878. We have traced the stages of inventing the image of the heroine, and to see how closely are they connected to the use (and abuse) of her figure in various social and political contexts.<sup>1</sup>

Taking part in warfare, defending the religion and the nation are the classical prerequisites for the heroic career. Also, women's actions in situations requiring determination and bravery, which are considered as predominantly men's virtues, are not easily shaped into a socially acceptable narrative to be retold repeatedly in

the years to come. What are the prerequisites and the specific contexts for a woman to be made a heroine? <sup>2</sup>



**Hristina Hranova, after 1885, Varna.**

**Source: Newspaper „Priyatel“ (Friend), Samokov, 16 December 2013**

It is Hristina Hranova's personality that drew our attention. Many newspaper articles and popular historical narratives presenting Hristina Hranova as a “heroine who did not deserve the oblivion” have been published in the recent years when the war of 1877 – 1878 was commemorated. <sup>3</sup>

The following quotation explains the focus of our investigation:

*„During the glorious battles at Shipka in August 1877 the Turks were astonished to see a young woman fighting together with the men. She was firing her rifle, she feared nothing and her greatest dream was*

*the freedom of Bulgaria. This person, who had the appearance of a nymph, but the boldness of a lion, was Hristina Hranova.”<sup>4</sup>*

This emotional quotation is the beginning of an article in a Bulgarian daily newspaper published in August 2014 that was related to the anniversary of the battles of Shipka (21-26 August). The whole article is devoted to present Hristina Hranova not only as a nurse in four wars, but as a real woman fighter. What is more, she is described in details as the first graduate midwife in Bulgaria and the first woman lifeguard on the beach. Several titles from the media and popular newspapers that disseminate this woman’s biography are listed below:

*“Levski’s Associate is the first woman lifeguard on the beach. The heroine from Shipka took part in 4 wars and helped thousands of people.”<sup>5</sup> (2014)*

*„The first Bulgarian midwife Hristina Hranova had a life worthy of being filmed.”<sup>6</sup> (2013)*

*„The first in the world woman lifeguard on the beach is the Bulgarian Hristina Hranova. Disguised as a shepherd she witnessed the hanging of Vasil Levski.”<sup>7</sup> (2011)*

*„A Forgotten Heroine.”<sup>8</sup> (2013)*

In this popular-exotic panorama of recent years publications concerning Hristina Hranova there is only one detached and analytical article, namely, the introduction of the biography of our heroine in a collection of articles dealing with the history of life guards water rescue in Bulgaria published in 2009.<sup>9</sup>

Though hardly known by the public until the end of the 60s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hristina Hranova appeared more and more often in the histories of obstetrics in Bulgaria.<sup>10</sup> In 1977 the Bulgarian Red Cross Press published a biography book about her.<sup>11</sup> This “discovery” of Hristina Hranova as a new heroine coincides with the 100-anniversary of the beginning of the war.

We find Hranova interesting for the number of cases of institutional use of her memory. In 1977, when the first biography monograph about her was published, the Medical College in Stara Zagora was named after her with a Decree of the State Council of People’s Republic Bulgaria.<sup>12</sup> The second case is from 2010, when the Municipality Council of Varna decided to name a street after her.<sup>13</sup> It is again in Varna, in the Museum of History of Medicine, where a small collection devoted to her work as a midwife and nurse in the town was exhibited.<sup>14</sup>

Let us take a look again at the popular and repeatedly cited version of Hristina Hranova’s biography:

*„Hristina Hranova was the first graduate midwife who practiced in Bulgaria. What is less known is the fact that she was the first*



woman lifeguard in Bulgaria. A bright and ardent patriot she took part in all the uprisings and wars for the Liberation and the Unification of Bulgaria: in the committees of Vasil Levski, the April uprising, the Russian-Ottoman War, the Serbian-Bulgarian War and the Balkan Wars.

After the Liberation Hristina Hranova graduated from the 'Midwifery Institute' at the Imperial University 'Saint Vladimir' in Kiev and returned to Bulgaria. She worked as a midwife in Lom, Silistra, Sofia, Varna. During her practice she assisted the delivery of 3462 newborn. Being an excellent swimmer Hristina Hranova applied her skills saving people from drowning on shore of the Black Sea. She was the first woman lifeguard on the beach who saved the life of 54 people. She was awarded military and civil medals for her participation in the wars of Bulgaria and for her devotion to her work (afterwards)."<sup>15</sup>



**Hristina Hranova (sitting on the right) as a student at the Institute in Kiev, probably in 1879. Source: Magazine Otechestvo (Homeland), 6, 1989, 47.**

It is interesting to trace how the mechanisms of constructing this biographical narrative change during different historical periods. As a whole, there is a lack of records that can prove the reliability of Hristina Hranova's life story. Generally, the popular biography of the heroine replicates the description of her life that she wrote on a specific occasion. In November 1913 an application demanding pension for special merits was submitted at the National Assembly by a 61-year-old woman.<sup>16</sup>

The application was in the form of a detailed autobiography. In it Hristina Hranova emphasized several basic moments of her life which are her major arguments to apply for a pension for special merits: she worked as a courier while building the network of revolutionary committees organized by Vasil Levski; she turned out to be in Batak (in the church during the massacre) at the time of the April uprising;<sup>17</sup> in the Russian-Ottoman War, as she put it:

*“When the time for the Liberation came, armed, I fought together with the glorious volunteer soldiers (opalchenci) at Šipka, Šejново and Stara Zagora”.*<sup>18</sup>

Her autobiography continues with her midwifery education in Russia. Further on, she emphasized on her 30-year experience as a midwife (she worked in Varna for 17 years):

*„I became a midwife and for years I helped thousands of mothers to give thousands of brave sons and worthy daughters to Bulgaria.”*<sup>19</sup>

She mentioned her volunteer work as a lifeguard at the Varna beach. She pointed out that for her “self-sacrifice” the citizens of Varna suggested that she should have been awarded the Order for Civil Merit which she was given in 1907. In her application she described her volunteer work as a nurse in the Serbian-Bulgarian War (1885) when she was wounded. Also, she stated her volunteer participation in the Balkan War (1912):

*„And again I put on the military great-coat... That time, however, I felt for the first time that I was no longer as strong as I used to be. Old disabilities made me leave the rifle...”*<sup>20</sup>

Her application demanding pension was approved after 6 years, at the beginning of March 1918, when the National Assembly granted her a minimal “people's lifetime's pension” (for civil service).<sup>21</sup>

This specific category of administrative procedure called “application pension for special merits” requires that one's contribution must be listed and proven. This explains to a great extent the super heroic discourse of Hristina Hranova's

biographical narrative. Many of the events of her life are difficult to prove with authentic documents, especially those before 1878, including the facts connected to her participation in the Russo-Ottoman War. As the author of one of the last publications about her admits – “*the appeals she cried out are the only credible information*”<sup>22</sup>.

We have mentioned that the biographical narrative from Hranova’s application for pension shows that she was in all “hot spots” that are relevant to the heroic narrative. It is in the topoi of the “heroic battles”, where it is most difficult to present evidence of participation, that Hranova described herself disguised as a man. This is the manner in which she, as well as her biographers, explain the lack of evidence that she was at all these places in the roles she claimed.

*„Disguised as a man I delivered letters... to the members of the committee following the great Levski’s orders and instructions /going through forests and mountains, day and night, in good and bad weather/. On the day of the appalling massacre in Batak I found myself in the church where so many innocent people died and I survived by a miracle. When the time for the Liberation came, armed, I fought together with the glorious volunteer soldiers at Shipka, Sheynovo and Stara Zagora.”*<sup>23</sup>

If “disguise” is introduced here only once, the contemporary interpretations of Hranova’s biography reveal her much more often disguised as a man even in episodes she did not mention:

*„She was Vasil Levski’s associate and disguised as a boy she carried the mail of the revolutionary committee. It is also claimed that disguised as a shepherd, she witnessed the hanging of Vasil Levski... During the Russian-Ottoman Liberation War Hristina Hranova put on the soldier’s uniform and as a fighter and a nurse she fought together with the men.”*<sup>24</sup>

The topoi that can be proven in Hristina Hranova’s biography are connected most of all to her professional work as a midwife:

- Her name is found in the list of the awarded participants in the Serbian-Bulgarian War;<sup>25</sup>
- In 1906 the Citizens’ Committee in Varna, where she worked for nearly two decades as a midwife, organized a “25 anniversary of Hristina Hranova as the first Bulgarian midwife”;



„Anniversary souvenir of the first Bulgarian midwife Hristina Hranova 1881-1906“  
 issued on a postcard. *Fund of the Museum of the History of Medicine*

- In 1911 she continued her work in Sofia. There again, the *Citizens' Committee* organizing the 20 anniversary since the Serbian-Bulgarian War, issued a postcard-portrait of Hranova – "Anniversary Souvenir 1881-1911 of the First Bulgarian Midwife". This postcard portrayed her not only as the woman-fighter who was not inferior to men; she was presented as the “Mother of the heroes”: not only a professional midwife, but the woman fighter that generations of men heroes looked up to.



II. Юбилеен споменъ 1881 — 1911 на първата българска акушерка

**ХРИСТИНА ХРАНОВА ЦЕНКОВА**  
родомъ отъ София (Кореначка), свършила въ  
РУСИЯ (КИЕВЪ).

Била е поща въ Априлското въстание. До сега е  
избавила 3462 цѣца и е чудесна Черноморска пла-  
вачка. Спасила е отъ Черно море 54 давящи се  
човѣшки жертви, за което е наградена съ сребъ-  
ренъ орденъ. Участвувала е въ Сърбско-Българ-  
ската война, за което е наградена съ военни от-  
личия и тя е майката на героите.

„Anniversary Souvenir of the First Bulgarian Midwife Hristina Hranova 1881-1911“. Fund of the Museum of the History of Medicine. 6 orders and medals can be seen on the picture: 1. Soldier's sign of the Order of Honour, IV degree, with swords; 2. Order for Civil Merit VI degree, silver, without a crown; 3. Commemorative Cross for the Independence; 4. Commemorative medal for the Serbian-Bulgarian War (1885) silver. Persons who took part in the warfare directly were awarded this medal; 5. Commemorative medal for the Serbian-Bulgarian War (1885), bronze. Not only military men, but the Red Cross personnel: doctors, nurses and civilians were awarded this medal; 6. Badge of Honour "Red Cross" with a sign of the 1885 War and for services to diseased and wounded.<sup>26</sup>

There is hardly any information concerning the last years of her life. Her biographies succinctly point out:

*„She died in the autumn of November 1922. As an (unknown) author of her biography wrote: she was buried by her ‘old war friends; a grave without a tombstone, a grave forgotten long ago’.*”<sup>27</sup>

This is the main suggestion: the woman heroine was forgotten undeservedly.

Hristina Hranova's image has been not only promoted in the popular historical writing with more and more exotic nuances, but also tacitly institutionalized, which is a significant step towards her mythologizing.

*Translation from Bulgarian:* Dafina Kostadinova

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Маргарет Ланцингер, Рафаела Сарти, Как „Момичето от Шпингес“ се превърна в Катарина Ланц. Изобретяването (making of) на една героиня от антинаполеоновите войни [How “The Girls from Shpinges” Turned into Katarina Lants. The Invention of a

Heroine from the Anti Napoleon Wars]. В: Кристина Попова, Нурие Муратова (съст.), Архиви на жени и малцинства: Субекти на архивиране [Women and Minorities Archives: Subjects of the Archives], Т.3, Благоевград, Университетско издателство „Неофит Рилски, Благоевград, 2011, 106-112.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 106.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Петя Иванова, Една забравена героиня от нашия край [Forgotten Heroine from our Region], Над 55 [Over 55], 12-18.08.2013. Web. 24 December 2014. <http://vestnikpriatel.com>.

<sup>4</sup> Людмила Габровска, Съратничка на Левски е първата спасителка на плажа. Героинята от Шипка Христина Хранова участва в 4 войни и помага на хиляди хора [Levski's Associate is the First Woman Lifeguard on the Beach. The Heroine from Shipka Took Part in 4 Wars and Helped Thousands of People]. Монитор [Monitor Newspaper], 23 August 2014. Web. 17 December 2014. <http://www.monitor.bg/article?id=440558>.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Кирил Божилов, Забравени истории на София - първи българки в обществения живот [Sofia's Forgotten Stories – First Bulgarian Women in the Public Life]. Сисание 8 [Journal 8], 14 October 2013. Web. 16 December 2014. <http://spisanie8.bg>.

<sup>7</sup> Владимир Калчев, Първата жена воден спасител в света е българката Христина Хранова. Предрешена като овчарка, тя присъства на обесването на Левски [The First in the World Woman Lifeguard on the Beach is the Bulgarian Hristina Hranova. Disguised as a shepherd she witnessed the hanging of Vasil Levski], Блиц [Blitz], 10 August 2011 Web. 16 December 2014. <http://www.blitz.bg/article/26278>.

<sup>8</sup> Иванова, Героиня, 3

<sup>9</sup> Тодорка Стоянова, Христина Хранова – първата жена воден спасител в България [Hristina Hranova - the First Woman in Bulgaria a Lifeguard on the Beach] – В: Сборник материали от Втора научно-практическа конференция по водно спасяване [Proceeding of the Second Water Safety and Rescue Scientific Practical Conference], Варна, 2009, vol.II, 2, 29-33.

<sup>10</sup> Йосиф Иларионов, Една героична българка [A Bulgarian Heroine], Здравен фронт [Health front], 50, 1968, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Кънчо Пеевски, Христина Хранова [Hristina Hranova], Изд. БЧК, С., 1977; Кънчо Пеевски, Майка на героите [Mother of Heroes], Отечество [Homeland Magazine], 6, 1989, 47.

<sup>12</sup> Държавен архив-Стара Загора, 824/5/1. [State Archives – Stara Zagora], Указ № 1124/22.07.1977 г. на Държавния съвет на Народна Република България за наименоуване на института на Полувисш медицински институт "Христина Хранова" [Decree № 1124/22.07.1977 of the State Council of People's Republic Bulgaria for naming the institute to Medical College "Hristina Hranova"].

<sup>13</sup> On 23 March 2010 "133" Street was named "Hristina Hranova - Протокол № 21 от заседание на Общинския съвет от 24.03.2010 г. [Minutes № 21 of the Municipality Council session of 24 March 2010]

<sup>14</sup> Стоянова, Христина, 9, 33.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 30p.

<sup>16</sup> Пеевски, Христина, 11, 34.

<sup>17</sup> A historic event that took place in 1876 and became widely known as the Batak massacre. It refers to the killing of nearly 2000 Bulgarian Christians by Muslim antiinsurgency paramilitaries in the process of stamping out an uprising against the Ottoman rule - see the project's publication: Martina Baleva, Ulf Brunnbauer (eds.), Batak As a Place of Memory / Batak. Ein bulgarischer Erinnerungsort, Sofia: Iztok-Zapad, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Пеевски, Христина, 11, 39.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>22</sup> Божилов, Истории, 6.

<sup>23</sup> Пеевски, Христина, 11, 39.

<sup>24</sup> Калчев, Първата, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Централен държавен архив/ЗК/2/786 [Central State Archive], Дневник на наградените с Възпоменателен кръст „За независимостта” [Book of the awarded the Commemorative Cross “For the Independence”], т. I, Web. 19 December 2014., <http://www.archives.government.bg/images/1221733231.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> Стоянова, Христина, 9, 33.

<sup>27</sup> Божилов, Истории, 6.

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## ***Lady from Radilovo village***

**Abstract:** *The paper presents the biography and philanthropic activities of Lady Emily Ann Strangford (1826-1887) for Bulgarian peasants (1876-1877) and for Turkish refugees (1877 – 1878). The authors deal also with the way the memory about her surfaced in the next decades. Although streets and schools in Bulgaria were named after her, the memory about her as an important local historical figure is particularly strong in some small places (like Radilovo village). The reasons of the 'regionalization' of the memory about Lady Strangford in Bulgaria are to be found in the characteristics of the memory cultures. She was convinced in her duty as a Christian, as a Victorian British noble, and as a woman to help Christian and Muslim people who suffered before, during and after the Russo-Ottoman war. Her motives for making people of both sides less suffering were not understandable for everybody. Those who expected absolute and unconditional support for their political cause were disappointed. In Bulgaria she was criticized for sympathies for the Turks. In the Ottoman Empire her active charity work in organization of hospitals and orphanages was overshadowed by other great philanthropic projects. The official politics of national memory, as well as the popular memory are similar in Bulgaria and in Turkey. They are similar in their demands of unconditional support for their national causes. Both cultures of memory show more higher appreciation for political than for humanitarian activities.*

**Key words:** *Victorian British philanthropy, charity, women's memor, Bulgarian peasant, hospitals*

In the beginning of June 2014 together with Nurie Muratova and Milena Angelova we visited Radilovo village. We were interested in the memory of the most respected woman in Bulgaria during the time 1876-1878. Only in 1876 two poems were dedicated to her by the famous Bulgarian poet Ivan Vazov (1850-1921) as well as a lot of letters of gratitude. As the historian Roumen Genov wrote some years ago her name was a legendary one and literally became a symbol of philanthropy.<sup>1</sup>



The day we came in the village museum in Radilovo which is a small village in the district of Pazardzhik (near Plovdiv), the museum staff was absent. The young woman who replaced the museum expert for this day took us in a small room which she called "lady's room". In the Internet site of Radilovo village "Lady" was presented as one of the most famous personalities of the village.<sup>2</sup>

It is not to be said that today the "Lady" is forgotten or neglected in Bulgaria, but the memory about her seems to be first of all as an important local historical figure. In the same time the interest in her personality behind the Channel in her native country is growing in the last years – especially in the postcolonial feminist studies and in the research of women's travel accounts.

Emily Ann Beaufort was born in 1826 as the last child in the family of the famous geographer and oceanographer Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort, who was of French origin. The family encouraged her interest in travelling, in natural sciences and writing. Young Emily travelled a lot with her father. In 1843 – 1845 during a travel along the shores of the Orkney Islands (North Scotland) and Ireland she collected sea-weeds and kept them in a two volume herbarium.<sup>3</sup> This collection exists today and is part of the collection of the Plovdiv Library.<sup>4</sup> Among the pages of the herbarium young Emily Ann Beaufort rewrote popular verses which expressed her emotional attitude to these "flowers of the Sea" she wanted to describe and to keep for herself:

*"...Call us not weeds; we are flowers of the Sea,  
For lovely and bright and gay tinted are we,  
And quite independent of sun's fire or showers..."*<sup>5</sup>

As a young woman Ann Beaufort acquired her own memory style to systematize and to archive her different "Ego Documents" and to keep her emotional affiliation to the important personal events of her life. Later on as an adult person she used the form of the "Scrap book" to preserve important documents of her activities: letters, articles etc. Like many Victorian women of her class, educated to be "Imperially" masculine and "domestically" feminine,<sup>6</sup> Emily Ann Beaufort shared in the next years the trend of travelling and visiting exotic places and countries, especially in the Orient. After the death of her father in 1858, Emily undertook a long travel in Asia Minor, in Egypt and Syria. She described her experience in a book published in 1861, because she wanted not only to share her experience but also to help other women – travelers.<sup>7</sup> Her memories about these trips are among the most valuable sources for the analyses of the female Victorian travelers and their images of the Orient, orientalist attitudes, desires, knowledge, fears and stereotypes about local people and places visited. Her travel descriptions are also a source for reconstructing her identity as an upper class woman of the time.<sup>8</sup> Her book was a very successful one; it was reprinted several times and provoked discussions. One of her critics was another young expert of the East – Lord Percy Smith Strangford. They met on that occasion in order to discuss the publications about the

Orient. Both their cultural interest and emotional affiliation to the region connected them more closely and were further developed after they married in 1862.



In 1864 Emily published her second book – “The Eastern Coast of the Adriatic”, where she described not only her travels together with her husband but discussed also the Eastern Question. The couple was attracted by the region like many other famous English travelers like Adeline Paulina Irby (also a daughter of an rear admiral) and Georgina Mackenzie; or diplomats and researchers like Eduard Freeman, the archeologist Arthur Evans and many others who loved the Classical Antiquity, enjoyed the life in the Orient or admired the liberation efforts of Balkan Christian people. The excitement over the Eastern question and the national liberation movements in Victorian sensitivity was interwoven with the interest towards social problems and struggles against poverty and ignorance. It was the time of passionate discussions about social legislation in Great Britain. This way the cultural interest in the Balkans and the sympathy for the liberation efforts inspired the philanthropic initiatives in favor of the poor Balkan population.

**Lady Emily Strangford (1826-1887).**  
*Historical Museum – Perushtitsa*

The feminists was also interested in the national liberation struggles on the Balkans especially under the influence from the Italian national movement. One of the first female projects was initiated by the travelers Paulina Adeline Irby and Georgina Mackenzie, who organized a “Philanthropic Fond” for Bosnia and opened a school for girls.<sup>9</sup> Their initiatives were followed by Lady Emily Strangford activities in Bulgaria in 1876 – 1878.

The death of Lord Strangford in 1869 was a turning point in the life of Lady Emily Strangford. The widow devoted herself to philanthropy and to voluntary work. After her curiosity for the exotic worlds, which was further developed under the influence of her husband into a stable interest and devotion, she changed her life and dedicated her efforts to help solve the issues of poverty, sufferings and social injustice. These were also important topics for Victorian women. Only a few years

younger than the founder of the modern nursing profession Florence Nightingale, Emily Strangford was under the influence of her ideas about social health. She became a voluntary nurse in a London hospital and spent there some years. In the first half of the 1870es she published her experience and her views as a nurse and presented her innovative ideas about the reforms she insisted to be introduced in the organization of the work. The most innovative views she developed together with Florence Lie. Their views about the need of district nurses (especially about poor population) were regarded as the predecessors of the visiting nursing - one of the main reforms for the improvement of the public health service. In these years Emily Strangford communicated with the most active female social reformers like Octavia Hill, as well with the famous writer George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans 1819 – 1890).<sup>10</sup>

Philanthropy and charity were considered to be public activities suitable for women of the upper classes. They could be seen as forms of social control and instruments for stabilization of the social differentiation. Nevertheless social support was inspired also by religious and humanitarian motives. In the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century the impulses for social reforms grew stronger and new forms of social assistance and education for poor people were invented. In the new invented social settlements in the outskirts of the big cities, social reformers lived together with the local people. The systematic way in which women manage to organize social initiatives developed their knowledge about social reality and contributed to further develop the most important qualities of Victorian women like: skills in managing finances, in organizing long-term charity work, and to proliferate their activities among the public. All this helped women to raise their influence in public life. Lady Emily Strangford demonstrated these skills in all her charity initiatives. She had managed to cope with the bookkeeping of her philanthropic projects, to keep an account of thousands of financial documents in different languages and different currencies, and to find a lot of volunteers and supporters for her job. .

Emily Strangford was active in all forms in which Victorian women were allowed to play public role – organizing charity, nursing, writing books. She contributed for the establishment of all these women's activities. The voluntary work and the philanthropy gave her the possibility to develop high organizational, managerial and accounting skills. Her practical sense was given as an example at the time and was appreciated as one of the main virtue of Victorian women.

The English newspaper "The Christian" informed:

*"Viscountess Strangford left England last Saturday to commence her labors in Turkey in establishing hospitals for the wounded. Before leaving, her ladyship published a statement accounting for the large sum of £ 28 892 entrusted to her by the public for the relief of the Bulgarians. The difficulty of preparing that balance sheet, she informs us, has been immense; the accounts fill no fewer than twenty-seven volumes, besides mass of bills, vouchers etc. These are in five different languages – Bulgarian, Turkish, Greek, French, and English – and are*

reckoned in several currencies, involving the fluctuation of paper and metal money and ceaseless differences in exchange. "During the six months of my work", she says, "I had no one to help me in money matters, or in keeping accounts, until the last fortnight, when, owing to my serious illness, Mr. Kennett acted as accountant and paid up the bill. On my return home, therefore, I felt that it would be satisfactory to the public, and yet more so to myself, to have those accounts authenticated by some professional accountant of eminence in London. I have, therefore, placed them in the hands of Messrs Robert A. M. 'Lean and Co', the well-known accountants, who have rendered me important services in their preparation, and whose certificate of their accuracy is appended to them. For myself, I said from the first that I would carry help to the Bulgarians at my expense, and I have done so. The accounts, therefore, do not include any portion of the expenses of my journey from Great Britain and back with those of my servants, nor any expense for our food during the eight months of my absence from home."<sup>11</sup>

The intensification of the Eastern Question in the mid-1870s and the beginning of the Russo-Ottoman war in early 1877 provoked a great philanthropic wave in Great Britain:

*"Another effect of the Russo-Turkish War in Britain was the development of relief societies – the historian Cammeron Whitehead wrote – fundraising organizations, nursing corps, and other organizational structures that overlapped with and strengthened the women's suffrage and moral reform movements. Building on the anti-slavery movement and the protests over the treatment of women during the Italian Unification as well as against the Contagious Diseases Acts, the Agitation involved a great number of women as campaigners, fundraisers, letter writers, organizers, secretaries, and petitioners."*<sup>12</sup>

And further:

*"Female participation within the Agitation and relief efforts transferred a variety of organizational skills and political aspirations to the moral reform and suffragette movements. Lady Strangford, well versed in Eastern affairs and sympathetic of Balkan national causes, founded the 'Bulgarian Peasant Relief Fund' in 1876 and administered its operation both in Britain as well as in Edirne, Sofia, and Constantinople. Among her volunteers and organizers was Margaret Freeman (daughter of Edward Freeman), Baroness Bourdett-Coutts*

*(the wealthiest woman in Britain), and two of Judith Butler's close associates: Elizabeth Malleon (née Whitehead) and Sarah Sheldon Amos. British women volunteered as Red Cross nurses during the war, including authors Emma Maria Pearson and Louisa MacLaughlin, as well as many others who had attended Florence Nightingale's 'School for Nurses'".<sup>13</sup>*



**An exhibition about Strangford in a museum in Radilovo**

At the beginning of August 1876, Lady Strangford was one of founders of the Eastern War Sick and Wounded Fund whose aim was to send hospital staff and surgeons to Serbia, then at war with the Ottoman Empire. After that, Lady Strangford announced, on August 15, the establishment of a "Bulgarian Peasant Relief Fund". She appealed to the British public, asking for £ 10,000 for homeless, and volunteered her services to offer relief to suffering Bulgarians.<sup>14</sup> In Bulgaria she continued the work of the first hospital founded by the American missionary James Clarke and built another five hospitals in Karlovo, Panagjurishte, Perushtiza, Petrich and Radilovo. She supervised the whole work and its organization directly or from the town of Plovdiv. The Ottoman administration allowed to do her voluntary work and attached a policeman in Plovdiv as her bodyguard and to observe her activity. She deeply believed in the importance of education and organized her shelter for homeless families in Plovdiv not far from the school in order for children to be able to visit regularly the lessons.

She managed to structure the work in the villages in six different districts mentioned by James Clarke to be in very deplorable conditions. She was able to supply the population with cloths, beds, pans, medicines etc. Hundred wooden huts were also distributed among homeless families as well as other items for the amount of £ 24,874.<sup>15</sup> Lady Strangford was not a distanced philanthropic person who just gave money. She communicated with local people supported by several young Bulgarian men and trusted local people for the direct management of her work. It was not unproblematic to establish the new institutions among the Bulgarian population. As a woman coming from Great Britain, Lady Strangford was suspected to be a Protestant missionary or a spy. There were also rumors in the town of Karlovo that the new hospital would be a psychiatry or maybe at least a brothel<sup>16</sup>.

To create relationship of trust with the people who were helped was also one of the skills Victorian women had developed during their charity activities in the outskirts of London and other towns. Lady Strangford managed to overcome the initial distrust among the local people. She also helped about 48 prisoners in Plovdiv with cloths, food etc. It is interesting to read the descriptions of the situation there, published in the English press, where she expressed her sympathy for the poor people, as well as her embarrassment that she lived in good conditions in comparison to the sufferings of the people around her.<sup>17</sup>

On November 3th 1876 she wrote from Plovdiv:

*“The present misery is so appalling that it may well absorb me. It will be many years before the Bulgarian villages can be restored to the state they were in last April; rich and poor villages are alike utterly destroyed, and nothing scarcely is to be seen but thousands of wretched, half starved, shivering women and children, huddling under a few loose boards on the damp earth among the blackened heaps of fallen walls. £ 300 000 might rebuild (R. m. – the thinking in money, the practical sense) while we have not £ 20 000 between us all) to carry the wretched people to the winter by affording temporary shelter, blankets (their only bedding – a couple of blankets for each family), clothing, and food...For myself, I am ashamed for the cloth I wear, of the blankets I sleep under, and the food I eat chocks me when I think of what I have seen around me”.*<sup>18</sup>

In the autumn of 1876 and in the first half of 1877 Lady Strangford's home in Plovdiv was showered with letters of gratitude and addresses from local Bulgarian majors, priests, prisoners and women societies written in Bulgarian, English and French. Part of this letters are preserved in her “Scrap Book”.<sup>19</sup> In the last day of her stay she received also a letter of gratitude from her Ottoman bodyguard which was also preserved in the scrapbook.<sup>20</sup>

Emily Strangford visited the Karlovo female monastery where nun Eugenia hold a speech in her honor, whose text is also preserved. In August 1877 Lady Strangford came again to serve as a superintendent to the new English hospitals in Odrin (Edirne), Sofia and Scutari (Istanbul). She helped the suffering Muslim people - refugees and wounded during the Russian-Ottoman war. Other women philanthropists like Baroness Angela Bourdett-Coutts (1814 – 1906)<sup>21</sup> had also organized generous funds for Muslim refugees.

Emily Strangford wrote:

*“...The English nation has ever had its hand open for the sufferings of the poor in other countries; I beg of that hand to open yet wider now. There is no one in his own country to look after the poor, broken, wounded Turk, nor is there any money to supply his needs...”<sup>22</sup>*

In Sofia, Odrin and Scutary Emily Strangford started large hospitals with more than 60 beds in each of them. The visitors were very impressed by the cleanliness, the good hospital order and the medical care. The young physician Charles S. Ryan who visited Emily Strangford's hospital in Sofia compared it with a paradise in contradiction with the situation in other hospitals he visited before it. He wrote:

*“...At Sofia I met Lady Strangford, who had a well equipped hospital, worked by three or four English doctors and several English nurses. There were fifty or sixty beds in it, and the contrast between this hospital and the dreadful place that I had left behind at Plevna was as startling as the difference between an "Inferno" and a "Paradiso." Lady Strangford gave me a letter to the Baroness von Rosen, who had another hospital at Adrianople, and I spent a couple of pleasant days with that enthusiastic lady. Going on to Ichtiman, I met there Fano Bey, who was the second military officer in charge of the hospitals at Widdin; and as he arrived late at night, I was glad of the opportunity of repaying some of his past kindnesses by giving up my room to him. Next day we went on to Tatar[302]Bazardjik, which was the terminus of the railway from Constantinople; and there, in the company of half a dozen jolly war correspondents, I shook off the last traces of the depression engendered by the horrors of my hospital work in Plevna.”<sup>23</sup>*

Lady Strangford communicated with a large number of people from different social background as well as with Bulgarian intellectuals. Her close collaborators were young Bulgarian men from the protestant churches – Andrej Tsanov, Peter Martinov, Valko Shopov. She managed to break the distrust toward especially English foreigners and their ability to operate in a patriarchal society. According to Roumen Genov the Bulgarian society trusted her because she was a widow of “a

Bulgarian friend", because she was an aristocrat and because of her law key exposure.<sup>24</sup> It was not mentioned that most probably her sympathies toward Bulgarians were inherited from her husband, but the organization of all the work for relief of the poor was her achievement.

Before leaving Bulgaria she expressed her wish to turn into schools the buildings of the hospitals that she had organized. She also sent some of the young men who helped her as co-workers and translators to study in British Universities.

After she went back to Great Britain she developed a lot of new projects. She organized the female emigrant society in Dorset Street, and the Medical School in Beirut. She initiated an award for achievement in geography named after her husband in Harrow, his old school.<sup>25</sup> She organized another hospital in Cairo, Egypt. When she died in 1887 she had left a lot of documentation, letters and books. According to her will, she left a copy of a very valuable Bible and her Herbarium to her Bulgarian collaborator Valko Shopov.

Viscountess Emily Strangford is not forgotten today – neither in Bulgaria nor in Great Britain. In the last years the interest about her publications became stronger especially among scholars of history of nursing and social work, in gender studies, in postcolonial feminist research. According to Elisabeth Baigent, who wrote the article about Emily Strangford in the Oxford Dictionary, she was a talented woman, a pioneer in many areas, especially in nursing and charity. Her name was mentioned equally to Florence Nightingale, but was forgotten in Great Britain because she didn't know how to present herself and was always ready to confess her mistakes.

In Bulgaria she was very popular in the late 1870s – and in the beginning of the 1880; after that her popularity has decreased in comparison to other personalities of that time. The women societies which were active in keeping contacts with her during her stay in Bulgaria didn't continue to honor her. Only the president of the women's society "Education" in Plovdiv Anna Kuzmanova (who came from Karlovo), wrote a biography of Emily Strangford, but her text was not published.

These who kept her memory alive were first of all her collaborators – the young men she sent to study in Great Britain: Valko Shopov, Peter Mateev and others recommended to her by the protestant missionary James Clarke. Most of them came from little Protestant communities in Bulgaria. In 1906 – 1908 Valko Shopov became a mayor of Plovdiv and suggested a street to be named after Lady Strangford. This was the street she lived in for months in 1876 – 1877. Another collaborator was Peter Mateev who published in 1934 the book "Beneficent of the Bulgarian People" where he his memoirs about Emily Strangford.

There is also a school in Petrich village (in Sofia district) that is named after her.



During communist period British philanthropy in Bulgaria was not forgotten, but stayed in the periphery of the official memory politics. Some names of British people like the politicians William Gladstone, Noel and Charles Buxton or the journalist James Baurchier survived in public sphere; among them Emily Strangford was also mentioned.



**The hospital of Lady Strangford in Radilovo. Today it is a museum.**

The name of Lady Strangford appeared again after the democratic changes first of all in the places she was active in the time 1876 – 1878, as well as she appeared in the politics of the memory institutions. In 1998, during the commemoration of 120 years of the National Liberation an interesting attempt to revive memories about Lady Strangford appeared. In a paper entitled “Lady Strangford – a Saint for Bulgarian Women and Children” the author told the story of her mother who remembered how she was helped as a poor child by Lady Strangford in 1877 in Odrin (Edirne) as a refugee from Stara Zagora.<sup>26</sup>

The historian Roumen Genov wrote in the 1990es several interesting papers and a small book about both Strangford. An exhibition about British philanthropy was organized in 2007 by the Central State Archive in Sofia again by Roumen Genov, who tried to collect the British and the Bulgarian sources about the couple. In 2008 a part of Lady Strangford’s personal archive was given to the National Library in Sofia by a British grantor.<sup>27</sup>

In 1992 Dr. Nikolaj Kostadinov from Batak organized the foundation “Lady Strangford” with the aim to popularize the life and the work of Lady Strangford. After the so called “Batak” case in the town of Batak memorials of Januarius Makgahan, Victor Hugo and Lady Strangford were built. Lady Strangford was called “the Well-Doer” of Batak. The carriers of this new trend are the Historical Museum in Batak, the Municipality and the Church society as well as nationalistic civil societies in Plovdiv. Lady Strangford was presented first of all as a witness of the atrocities. Her deeds were commemorated first of all as witness of the sufferings and as a friend of Bulgaria - as a friend of the Bulgarian liberation cause. Her engagement to the social support of the poor was less mentioned. In Radilovo village she is presented as the founder of the hospital. Here she is described as a “missionary woman”.<sup>28</sup> She is the most popular historical figure for the village now.

The reasons for the “regionalization” of the memory about Lady Strangford in Bulgaria are rooted in the characteristics of the memory culture. In Great Britain Great Britain Lady Strangford didn’t receive the glory of a social reformer like Octavia Hill, nor she got the name of a pioneer in nursing like Florence Nightingale. Despite of her long-term philanthropic projects for Bulgarians which helped so many families to survive; of her obvious sympathy to Bulgarians (that she demonstrated emotionally many times and underlined it also after the Russo-Ottoman war), despite of her deep very optimistic belief in the European future of Bulgarians as well as in their abilities for education and their industrious skills as “the best of Slav nations”<sup>29</sup>, she always tried to keep the principal of neutrality in supporting suffering people of both sides during the in the Russo-Ottoman conflict. This principal was considered to be the leading idea in the Red Cross movement. Emily Strangford was convinced that it is her duty as Christian, as European and as a woman to do this for both Christian and Muslim people who suffered before, during and after the Russo-Ottoman war. Her motives and ideas for making people of both sides less suffering were not understandable for everybody. Thus, she had disappointed those who expected absolute and unconditional support for certain political cause. In Bulgaria she was criticized for sympathies for the Turks. In the Ottoman Empire her active charity work in organization of hospitals and orphanages was overshadowed by the great philanthropic projects of other women, especially of Baroness Angela Bourdett-Coutts. The official national memory politics as well as the popular memory cultures are similar in Bulgaria and Turkey. They are similar in their demands of unconditional support for their national causes. Both cultures of memory show more higher appreciation e for political than for humanitarian activities.

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<sup>1</sup> Roumen Genov argues that in her shadow left a lot of men who also deserved gratitude as philanthropists in Bulgaria. Cf. Genov, Roumen, Lady Emily Anne Strangford and the

Image of British Philanthropy in Bulgaria, In: Shurbanov, Alexander (ed.), *Victorian England. Literary Perspective in Bulgaria*, St. Kliment Ohridki University Press Sofia, 1996, 247-259.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Културното наследство на село Радилово. Известни личности [The Cultural Heritage of the Village of Radilovo. Famous Personalities]. Web. 21 December 2015. <https://zora1903radilovo.alle.bg/видни-личности/>.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Стефанов, Павел Малко известен хербарий на лейди Емили Странгфорд [Little Known Herbarium of Lady Emily Strangford], *Historia Naturalis Bulgarica*, 4, 1993, 10 - 15.

<sup>4</sup> The two volumes of the herbarium were granted to Valko Shopov according to the testament of Emily Strangford and now they are preserved in the Plovdiv Library "Ivan Vazov". Cf. Стефанов, Хербарий, 3, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Deloach, CarrieAnne Simonini, *Exploring Transient Identities: Deconstructing Depictions of Gender and Imperial Ideology in the Oriental Travel Narratives of Englishwomen 1831 – 1915*, B.A. University of Central Florida, 2006. A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of History in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida, Fall Term.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Yovevska, Mariana, Adeline Irby and Georgina Mackenzie: Two British Women in the Balkans, In: Shurbanov, Alexander (ed.), *Victorian England. Literary Perspective in Bulgaria*, St. Kliment Ohridki University Press Sofia, 1996, 259-295.

<sup>10</sup> Irvine, Jane (ed.), *George Eliot's 'Daniel Deronda' Notebooks*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, 286-287. In 1873 – 1874 Emily Strangford met many times George Eliot. There are letters between George Eliot and Emily Strangford from that time.

<sup>11</sup> Български исторически архив [Bulgarian Historical Archive], 905/28/1.

<sup>12</sup> Whitehead, Cammeron Ean Alfred, *The Bulgarian Horrors: Culture and the International History of the Great Eastern Crisis 1876-1878*, Dissertation, University of British Columbia (Vancouver), 2014, 315.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Genov, Roumen, Lady Emily Anne Strangford and the Image of British Philanthropy in Bulgaria, In: Churova, Margarita, Ludmila Kostova (eds.) *The Case for Women: Britain and Europe*, Sofia, 2001, 75-94.

<sup>15</sup> Baigent, Elizabeth Smythe [née Beaufort], Emily Anne, Viscountess Strangford (*bap*. 1826, *d*. 1887), *Oxford Dictionary*. Web. 18 December 2015. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25963/>.

<sup>16</sup> Стефанов, Павел, Лейди Емили Странгфорд в Карлово [Lady Emily Strangford in Karlovo], *Тракия*, 3, 1984, 86-91.

<sup>17</sup> Lady Strangford's Mission In Bulgaria, *Evening Post*, Volume XV, Issue 34, 10 February 1877, 2. Web. 17 December 2015. <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=EP18770210.2.26>.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Архив, 11, 905/ 27/ 1-107. The letters in Bulgarian are translated ore summarized in English.

<sup>20</sup> This is an interesting evidence of the stay of Lady Strangford in Plovdiv. He asked her to support him to obtain the rank of captain for his “good serving” for her and for the Government in order to be able “to feed” his family. Архив, 11, 905/ 27/ 101.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Dđnçyürek, Saddye Sena, A Compassionate Episode in Anglo-Ottoman History: British Relief to ‘93 Refugees (1877 – 1878), MA Thesis, Bilkent University, Ankara, June 2010. Web. 18 December 2015. <http://www.thesis.bilkent.edu.tr/0006065.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> Архив, 11, 905/ 28, 1. The Christian, Thursday, July 19, 1877, Viscountess Strangford’s British Hospital and Ambulance Fund.

<sup>23</sup> Ryan, Charles S., Under the Red Crescent. Adventures of an English Surgeon with the Turkish Army at Plevna and Erzeroum 1877 – 1878, New York, Scribner, 302.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Roumen Genov, Lady, 14.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Baigent, Viscountess, 15. Elizabeth Baigent wrote: “*On their return to Great Britain, Lady Strangford and Sieveking wrote The Victoria Hospital, Cairo (report of the Egyptian Relief Fund, 1883), and the Royal Red Cross, instituted in 1883, was conferred on Lady Strangford by the queen. Lady Strangford continued to be active in a wide range of projects. She established the Women’s Emigration Society in Dorset Street, Portman Square, London (with Mrs E. L. Blanchard); founded a medical school in Beirut; and endowed a geography prize in memory of her husband at Harrow, his old school... Lady Strangford was an energetic and talented woman, generous with both her time and her money. She was a pioneer in several branches of nursing, but chiefly in relief and war nursing. Her reputation eclipsed even that of Florence Nightingale in the eyes of some contemporaries, but her name soon fell into relative obscurity in Britain, though not in Bulgaria, where both she and her husband were long and affectionately remembered. This obscurity may have been because she lacked Nightingale’s gift for self-publicity, or because she readily admitted her failures. This made her the more likeable character but not the more memorable one.*”

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Касабова, Пенка, Лейди Странгфорд - светица за български жени и деца. Благородната англичанка спасява много наши сънародници в трагичните дни на робството [Lady Strangford – a Saint for Bulgarian Women and Children. The English Aristocratic Woman Saved a Lot of our Countrymen in the Tragic Days of the Slavery], Дума [Duma Newspaper], 183, 1998, 23. Penka Kasabova – a famous Bulgarian pedagogue and the pioneer of Bulgarian preschool education – was very closed to the family of James Clark and her daughter Elisabeth Clark. She didn’t mentioned this personal connection in the paper probably because of it she was accused during the Communist regime to be an “American agent”.

<sup>27</sup> Other documents concerning Lady Strangford are preserved in different American and British archive collections. Cf. Layard Papers, Scope: Sir Austen Henry Layard, P.C.G.C.B. D.C.L. the discoverer of Nineveh (b. 1817, d. 1894). Correspondence and papers. Location and Catalogue: 38931-39164, 40637, 46153-70, 50149, 50182, 58149-58202, 58222-3; Huntington Library, Manuscripts, mss FBBox 35.; Viscountess Emily Anne Beaufort Smyth Strangford Journal, 1859-1860, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University, Collection Number RL.01261.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Наследство, 2.

<sup>29</sup> In the beginning of 1879 Emily Strangford wrote the paper “East Roumelia”, where she commented the political situation after the Russo-Ottoman war and future of Bulgarians as well their qualities. She wrote: “...*The Bulgarian is untruthful from the habit of fear, but,*

*relieved of that, he is stolidly upright, full of shrewdness and excellent good sense; he is naturally very industrious, awfully parsimonious, and has an impulse of moral and physical advancement in him which is intensely interesting and admirable. He is, in my opinion, the best of the Slav nations..."* (Emily, Viscountess Strangford, East Roumelia, The Nineteenth Century, May 1879, 822-832), Архив, 11, 905/31/1-6.

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## **“Yuliya Vrevskaya” – the Other Movie about the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878**

**Abstract:** *The first Soviet-Bulgarian movie devoted to the Russo-Ottoman War was created in 1954 as a Soviet model for the Bulgarian national cinema. "The Heroes of Shipka" is historical chronicle of the war whose messages were directed also to the new enemies of the Cold War. At the beginning of the "golden years" of the Bulgarian cinema (1970 – 1980s) the Russian-Ottoman War became a subject of two co-productions with the Soviet cinematography – the two series movie "Yuliya Vrevska" (1878) of the director Nikola Korabov and the TV movie "The Route to Sofia" (1979) of the director Nikolay Mashchenko. The present analysis is based on the movie archives and the reviews about it in Soviet and Bulgarian official press.*

**Key words:** *cinema, Cold War, women heroines, Soviet-Bulgarian co-productions*

*"Yuliya Vrevska" was a difficult movie  
because for the officials in Bulgaria and Russia  
it was difficult to accept that a baroness could  
be a main personage in a movie."<sup>1</sup>*

Baroness Yuliya Vrevska was a Russian nurse on the Balkan front during the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878 and the main personage in the movie “Yuliya Vrevska”. As a comparison, the Russian production “Bajazet” (2003) about the Caucasus front of the war the role of woman was quite peripheral. In this 12 episodes movie based on the novel of Valentin Pikul from 1961 the female personage was also presented by a nurse – Olga Hvoshtinska, who was the wife of one of the commanders of the fortress – colonel Hvoshtinski. Even if this delicate woman turned the course of the defense of the fortress, her role in the movie was of a secondary importance, pushed out and lost behind the battle scenes.

In "The Heroes of Shipka" (1954) the image of woman was not only of a martyr, but was also quite atypical. On one hand the woman was presented as a martyr who could not get rid from the oppressor without Russian help. On the other side, the story of the flirt between Jonka and the Cossack Sasha Kozir challenged the myth of the chastity of Bulgarian women. This "free expression of feelings" was criticized in the 1950s by the "Artistic Council" of the Bulgarian Film Studio.

In the comparatively modern and not standard (action movie style) interpretation of the Russo-Ottoman War in the movie "Turkish Gambit" (2005) based on the novel of Boris Akunin, the role of woman in the war and her character were very different from the previous films. Varvara Suvorova was independent, self-confident, modern and ego-centered intelligent woman and her role and presence in the movie was equal to the main character Erast Fandorin.

These and other examples of the movies reflecting the time of the Russo-Ottoman War and the period of the Ottoman domination outline the popular image of woman and her role in the war.<sup>2</sup> I will pay special attention to the movie, whose title suggests and prepares the audience to accept the central personage - the woman, the baroness and the nurse Yuliya Vrevska.

The historical film "Yuliya Vrevska" was created on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule in 1878. This movie was one of the three joined Bulgarian-Soviet productions which followed the course of the war on the Balkan front. ("The Heroes of Shipka", "Yuliya Vrevska", "The Route to Sofia"). They were all using the matrix of the so called "battle" Soviet movies about the Second World War. This same model was applied in the presentation of the last Russo-Ottoman War from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The first movie to be produced was "The Heroes of Shipka" as a co-production of "Lenfilm" and "Bulgaria film". The movie was a result of the patronizing policy of the Soviet cinematography from the beginning of the 1950s vis a vis the "young" cinematography of the countries on the East of the "iron curtain".<sup>3</sup> Apart from being the first joint-venture (and the first in general) movie about the Russo-Ottoman War, "The Heroes of Shipka" was meant to serve as an example for the Bulgarian national cinema how to follow the rules of the "socialist realism".<sup>4</sup> It was defined as historical chronicle and in this sense it was an exception from the prevailing in the 1950s Soviet historical-biographic movies in which as a rule the the main character was in the center of the narrative and the construction of the plot was based on its personality. The conception of the central personality was strictly regulated and in many cases tendentiously modernized. Instead of this "The Heroes of Shipka" was a chronicle not only of one event - the Shipka epopee, as the title suggest, but of the entire course of the war on the Balkan front in 1877 – 1878.<sup>5</sup>

In the first half of the 1970s the Russo-Ottoman War was a subject of two co-productions – "Yuliya Vrevska" of the director Nikola Korabov<sup>6</sup> and the TV film "The Road to Sofia" of the director Nikolay Mashchenko.<sup>7</sup> According to the contract between Studio "Mostfilm" and the Cinema Studio in Sofia, the Bulgarian – Soviet

production "Yuliya Vrevska" should have been two series film of 3 824 meters and had to be developed from 16<sup>th</sup> of September 1975 until 20<sup>th</sup> of September 1977.<sup>8</sup>

These two films about the Russo-Ottoman War were created 20 years after the appearance of the movie "The Heroes of Shipka" and reflected another period of the development of the Bulgarian cinema – the beginning of its “golden” years. These two movies were created immediately before the series of movies sponsored for the official celebration of the 1300 anniversary of the Bulgarian state which marked the climax in the production of historical films.<sup>9</sup>

According to the only monograph about the Bulgarian historical movies<sup>10</sup> the movies created by the end of 1970s, i.e. immediately before the 1300 anniversary, were the result of *“a paradox situation concerning the development of the history topics in Bulgarian cinema. All the preconditions for the “blossom” of the historical movies were provided but such “blossom” did not exist – neither quantitative nor qualitative.”*<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, according to the official documents of the ruling Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP), the assessment of the development of Bulgarian cinematography insists that the years after the X<sup>th</sup> Congress of the BCP (1971) and the II<sup>nd</sup> Congress of Bulgarian Culture (1972) are *the most fruitful and dynamic periods in the history of the Bulgarian film production.*<sup>12</sup> In the period from 1973 until 1974 all together 19 movies were produced, in the following period 1974 –1975 another 20 movies.<sup>13</sup> Priority was given to the movies concerning contemporary issues.<sup>14</sup> The movies promoting the “positive personage”, the personage of “high communist morality” were promoted.

In order to apply the directives of the Communist Party in the sphere of cinematography a “Program for Cooperation between the State Union “Bulgarian Cinematography” and the State Committee to the Council of Ministers of USSR was initiated for the period 1975-1980.<sup>15</sup> The program aimed at subordinating the cinematography to the fulfillment of the “course of the BCP and Soviet Communist Party for cooperation in all spheres between Bulgarian Socialist Republic and USSR”. For 1975 the main events were the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the victory over fascism, the 58<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great October Revolution, the 31<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the socialist revolution in Bulgaria. In the plan among the co-productions were included “Yuliya Vrevska”, the “Soldier Who Came from the Front”, “People from the Blue Fire”, and “Mermaid”.<sup>16</sup> According to the program each year plans should be elaborated for the development of the joint activities of Bulgarian and Soviet cinematography.

Concerning the genre, the historical movies were divided into historical-biographical films and historical chronicles. Concerning the historical periods they were divided into films about Antiquity, Middle Ages, "New" and "Newest" History. Up to the beginning of the 1980s according to Nedelcho Milev only 14 films were truly historical.<sup>17</sup> Two of them he defined as chronicle of historic events: “Notes on the Bulgarian Revolts” (TV) and "The Heroes of Shipka" the movie



“Under the Yoke” was accepted equally as both biography and historical chronicle. In these three movies two events were reflected: the April revolt 1876 and the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878.<sup>18</sup> The rest 10 movies were defined as biographical, one of them was the historical biographical movie “Yuliya Vrevska”.<sup>19</sup>



**Photo of the Soviet actress Ludmila Savelyeva and Nikola Korabov, the director of the movie, in front of the grave of Baroness Yuliya Vrevska in Bjala, Ruse district, 6th of January, 1978<sup>20</sup>**

According to the director Nikola Korabov, this movie is “*an epic ballad, a movie about the fight for liberation as a result of personal motives of an individual person, not a result of common spontaneous stimulus*”.<sup>21</sup>

Unavoidable for the cinema critics was the comparison between the movie about Yuliya Vrevska and the other co-production “The Heroes of Shipka”, considering their scope and influence.<sup>22</sup> Many differences were also outlined. Unlike “The Heroes of Shipka” which is a movie without a defined plot and one main character, in “Yuliya Vrevska” along with the Russian nurse, the Bulgarian patriot Karabelov is also a main personage. According to Nikola Korabov “*this is a movie about the destiny of Yuliya Vrevska projected on the destiny of the whole Russian army from the common soldier to the general, or more about the epic scope of the war and the role of the main heroine in this war.*”<sup>23</sup>

In comparison to “The Heroes of Shipka” the film about Yuliya Vrevska was developed with equal Bulgarian participation in the co-production. The script of “The Heroes of Shipka” was written by the Russian writer Arkadiy Perventsev and director was also Russian – Sergey Vasilev. The script was discussed in Bulgaria only formally.

The script of the movie about Yuliya Vrevska was written by two authors – the Soviet play-writer and scriptwriter Semyon Lungin and the Bulgarian play-writer, poet and writer Stefan Tsanev. According to the contract between the Bulgarian and Soviet Cinema Studios copyrights of the two authors were strictly defined, as well as the rights for shooting and distributing the movie.<sup>24</sup> Nikola Korabov was directly engaged in the preliminary research and in the work on the script. The director book was developed only by Nikola Korabov. The preparation of all documents concerning the cinematographic process of the movie was concluded before the signing of the contract.<sup>25</sup>

Among the attached to the contract documents were: calendar plan; calendar staging plan; list of the Soviet participants in the shooting of the movie in Bulgaria and the exact number of days of their stay in Bulgaria; list of the main and episodic roles for shooting of the movie in Bulgaria and USSR; two cinema technicians provided by the Soviet party for shooting the movie on the territory of the Soviet Union and Bulgaria; list of the costumes produced in the Soviet Union; list of the requisite produced in the Soviet Union and designed for Bulgaria; list of the requisite for shooting the movie in the USSR; list of the pyrotechnic materials provided by the Soviet party; list of the members of the Bulgarian Film Studio who were chosen to work in the USSR (62 days for each person) and three representatives of the General Direction of the Bulgarian Cinematography, Bulgarian Film Studio and First Creative Union “Hemus” for 10 days; list of the Bulgarian actors who will take part in the shooting of the movie in the USSR; cinema technique provided by the Bulgarian part; list of the costumes produced in Bulgaria; film materials produced in the USSR and designed for Bulgaria. In total 16 attachments were added to the contract.<sup>26</sup> The script approved by the Soviet and the Bulgarian party and the “director book” of Nikola Korabov were also provided.

All this package of documents prepared in advance and attached to the contract was a precondition for keeping the technological sequence in creating the movie “Yuliya Vrevska” and speaks about the accurate planning and documentation of the cinematographic process.<sup>27</sup>

In a sharp contrast, the technological sequence in developing the movie “The Heroes of Shipka” was disturbed, because the preparatory period was missing and one directly started the shooting of the movie. It started even before the director book was completed. As a result the creating of the movie was straitened and costed more financial resources. That is why in the middle of the 1950s the Soviet minister of culture Bryantsev pointed out that the Soviet specialists have shown to their Bulgarian colleagues how a movie should not be done.<sup>28</sup>

The movie about Yuliya Vrevska was created on the basis of strictly regulated relations between the Bulgarian and Soviet cinematography. In 1973 a general contract was signed between the Bulgarian Film Studio and the Soviet Union “Sovinfilm” for cooperation in creating movies, television films, documental films, popular science films, cartoons and advertisements.<sup>29</sup> In the contract all conditions

concerning the payment of the Bulgarian cinema specialists and actors working in the USSR and the Soviet specialists and actors working in Bulgaria were defined strictly and in details; the order of using the services of the two parties with exact coast of the services was also attached.

Unlike the Soviet – Bulgarian movie "The Heroes of Shipka" the movie "Yuliya Vrevska" is a Bulgarian – Soviet production with equal expenses for each party – 50%. Each of the countries used the expenses separately in accordance with the contract and the countries did not control the expenses of the other party. And something very different form the practice of "The Heroes of Shipka" – the salaries and the honorariums of the people working on the movie were managed by each party independently.<sup>30</sup> The Soviet party took the expenses for the script and the music by Soviet authors, the Bulgarian party – for the Bulgarian scriptwriter, Stefan Tsanev, and the Bulgarian composer.<sup>31</sup>

The equality of the two parties was underlined even by the size of the letters indicating the two countries of the co-production in the titles and the advertisements.<sup>32</sup>

According to the contract the movie "Yuliya Vrevska" was shot in a "united figurative and sound version" in Russian and Bulgarian language. For Bulgaria the subtitles were to be done by the Bulgarian party, for the USSR the Bulgarian language was duplicated in Russian by the Soviet party.

After specifying the delivery of the reels it was noted that the original reel was property of the USSR and Bulgaria, but would be stored in the USSR.



**Photo of Ludmila Savelyeva with activists of cinema club in Bjala,  
Ruse district, 6th of January 1978<sup>33</sup>**

### **From the archive, press and the laboratory of the movie**

Initially the title of the movie about the nurse Yuliya Vrevska was “Fidelity for Fidelity”. Probably it was influenced by the novel of Georgi Karastoyanov<sup>34</sup> with the same name published in March 1960 in 5 000 copies.<sup>35</sup> In the novel the young by that time novelist told the love story of the baroness, volunteer and nurse Yuliya Vrevska and the Bulgarian revolutionary Stefan Grozev. In the movie another personage was chosen for the love plot – the Bulgarian Nikolay Karabelov (who combined features of the historic figures of two revolutionaries – Petko Karavelov and Olimpi Panov).<sup>36</sup> It was expected that the wide-screen, colorful and two series film to cover the period between the beginning of the war to the signing of San Stefano peace treaty.<sup>37</sup> The scriptwriters (in Bulgaria and USSR) used the letters of Yuliya Vrevska and the Russian writer I. S. Turgenev, information about the war in “Russian Registers”, “Moscow Registers”, “Government Newspaper”, “Russian Invalid”, “Times”, the correspondence of Nemirovich-Danchenko and Vereshchagin, the letters of the doctor C. P. Botkin and memoirs of nurses, who took part in the war. In the developing of the script took part the Soviet historians Braynina<sup>38</sup> and Nazarova.<sup>39</sup>

According to the words of Nikola Korabov, his inspiration to create a movie about Yuliya Vrevska came from the author Svoboda Bachvarova<sup>40</sup> “*when nothing has been done, even the script did not exist*”.<sup>41</sup> The development of the script was preceded by searching and analyzing materials both in Bulgarian and in Russian institutions:

*“There is no other film for which such preliminary work has been done. For two years we have examined everything which has been left as a documentation for that époque.”*<sup>42</sup>

Until the beginning of the 1980's in Bulgarian cinematography Nikola Korabov was considered as one of the four most prominent directors who treated historical topics (the other being Dako Dakovski, Sergey Vasilev, Rangel Valchanov).<sup>43</sup> As Nikola Korabov admitted to students at the beginning of the 2000s - history has always attracted him that is why he has chosen such subjects nobody offered him to work on them:

*“No, no one movie has been offered to me.”*<sup>44</sup>

In 1976 when the shooting of the new two series movie started the working title has been changed – instead of “Fidelity for Fidelity” it was renamed “Nurse”.<sup>45</sup> This title has been kept until the beginning of the next year.<sup>46</sup> By that time still the actress for the main role has not been selected. According to the words of Korabov the choice was to be done between three magnificent performers, but at the end Savelyeva was chosen “*because of her full harmony with the authenticity and the*

*morality of Vrevska to such extent that for her artistic skill were not needed to be convincing*".<sup>47</sup> For the main male role it was considered that the best actor would be Stefan Danailov, KostaTsonev was given the role of the rebel.<sup>48</sup> The cameraman of the movie was Vadim Jusov, a fellow student of Nikola Korabov from the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography in Moscow. As students they have already co-produced a film about Yulius Fuchik.

### **A movie about baroness Vrevska, about the nurse or about the war?**

Initially the intentions of Korabov were to create not so much a historically authentic movie, but rather to keep the spirit of the époque without direct restoration of the past. He pointed out that he was attracted *by the spiritual parallel between history and present time, by the relation between personal, individual destiny and the destiny of the nation and the Motherland*.<sup>49</sup> The Soviet scriptwriter also noted that they were able not to follow strictly the biographical sources. They focused on the character of Vrevska, on the deepness of her compassion and her unusual gift for self –sacrifice.<sup>50</sup> In the published text of the script in Bulgarian it was specified that *the personages in this text are not historically authentic, they are artistic figures created by the authors*.<sup>51</sup>

According to the director Nikola Korabov his intention was to present the War of Liberation through the dramatic experience of the main heroine and the other characters and by presenting the crucial moments of the war – the declaration of the war, the story of the Samara flag, the Shipka battle.<sup>52</sup> He wanted to relate the unusual destiny of a girl of aristocratic origin, a daughter of a Russian general who left her rich home to follow the Russian soldiers and the Bulgarian volunteers as a nurse.

Korabov insisted that he did not aim at telling something new about the war. He aimed at providing another point of view, thus the whole epic event – the War of Liberation – was not presented in the movie. The personality of Yuliya Vrevska was the major focus of the film.<sup>53</sup> He explained:

*„All the personages are generalized. Even Yuliya Vrevska in the director book is called Yuliya Petrovna. There should not be a specific connection with the historical personage except for her grave in Byala. She is not a baroness, a countess, nor a princes – I do not know how do they call her. She is Yuliya Petrovna – a generalized personage of all noble and compassionate people that Russia has created..., one spiritual, moral monument.*"<sup>54</sup>

Important and decisive in the 1970s was the evaluation of the movie by the official press of the Communist Party. The newspaper "Worker's Mission" defined the movies as *„wider than the title, it is not a screened biography of a nurse who could be considered as main personage with some reservations*".<sup>55</sup> Further de-individualization of the personage of Yuliya Vrevska was suggested:

*„The character of Yuliya Vrevska does not have an independent meaning; it is a mirror of the progressive Russian society, of the intelligentsia, of the alert writer’s consciousness which cares about the destiny of the Bulgarian people and works for their liberation... Her self-sacrifice is brave and noble, but it is not enough as a plot and suggestion to fill up a two hour movie. The ambitions of the scriptwriters Stefan Tsanev and Semyon Lagunin and the director Nikola Korabov was to make a film panorama of the War of Liberation in parallel with the destiny of Vrevska and often without her. The movie is not a reconstruction of the history, it is the history as seen through a legend.”<sup>56</sup>*

The “voice” of the Soviet press was repeated many times and reprinted word by word in the Bulgarian newspapers. In the Soviet publications it was reminded that Nikola Korabov graduated from the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography. His movie was opposed to “The Heroes of Shipka”. The personage of Yuliya Vrevska was generalized to the utmost limit. It was underlined that the movie was created “*in a different artistic manner emphasizing not the epic events but the spiritual human world – the world of the one of the 200 000 Russians killed and wounded in the struggle for liberating Bulgaria*”.<sup>57</sup> According to the Soviet cinema critics:

*“The battle episodes only helped to recount the destiny of one of the participants in the events, to be seen though her eyes”.*<sup>58</sup>

Turgenev was not missed – his poem and his prose “Memory about Yuliya Vrevska” in which Yuliya Petrovna is characterized as “*tender gently heart ... and so eager for sacrifice! To help to the needed ones...she searched for another happiness*”.<sup>59</sup> There is one more accent in the Soviet press that is also important. According to the “Literature Newspaper”:

*“The war in the movie is not a background on which the destiny of the heroine is projected but direct “participant” in the movie.”*<sup>60</sup>

According to the cinema historian Nedelcho Milev in this historical-biographical movie the history of the main personage Yuliya Vrevska was followed in a strict succession of the events. The story of her life made the movie plot coherent. It is communicated in details “*with underlined tendency to full authenticity in restoration of the historical time and historical personages*”.<sup>61</sup> As for the character of Yulia Vrevska, it was outlined indirectly and delicately. *Indirectly by the social environment which formed her personality. Her friendship with Vereshchagin was*

*especially emphasized. Her relations with Viktor Hugo and Turgenev were very delicately revealed ... her close connections with the (Tsar) palace were also presented.*<sup>62</sup> Tastefully was revealed also her “*self –sacrifice*”.<sup>63</sup> And if her desire to leave for the front the author defines as *tremendous outburst of feelings her volunteer sacrifice to stay in the field hospital and even to go to the most dangerous infection ward of sick with typhus patients* he considered as a *discreet photographic portray of her tragic biography*.<sup>64</sup>

According to Nedelcho Milev, the war is dominating and it is a background which shadows the basic subject. He is convinced that in the representation of the war and the biography of Vrevska the sense of measure was lost and the proportions were unbalanced. Instead of serving as a background for the movie plot, the war scenes distract the attention from the picture of the peaceful spiritual world of the main heroine.

*“Episodes like passing the Danube, the Shipka battle, ceremonials like the prayer when the war was declared were turned into flamboyant and complex baroque frame in which the modest charm of the portrait of a fascinating woman is faded and lost.”*<sup>65</sup>

We have to admit also, that even if the Shipka battles were decisive for the course of the war, in this specific movie, the scenes related to them do not contribute nether directly nor indirectly to the development of the central character. In this sense according to Nedelcho Milev the plot of the movie is unduly overlade and not harmonious.

### Conclusion

In the 1970s the movie “Yuliya Vrevska” did not provoke attention neighter in the Soviet Union nor in Bulgaria. In 2013 on the occasion of the 135<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war and the 35 years anniversary of the creation of the movie, it was included in the program of the Moscow Film Festival and according to the press it attracted big audience. The meetings with Nikola Korabov, Ludmila Savelyeva and Emiliya Radeva with the Moscow audience also draw the attention of the press. But it was underlained that the the movie did not fit the high expectations of the spectators.

The existing attempts to represent women participants in the Russo-Ottoman War by movies, including the cinematographic personage of Yuliya Vrevska should be considered rather as a sign of the necessity for next steps in this direction. The woman face of the Russian-Ottoman War is still to be revealed.

I do not doubt that Nikola Korabov was honest when admiting:

*“The movie “Yuliya Vrevska” is very precious to me but it was not liked by the both parties – the Soviet and the Bulgarian. I know that when watching the movie in Russia the people commented ‘What*

*is this, why we should represent the war as seen by a baroness. There are heroes of the war we know very well, she is unknown. And the fact that she has a grave in Byala is good but she was not the only one. '... Russia is still an Empire. What does it mean is that the Emperor has shed so much blood for liberating Bulgaria? What does it mean that his brother was untalented military commander? Is that important?'<sup>66</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Delijska, Adelina, Nikola Korabov: Kinodejtsite sa Obrečeni na Genočid. Minaloto Trijabva da se Pročete i da se Kaže Gorčivata i Bolijašta Istina, [Nikola Korabov: Cinema Specialists are Doomed to Genocide. The Past Should be Read Again and the Bitter and Hurting Truth Has to be Told]. Web. 09 June 2015.

[http://www.vestnikataka.com/?module=displaystory&story\\_id=4859&format=print&edition\\_id=68](http://www.vestnikataka.com/?module=displaystory&story_id=4859&format=print&edition_id=68).

<sup>2</sup> Examples in this sense are the two versions of the movie “In The Eve” (1959; 1985) of the director Nikolay Mashchenko).

<sup>3</sup> Before it was finished only the Soviet – Albanian movie “The Great Warrior of Albania Skenderbeg”.

<sup>4</sup> In the text I will not consider this movie, who was created 20 years earlier than “Yuliya Vrevska”, but it is researched in details in papers and in the monograph – Cf. Пискова Марияна, Героите на Шипка. Архивен прочит на един филм за Руско-турската война (1877 – 1878 г.) от времето на Студената война [The Heroes of Shipka. Archive Reading of a Movie about the Russian –Turkish War from the Time of the Cold War], София, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Милев, Неделчо, Българският исторически филм, [Bulgarian Historical Movie] София, 1982, 76.

<sup>6</sup> He graduated the Moscow Academy for Film Directors in 1956 and worked in the Bulgarian Cinema Studio “Boyana”. He has taught film producing in the National Academy for Theatre and Film Arts and in the University of Varna. He was director of the movies “Dimitrovgradtsi” (1956 with Ducho Mundrov); the “Small Girl” (1959); “Tobacco” (selected for the film festival in Kan, 1963); “Vula” (1965); “Freedom or Death” (1969); “Angry Journey” (1971); “Ivan Kondarev” 1974, awarded with “Golden Rose” Prize in Varna and the special prize of the jury in San Remo); “Yuliya Vrevska” (1978); “Fortune” 1983, prize in Varna Film Festival, 1984); “Longing on the White Road” 1987); “Belief about the White Wind”(1990). He was director of the documental films “Nikola Vaptsarov”, “I don’t live one life”, “Hundred Bagpipes”.

<sup>7</sup> The TV movie the “Route to Sofia” has another specific for the TV genre features and will not be considered in this text.

<sup>8</sup> ЦДА (Централен държавен архив), 404/ 6/ 77/8 [CSA (Central State Archive)]

<sup>9</sup> For the 1300 anniversary of the foundation of the Bulgarian state the Movie Studio was ordered to develop the following movies: “Asparuh” in two series; “Boris I” in two series; “Measure for Measure” in two series; “Boyana Master” in three series; “Captain Petko Voyvoda” TV serial in 11 series; “Golden Century” TV serial in eight series. Cf. ЦДА, 8, 404/ 6/ 62/ 6.

<sup>10</sup> Милев, Филм, 5, 158.



<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> ЦДА, 8, 404/ 6/ 62/ 9-12

<sup>13</sup> The movie "Yuliya Vrevska" was finished in 1978 when 21 movies were produced by the Bulgarian Cinematography. Cf. ЦДА, 8, 383/ 15/ 153/ 1-2. This tendency to produce around 20-21 movies was preserved until 1988. ЦДА, 8, 383/ 15/ 153/ 10-13.

<sup>14</sup> Among them a big part belong to the so called "films about the migration from villages to big towns": „The Last Summer“, „Eternal Time“, „The Peasant with the Bicycle“, „Tree without Roots“. Cf. ЦДА, 8, 404/ 6/ 62/ 10.

<sup>15</sup> ЦДА, 8, 404/ 6/ 76/ 40-49. The program was signed up by Pavel Pisarev deputy - head of the Committee of Art and Culture and General Director of the Bulgarian Cinematography and by Filipp Ermash - head of the State Committee of Cinematography to the Council of Ministers of USSR on 14<sup>th</sup> of March 1975 in Moscow.

<sup>16</sup> ЦДА, 8, 404/ 6/ 76/ 42.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>19</sup> Before "Yuliya Vrevska" and after "The Heroes of Shipka" the Movie Studio had several co-productions with Soviet Movie Studios: 1956 with „Mosfilm“ „History Lesson“, 1959; „In the Eve“; 1966 with „M. Gorki“ „Running on the Waves“; 1967 with „Mosfilm“ „First Courier“; 1970 with „M. Gorki“ „The „Stolen Train“; 1971 with Mosfilm and German Democratic Republic „Frozen Bridge“; 1975 with „Belorusfilm“ the „Soldier from the Transport Unit“; 1975 with „M. Gorki“ the „Small Mermaid“; 1975/1976 with „Mosfilm“ „Communists“. Cf. ЦДА, 8, 404/ 4/ 76/ 61.

<sup>20</sup> ДА Плевен, [State Archive Plevan, 1065/1/35/11.

<sup>21</sup> Власков, Стефан, На снимачните площадки „Сестра на милосърдието“ (съвместна българо-съветска продукция), [On the film sets "Nurse" (joint Bulgarian – Soviet production)], Нови филми, 1976, 3, 11-12.

<sup>22</sup> Литературен фронт [Literature Front], 26 януари, 1978, 5.

<sup>23</sup> Недялков, Стефан, На снимачната площадка „Вярност за вярност“ [On the film Set "Fidelity for Fidelity"], Филмови новини, 1975, 5, 17-19.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. ЦДА, 8, 404/ 6/ 77/ 28-37.

<sup>25</sup> Contract for joint production of the Soviet – Bulgarian movie "Yuliya Vrevska" in two series was signed up on 26<sup>th</sup> of March 1976 in Sofia by the general director of Movie Studio "Mosfilm" N. T. Sizov , O. V. Teneyshvili, head of the Union "Sovinfilm" and the director of the Bulgarian Movie Studio Ivan Popyordanov. Cf. ЦДА, 8, 404/ 6/ 77/ 28.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. ЦДА, 8, 404/ 6/ 77/ 38-65.

<sup>27</sup> ЦДА, 8, 404/ 6/ 77/ 28-37.

<sup>28</sup> ЦДА, 8, 499/ 2/ 40/ 2.

<sup>29</sup> ЦДА, 8, 404/ 6/ 76/ 1-23

<sup>30</sup> ЦДА, 8, 404/ 6/ 77/ 32.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 32-33.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>33</sup> ДА Плевен, 20, 1065/ 1/ 35/ 1.

<sup>34</sup> Недялков, Площадка, 22, 18.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Карастоянов, Георги, Вярност за вярност [Fidelity for Fidelity], С., Военно издателство, 1960.

<sup>36</sup> Власков, Площадки, 20, 12.

<sup>37</sup> Недялков, Площадка, 22, 17-19.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Брайнина, Берта, На Старой Планине. Москва, 1975.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Назарова, Людмила, Подвиг сестры милосердия [The Heroism of the Nurses], Звезда, 3, 1978; Назарова, Людмила, И.С. Тургенев и Ю.П. Вревская [I.S. Turgenev and Yu. P. Vrevskaya], In: Русская литература. 1958.

<sup>40</sup> By that time and till 1987 she is editor in the Bulgarian Cinematography.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Корабов, Никола, Вие трябва да останете тук (Аудио запис, 23 март 2006) [You have to realize (audio record, 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2006). My unusual art decisions as an example of the role of culture in society. Workshop with students from the National Academy for Theatre and Film Arts. Web. 12, March, 2014. <http://www.filmmakersbg.org/art-culture-Nikola-Korabov2.htm>.

<sup>42</sup> „Сестра на милосърдието“ Българо-съветски филм за Освободителната война 1877 – 1878 г. [“Nurse” Bulgarian – Soviet Movie about the Liberating War 1877 – 1878], Студентска трибуна [Students forum], 20, 10 February 1976, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Милев, Филм, 5, 155.

<sup>44</sup> He initiated the movie “Tobacco” when he was only 30 years old. His movie “Freedom or Death” aimed at searching another image of the revolutionary Hristo Botev. After shooting the movie he was fired from his job because he was not loyal enough to socialism. The movie IvanKondarev” was developed on his own initiative.

<sup>45</sup> Сестра, 40, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Кооперативно село, [Cooperative Village Newspaper], 2, 1977, 6.

<sup>47</sup> Паралели [Parallels journal], 21, 1977, 26.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Сестра, 40, 3.

<sup>50</sup> Антени, [Antennas Newspaper], 24, 11 юни 1976, 8.

<sup>51</sup> Цанев, Стефан, Лунгин, Семьон, Юлия Вревска, [YuliyaVrevska], Киноизкуство [Cinema Art], 1976, 2, 70.

<sup>52</sup> Интервю с Никола Корабов [Interview with Nikola Korabov], Вечерни новини [Evening News], 24 август 1976, 5.

<sup>53</sup> Сестра на милосърдието. Филм за братството. Съзвездие от съветски актьори. [Nurse. Film about Brotherhood. Pleiad of Soviet Actors], Трезвеност [Temperance], 5, 11 май 1976, 3.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Чернев, Григор, По пътя на освободителите. На екрана – българо-съветският игрален филм „Юлия Вревска“, [On the Road of the Liberators. The Bulgarian- Soviet Movie “Yuliya Vrevska” on the Screen], Работническо дело [Worker’s Mission], 26 януари 1978, 8.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Черток, Семен, Она не ведала другото щастие [She Did not Know another Happiness], Новое время [New Time], 26, 1977, 13-17.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>60</sup> Литературная газета, [Literature Newspaper], 2 февр. 1977, 7.

<sup>61</sup> Милев, Филм, 5, 90.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Корабов, Вие трябва, 38.

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## **The Participation of Women in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878. An Analysis of the Newspaper “Mšak”**

**Abstract:** *In Armenia discussions about the socio-political role of women started in the liberal press just before the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878. To prepare the Armenian public for the incoming war the participation of Armenian and foreign women in Balkan rebellion as the Dutch lady Marcus in Bosnia and Herzegovina received wide coverage. Different women public organizations were getting ready for the coming war. The majority of these organizations operated under auspices of the Russian authorities. Benevolent events were held by women to collect necessary facilities for military hospitals in Transcaucasia. During the period of war operations Armenian women served as nurses in the Red Cross hospitals in Yerevan and Alexandropol. Armenian media writes about these hospitals with admiration and particularly mentions the pious attitude of the nurses working there. After finishing the war women were active in education activities, social work and national enlightenment.*

**Key words:** *Armenian newspaper, women images, hospitals, nurses, education activities*

Grigor Artsrouni, the founder of "Mshak" newspaper and one of the most eminent representatives of Armenian social-political thought of XIX century, continuously voiced the question of equality of women, particularly of Armenian women and their involvement in Armenian social-political life since the very first day "Mshak" started publishing. In his article titled "Woman is with us" Artsrouni writes:

*“Woman is an extremely powerful force within society. History has shown that when she is against certain idea, the latter should be deemed lost. When a woman remains indifferent to a question, idea or phenomenon, it will remain unchanged. When a woman is conversely sympathetic to an idea, one can surely say that she will overcome all*

*hindrances and challenges to carry it out. Every kind of progress and regress in society depends on participation or opposing attitude of women within society. It's about ten years that Armenian women in Russia got involved little by little in nearly all phenomena of our social and national life and have recently started appearing in various fields nation-wide. Armenian woman were not indifferent towards questions of national importance, they started showing interest and participating in general, national scale charitable activities. Armenian woman tried ameliorating the wretched condition of Armenians not only through participation, but by promoting fundraising activities for suffering Van Armenians.<sup>1</sup> Even though the raised funds were slim, this undertaking shows that Armenian society hasn't yet lost track of the link between Armenians scattered in different countries of the world.”<sup>2</sup>*

It is not random that Grigor Artsrouni's editorial appeared in the same issue and on the same page in "Mshak", side by side with the manifesto of Tsar Alexander II that declared war on the Ottoman Empire. Grigor Artsrouni grasped the opportunity and directly called on women:

*“We are turning to you, Armenian women, we do repeat that we expect from you to undertake the moral and mental healing of the Armenian spirit ... As soon as Armenian woman gives us a helping hand, the Armenian spirit will revive, and we will be able to deem us saved and consider the mental and moral revival of Armenians accomplished.”<sup>3</sup>*

### **The participation of women in the period of preparation of Russo-Ottoman War (1877 – 1878)**

The subject of the following research is the participation of Armenian and women from different nationalities in the Balkan rebellion and the Armenian social and political responses as well as the prowess of Dutch aristocrat lady Marcus in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its coverage in Armenian mass media.

During the revolts of diverse Balkan peoples against the Ottoman rule, Armenian social and political thought and particularly liberal media carefully kept track of their development. Any news that came from the Balkans about either success or failure of the rebels was published in Armenian media of Tbilisi at first, and was immediately analyzed by Armenian publicists. The national liberation movements of the Balkans have brought about large excitement among Armenian liberal and revolutionary-inclined social circles. The representatives of those circles tried to inspire Armenian society with the heroic experience of the Balkan peoples. The Armenian media paid special attention to European volunteers, who came to help them and particularly to women standing out with their courage. The phenomenon

of Dutch aristocrat lady Marcus became one of a particular interest. The Armenian media published a number of articles in the spring of 1876 about Marcus' activity in Bosnia and Herzegovina. "Mshak" newspaper first published a story about the Dutch lady when referring to the detention of Mičo Ljubibratić, the leader of rebellion, and his six companion-in-arms (Đorđe Petrović, Tomo and Valle Balardić, Jago Miskiće, Karlo Valle and Cezar Zezarić) by the Austrians.<sup>4</sup> In the following issues the same newspaper, the editor and readers of which were excited by the heroic deeds of this courageous woman, provides more detailed information about her:

*"Following the recent news, it seems that Lady Marcus, who was fighting against Turkey in Herzegovina, was detained by the Austrian Government and forced to live in Lynch under administrative control, managed to escape from that city and fled to Serbia and Herzegovina via Vienna and Pest. In the previous issue we had reported that among the detained Serbs there was a Dutch girl named Marcus. That woman had been inspired by the idea of liberation of suppressed nations and took part in the war against the Turks with astonishing zeal and courage. She was the first to attack the Turks everywhere. Legends were born about Lady Marcus in Bosnia and Herzegovina. When the detainees, who had escaped from Austrian arrest, arrived to Spalato (Split), people welcomed them with great excitement and national songs. People gave Lady Marcus many flowers as a sign of gratitude."*<sup>5</sup>

Then the Armenian newspaper informs that Marcus avoided persecutions from the Dalmatian authorities and moved to Belgrade in Serbia. Below we present the unedited correspondence about her welcome in Belgrade:

*"Lady Marcus, who had taken part in Herzegovina uprising and managed to escape from Austrian place of confinement, is now in Belgrade, the Serbian capital and was welcomed with great excitement by the people. The huge crowd of people, nearly all Belgrade, accompanied her with music, walked in front of lord's palace crying out "živo", then headed to the hotel where Lady Marcus stayed. After the endless cries of praise someone delivered a speech in honor of this courageous lady. Finally, she herself appeared on the balcony and responded to the crowd with a speech, expressing her sympathy to Slavonic peoples and her wish to see them in absolute freedom. The crowd, even more excited by her speech, continued to pour praises on her. The demonstration did not disturb the public order."*<sup>6</sup>

From the very first day of Bulgarian uprising in April 1876 Armenian media published several articles, which were taken from European and Russian newspapers, as well as from international telegraphic agencies. The struggle of Bulgarian people against Ottoman rule and particularly the involvement of Bulgarian women inspired Armenian public. Armenian newspapers published materials about the self-sacrifices and the deprivations that Bulgarian women underwent for the sake of liberating their country. "Mshak" published materials about inhuman brutalities of Ottoman forces and bashibazouks, who mainly killed unprotected women, children and elders:

*"It is enough to look at the brutalities carried out by Turkish forces in Slavonic countries, especially in Bulgaria. As soon as Turkish forces enter Bulgarian villages, they burn houses, murder elders, break children's heads, rape women and girls, stab their bellies and cast them into the fire. They tie women together, burn their breasts on a white-hot coal and cut them. They also cut noses and ears of captives, thousands of whom are thrown into prisons, where they are piled up. They can neither sit, nor lie and suffocate from their own excrement. Only a short part of sufferings reminding of martyrdom of the first Christians were described in newspaper articles. European reporters, who had been eyewitnesses of the Turkish military actions, say that Europe has no idea of all brutalities committed by the Turks. And Europe stays indifferent to the sufferings of Bulgarian elders, children and women."*<sup>7</sup>

In his article "East and West" published in another issue of "Mshak", eminent Armenian social and political figure Dr. Spandar Spandaryan refers to brutalities of the Ottoman forces and the Circassian bashibazouks and writes the following:

*"The elders and youngers, eighty years old man and a month-old child, virgin girl and pregnant woman, all without exception are massacred and fall martyrs by the hands of bloodthirsty Turks. No pen can put in black and white every event, the blood-stained and awful scenes, which turned Bulgaria into a theatre of violence. Bashibazouks make children jump on swords and eventually make their mothers eat their sons. These blood-thirsty monsters tie men to trees and rape their wives and girls in front of them. Murdering everybody and razing churches and houses to the ground, they foray everything on their way. Wherever these freaks go, they leave after them plague, blood and fire. All this is happening at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, in front of educated Europe, where people use to build shelters for old animals and where the police of all nations are chasing after a wretched criminal and writing bulky books about him. Perhaps in a humanistic country as England*

*people will build a hotel for old flies, which are unable to earn a living, while the blood of thousands of people and children is shedding and one can buy thousands of Christian children for hundred Florin and enslave them.”<sup>8</sup>*

### **Benevolent events held by women to collect necessary facilities for military hospitals in Transcaucasia**

Already in autumn of 1876 it was clear for the Russian public that the war with the Ottoman Empire was inevitable and the start of military operations was a question of time. Such preparations were largely on the way. The accumulation of unprecedented military equipment near the Ottoman border in the Caucasus, eloquent anti-Ottoman publications disseminated by the media and various articles describing the sufferings of the Bulgarian people raised an unprecedented patriotic movement among Russian society. All strata of Russian society and the majority of empire’s subjects were willing to sacrifice their life for the sake of liberating Christian and Slavonic peoples from Ottoman ‘yoke’. Russian authorities were totally aware of the scale of the coming war and once again considered the experience of the Crimean War (1853-1856). Until the publication of the Alexander II Manifesto that declared war on the Ottoman Empire in 1877, the entire country, including the Caucasus was mobilizing military forces. Different women public organizations were also getting ready for the coming war. The majority of these organizations operated under the auspices of the Russian authorities or enjoyed their trust. As an example we quote the following statement that periodically appeared on the cover pages of Russian, Armenian and Georgian newspapers published in the Caucasus: “Upon the will of Her Imperial Highness Olga Fyodorovna<sup>9</sup>, the honorary member of the Company taking care of sick and wounded soldiers, and under §87 of the Company dealing with the moveable hospital, facilities and stock compiling, the Tbilisi Women Committee, established as adjunct to the Health Condition Department of the aforementioned company, calls to voluntary donators wishing to donate as much as they can. The donations can be both material and financial and will be kept in a repository opened by the Committee.”<sup>10</sup>

Individuals who sympathized with the Committee’s humanistic intents are welcome to turn to Major-General Rerberg, the Teller of Company’s Health Condition Department. Among accepted items are also broadcloth, linen, flannel patches, folding beds, steel tableware for hospital, cans, extracts, tea, sugar, etc.”<sup>11</sup>

On the eve and especially during the Russo-Ottoman War (1877 – 1878) the most active members of organizational committees – established to provide support to the army, to the Armenian voluntary corps and to the Armenians, who had become migrants because of war – were Armenian women. The major burden for organizing various fundraising events (balls, mass walks, amateur performances, concerts, etc.) rested on shoulders of Armenian women. By assiduous efforts and



accuracy of these women list of donators was created, where the contribution of each donor was carefully recorded, and the raised sum was transferred to other public committees operating in Tbilisi.

Referring to passive attitude of Armenian students in Moscow towards the question of raising sums to help Western Armenians, who suffered from war and foray of Kurdish units, the newspaper correspondent Mariam Tumanyants writes with pain:

*“We thought that now women can anticipate sympathetic attitude especially from young Armenian students, who can be helpful to their activities, but their attitude proved that it’s too early to expect such moral and mental changes from them.”<sup>12</sup>*

### **Red Cross hospitals in Armenia and participation of Armenian women in fundraising**

From the very first days of the war the International Red Cross started providing active assistance to different settlements in the Yerevan province. Hospitals were opened in Yerevan and Alexandropol. Armenian media writes about these hospitals with admiration and particularly mentions the pious behavior of the nurses working there. The Red Cross hospitals stood out for their cleanness and sterility conditions, for the availability of doctors with particular specialties (surgeons, traumatologists, therapists, etc.) and for the special care for patients. For wide strata of Yerevan and Alexandropol cities, which were at that time in a poor sanitary conditions, the Red Cross hospitals were kind of “revelation”. We come across the description of similar hospital in one of the September 1877 issues of “Mshak”:

*“The following information is reported from Yerevan. The public garden, which looks like a wood, serves as working space for a group of Germans from the Red Cross, who had arrived from Finland. In a glade situated in between the garden there are about 10 camps, where wounded or sick patients are accepted. The flag of Red Cross flies above the camps. The groups consist of skilled doctors with various specialties and of 8-10 nurses. On Sundays one can see every nurse dressed casually and seated in front of the camp reading a prayer book. The picture of little Germany emerges in front of you. One needs not go to Germany to become acquainted with these people. If you take a handful of wheat, you’ll know its quality.”<sup>13</sup>*

It should be noted that in the front line and in the rear of the Caucasus front (Tbilisi, Yerevan, Alexandropol and elsewhere) aristocratic Russian, Georgian and Armenian women were voluntarily and devotedly serving as sisters of charity in the

Red Cross hospitals. "Mshak" periodically refers to the prowess of those women, who didn't leave their patients when typhus epidemic broke out in the Caucasus front. An example of such courage and valour is the departure of honorable women Chavchavadze, Chelokaeva and Arghutyan-Dolgorukova to Ardahan, where the first grounds of typhus epidemic were discovered.<sup>14</sup>

Armenian women had a great role in raising funds in different places of Caucasus viceroyalty for the Red Cross. Besides the literary soirées, a considerable sum was raised during "mass walks" organized in city gardens. Games, side-shows, small orchestra performances, lotto drawing, performances by tight-rope dancers and other shows were organized in Alexander Park in Tbilisi, English park in Yerevan and in Gorka Park in Alexandropol. The income generated from these events was transferred to Red Cross. On the eve of similar "mass walks" "Mshak" editorial staff called the Tbilisi Armenians to actively participate in the event:

*"We know that on May 16<sup>th</sup> a national celebration was to be held in Alexander Park in favor of the Red Cross that provides support to wounded and sick soldiers. We hope that locals and especially Armenians, who constitute the majority of Tbilisi population, will appreciate this celebration and will donate as much as they did last year, though there are newspapers that audaciously blame Armenians as if they were not sympathetic to such benevolent undertakings and therefore did not donate. One should ask whether there is more or less well-to-do society in Tbilisi and Transcaucasia other than the Armenian one that participates in all kinds of benevolent initiatives. All kind of donations are accepted every day in Alexander Park, in Agricultural Association building, from 11 AM to 1 PM."*<sup>15</sup>

The description of that event was published in one of the following issues of "Mshak" in 1877:

*"A national celebration was held in Alexander park of Tbilisi on May 21 and 22. The sum raised during the event was allocated to the Red Cross to support wounded and sick soldiers. The park was lightened and there were also beautiful fireworks. Women and girls of high and middle class society raised money in boxes for the Red Cross. The park was adorned with flags, the pictures of the Emperor, generals Loris-Melikov and Chelokaev, Ardahan fortress, as well as the bust of viceroy were installed in different corners of the park. On Sunday the park was crowded with people that it was impossible to walk."*<sup>17</sup>

The following brief report provides the figures of raised funds during "mass walks":

*"The total sum raised during the national celebration held on May 21-22 in Alexander park of Tbilisi was 6273 roubles and 27 kopeks. From that sum 2134 roubles and 86 kopeks were spent on ongoing expenses and the other 4138 roubles and 41 kopeks were transferred to the Red Cross."*<sup>18</sup>

### **Participation of women in nursing activities within military hospitals; women volunteers**

Following the call of "Mshak" newspaper, women committees were formed in Armenia and especially in Armenian colonies during the war period. These committees were to provide first aid items, made and collected by them, to army and wounded and sick soldiers. This initiative undertaken by Armenian women was highly appreciated in wide circles of society, and suggestions about expanding this initiative were made.

Such suggestion was published in "Mshak" and belonged to military doctor Mirimanyants serving in the Caucasus front:

*"When I read in "Mshak" newspaper (№ 31) that Armenian women of Tbilisi high-class society established an association and prepared different materials and items for the army, I got an idea and would like to share it with everybody. I hope they'll approve my idea, and they'll be glad to carry it out. The Armenian women do a great humanitarian work by helping the wounded and it is an immense honor for them. Besides sewing and needlework, it is necessary to raise funds to ease the healing process of wounded soldiers. The source for those funds can be as follows: we know that it is very popular among Armenian society to play lotto and cards. It would be preferable if the winner donated the sum to wounded soldiers, instead of keeping it for him/her. Of course, as it is the case with each humanitarian work, a committee of women can be established. The committee will then transfer the sum to the Red Cross or to the Board of Trustees of the military hospital. In my suggestion, benevolence will come out from two persons, the one who receives and the ones who donate money. In this case lotto and cards will be given favorable meaning. This is very desirable under present conditions. I hope that this suggestion will not be a voice in the wilderness and will find response among honorable Armenian women. Believe my words, honorable Armenian women, each bottle of wine or other beverage and food purchased by roubles and kopeks donated by you and provided to the wounded and weakened soldiers, will raise their spirits, give them strength to overcome their pains and heal shortly."*<sup>19</sup>

And more eyewitness reports:

*“We have been reported from Vagharshapat that those, who were wounded and became sick during the last battle in Bayazet, are brought here to be cured. We should recall the works of Mr. Navasardyan from Vagharshapat, one of the doctors visiting from St. Petersburg medical academy. The latter with two Armenian sisters of mercy takes care and cures patients free of charge.”*<sup>20</sup>

More educated nurses serve in the area: “Armenian women, who received their education in obstetric school in Tbilisi, left for Borzhom to serve as sisters of mercy in military hospital.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Armenian women fundraising for the refugees**

Committees aiming to provide support to Western Armenians were established in Eastern Armenia, the Caucasus and in different Armenian colonies as early as before the war. The fire of the region of lake Van in 1876 and the inactivity of the Ottoman authorities put the Armenian population of the city and the vicinity in extremely hard conditions. The representatives of Armenian intelligentsia came forward with special call in Western Armenian and especially in Eastern Armenian newspapers. They urged all Armenians living in different corners of the world to organize fundraising for Armenians of Van, who were in grievous conditions. The input of Armenian women was especially big. In all settlements, where relief committees and commissions were operating, general organizers and key players were Armenian women. “Mshak” was published in different cities of the Russian empire: Moscow, St. Petersburg, New Nakhijevan, Rostov, Stavropol, Ghzlar, Theodosia, Vladikavkaz, Baku, Tbilisi and elsewhere. It published the reports of established committees on organizing fundraising for the needed. Nearly all reports and correspondence show that Armenian women were the most active in helping and supporting their compatriots.

Armenian benevolent organizations became even more in the next year of the war. When the first groups of refugees from Bayazet, Mush and Alashkert provinces of Western Armenia crossed the Russian border during the first months of war, the Refugee Relief Organizational Committee was established in Tbilisi. Armenian and Yezidi refugees, who had arrived to Yerevan under the protection of General Arshak Ter-Ghukasov, lacked any vitally important living conditions and means of first necessity. Receiving the obvious support from the Russian authorities, Armenian social activists launched a large-scale initiatives in the Caucasus and in all other Armenian-populated places of the Russian empire. Refugee Relief Organizational Committee established in Tbilisi started fundraising through different ways

and distributed food and materials of first necessity to refugees, who had found asylum in both urban and rural settlements of Yerevan province. Armenian women organized literary and musical evenings and balls in order to raise funds. The girls studying in Armenian female schools sold their hand-made works. "Mass walks" organized in Tbilisi, Alexandropol and Yerevan, were of particular importance. The Armenian mass media had a crucial role in promoting and popularization of those events. "Mshak" and its editor-in-chief Grigor Artsrouni promoted "mass walks" in every possible way, called the Armenian population of the Caucasus and Russia and especially Armenian women to actively engage in those events. Besides, one of the fundraising centers was located in the "Mshak" editorial office, and the newspaper periodically published the reports on fundraising that came from different areas of the Russian Empire. The report analysis of Refugee Relief Organizational Committee shows that the number of women engagement in organized events is estimated to be between 70-80%. The same is the picture in fundraising. Reports published in "Mshak" show that women outnumber men as donors 4:1.

Information about the active role of Armenian population and especially women in Russia willing to support the army, were published in European mass media and spread in messages from the telegraph agencies. In this regard "Foreign News" section of "Mshak" newspaper writes:

*"German telegraph agencies inform that Russian Armenians are sympathetic to the war and offer great sacrifices to the organization supporting Russian wounded and sick soldiers. Armenian honorable women organize different events raising funds and collecting necessary materials for military hospitals. The same agency informs that Tbilisi "Mshak" newspaper propagates the idea of merging Armenia with Russia."*<sup>22</sup>

### **Establishment of women public organizations after the Russo-Ottoman War (1877 – 1878)**

On the eve and during the war the active social role of women raised their public awareness, changed stereotypes existing within society and served as ground for a large amount of public discussions about women issues. The arguments about the function and the status of women and the significant role they play in the life of Armenian people became more vivid especially at the end of war, as the Armenian Question was introduced into international diplomacy according to 16<sup>th</sup> article of the San Stefano Preliminary Peace Agreement signed in February 1878. The Armenian Question was the issue about urgent reforms to be carried out in Western Armenia, its further autonomy or independence – the latter became disputed and ambiguous matter for the Armenians. It was understood as a question of liberating Western Armenia from the Ottoman Empire and was triumphantly welcomed by the Armenian people. However, this article turned into Article 61 under the name "Ar-

menian Reforms" during the Berlin Congress that took place on June 1, 1878. This brought about the usual disappointment among Armenians. But that disappointment was counterweighted by the strenuous efforts of preserving the national identity and defending the national culture. As a result of all this strong self-organization, self-consciousness and self-awareness arose among Armenians. Yet, it was impossible to develop further the nation under the conditions of mass ignorance. That is why the Armenian intelligentsia, which was the unofficial leader of the Armenian society propagated the idea of national enlightenment as a mean of being "saved from slavery".

Women's question entered Armenian public sphere simultaneously with the occurrence and development of the national enlightenment program and referred to securing women's education and social role. It required great propagation efforts; it was necessary to eliminate enrooted prejudices and stereotypes and to make everyone acknowledge the right of women of education. The necessity and the significance of this issue, as well as its further realization was not an easy task.

Initially, before the turn of the century, men publicized the women issues and consistently pushed them ahead. Even though this movement was stimulated by women movements in the West and their ideology, among Armenians it arose not as a struggle of women to obtain their political and civil rights. Actually, it emerged because of the active engagement of women in national liberation movement. The rights of women of education, of work, and of active engagement in social life were not achieved as a result of consistent struggle, as was the case with many European countries, but were actually just granted to them. It was men, who, with certain exceptions, pushed women ahead into active participation in social life. It was not an expression of self-sacrifice or generosity, rather than was a call to share responsibility. The responsibility retained for women consequently brought about the acknowledgement of their rights.<sup>23</sup>

The attention of Armenian intelligentsia focused on the lives of women representing different classes and groups. Women became the object of study of ethnographers, historians, economists, psychologists and provincial correspondents. Different news and reports appearing in mass media chronicles concerning women's life became an obligatory genre. Women issues were further analyzed and discussed in extensive articles.

During these years the movement of the so-called "Natural Beauty Followers" started, which was against modern fashion and foppery. Armenian women of Enihale quarter of Skyutar (a neighborhood in Constantinople) with the initiative of Yevpime Torgomyan established the "Parzasirats Association" in 1878, aiming to abolish love to contemporary fashion and enroot simplicity. A year and a half after its establishment another association with the same name was established in Psamatia in 1879 under the leadership of a former alumni of Nunyan-Varduhyan College and women from the district.<sup>24</sup>

By the end of 1870s Constantinople Armenians paved the way to national undertakings, a whole generation was tempered and deemed itself prepared and especially obliged to assume the responsibility of disseminating national enlightenment in all Armenian provinces. Women established the first public organizations, which mainly pursued benevolent purposes and were relief unions promoting schooling and education, care for the poor and orphans. They consisted of nurses, pupils and alumni from different educational institutions, as well as common women. They materially supported people in need through means generated from membership fees, donations and different cultural events, organized medical aid for them, look after the hygiene, laundry and medical supply in hospitals, established orphanages, workshops and mainly supported educational institutions by providing pupils with stationery, textbooks, financial means; finding female teachers to teach in colleges; established new schools and trained teachers.

At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century women unions and councils operated nearly in all Armenian and Armenian – populated town, while dozens of them ran in big cities. According to the recent research, about sixty women associations operated in Constantinople by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is surprising that, in spite of the lack of tradition and experience, the representatives of these organizations stood out for their high organizational skills and established coherent organizations with strict by-laws and structures. They were zealous about publicity of their activities and total transparency of their activities. Annual reports, meeting records and financial accounts were published in details in the media and open for public scrutiny.<sup>25</sup>

As a result of the consistent activities of women organizations, female colleges and schools were established in Armenian and all Armenian-populated settlements in 1880s. Pupils got education by European educational methods used at that time.

Pre-school education was also introduced and developed among Armenians thanks to the same women movement. This practice was mainly located in big cities. Children were educated by Froebel method, which was widely-applied in Europe.

However, women movement of 19<sup>th</sup> century was not limited to these goals. As the first and important pledge of women's freedom was the ensuring of right for education, this movement was aimed at resolving this issue. Only after that it would be possible to consider work and equal remuneration, independent economic condition, political involvement and other questions. This particular scope of activities was determined by the absence of an independent statehood and by certain limitations that existed under foreign rule.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that Armenian women were not involved in discussions of national issues that concerned Armenians. One of vivid expressions of women's social engagement is their involvement in liberation movement. Many women took part in rebellions, heroic and self-defense battles that took place in Western Armenia.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “*The Armenians in the Eastern part of Turkey in the area around Lake Van. The suffered from Ottoman atrocities following their insurrection against the Ottomans*”. (Note of the editor).

<sup>2</sup> Mshak, 29, 1877, 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Mshak, 10, 1876, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Mshak, 11, 1876, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Mshak, 15, 1876, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Mshak, 27, 1876, 2-3.

<sup>8</sup> Spandaryan, Spandar, East and West, Mshak, 35, 1876, 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Olga Feodorovna (her name was Cäcilie Auguste von Baden – before she married the Caucasus Viceroy, Commander-in-Chief of the Caucasus front during Russo-Turkish War (1877 – 1878), Grand Duke Michael Nikolaevich. For about twenty years she had lived with her husband in the Caucasus and was highly respected by the local society.

<sup>10</sup> The following items, which are necessary for compiling hospital stock and through which army health departments will be replenished in a due time, are the following: Bed cover for mattresses filled with heap, with 3 arshin length (6 arshin for linen covers); bedsheets, each with 3 arshin length; external pillow cases with 1<sup>1/4</sup> square arshin length; internal pillow cases with the same size, made from wineskin; wool blankets; flannel gowns; leather slippers; shirts; pants; face towel, with 2 arshin length (11-12 kopeks for one arshin linen); handkerchief; sponges; surgical corsets, with 3-4 fingers wide and 5-15 fingers long, made from flannel, gauze or linen, without stitch or scar; lint, from regular, common, thin and clear linen; collars from different materials; different head gears sewn from threads, for head wounds; belly binder, from flannel, cotton or flannel in the backing.

<sup>11</sup> Mshak, 44, 1876, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Mshak, 22, 1877, 1-2.

<sup>13</sup> Mshak, 66, 1877, 2-3.

<sup>14</sup> Mshak, 37, 1877, 4.

<sup>15</sup> A few days after the information was published, the organizers of “mass walks” changed the day of the event, which was then to be held for two days.

<sup>16</sup> Mshak, 33, 1877, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Mshak, 37, 1877, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Mshak, 38, 1877, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Mshak, 42, 1877, 2.

<sup>20</sup> Mshak, 50, 1877, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Mshak, 52, 1877, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Mshak, 33, 1877, 3.

<sup>23</sup> Zakaryan, Lilit, Gender Issues in the History of Armenian Socio-Political Thought of the Second Half of 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the Start of 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Gender studies, Yerevan, 4, 2001.

<sup>24</sup> Harutyunyan, Anahit, Century of Notable Women. Social Activity of Armenian Women in 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Yerevan, 2005, 42-43.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Poghosyan, Svetlana, Armenian Woman and National Liberation Struggle. Tradition and Innovation in Armenian Subsistence Culture”, Basic directions, Yerevan, V, 1998.



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## **Muhajir Resettlement and Women's Memory of the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878**

**Abstract:** *The authors deal with the oral transfer of memory of women migrated to Ottoman Empire (Muhajir movement) after the annexation of Muslim Ajara by the Russian Empire in 1878. The research is based on study trip in former ethnical territories, which nowadays are part of Turkey, and in the inner provinces of Turkey. From generation to generation, people from different parts of Georgia and outside of Georgia were passing the stories about the "great resettlement". The interviewed women point to the Russian oppression as a main reason for the migration. Some women blame the two rival Empires for the misfortune of the Georgians. Particularly interesting was the information about the secret writing system 'dedabruli' created by the Georgian women to safeguard the secrecy of the correspondence under the Ottoman rule. The information about Georgian women serving as nurses or collecting money and cloths to support the Georgian soldiers during the war has also been provided.*

**Key words:** *Muhadjir movement, women's memory, Ajara, secret writing system 'dedabruli'*

Research of women's memory of war, their participation in war, and their participation in postwar social and political movements represent one of the important topics of our research. Memories based on the real events are in close relation with history. We may even say, that in some cases oral history accounts of the eyewitnesses are more valuable, specific, and more realistic than the official historiographical version.

Various groups of women participated in Russo-Ottoman war 1877 – 1878. They had different positions in the society. Therefore, during the analyses of the oral history accounts, reflecting the memory of women about the war, we were trying to focus on: woman-heroine, woman-activist, woman-victim, and a woman – representative of different social status. In order to achieve our goal, we were trying to 'provoke' the women-respondents in order for them to tell us the stories and tales,

which represent one of the main tools of reflecting the history of diverse groups in Georgia during the war. In some stories we encounter tragedies of specific individuals and families.

There are number of works dedicated to the study of Muhajir resettlement (Muhajiroba).<sup>1</sup> The stories collected by us represent personal oral history accounts. They are interesting from the perspective of identifying women's emotions, which have inherited the assessment of these events passed to them by their ancestors. These events were extensively published in the media of the XIX century. Reunification of South-West Georgia with its historical homeland and the facts of the forced resettlements of Georgians were covered in the press along with the ongoing events. But the stories of Georgian women living on the territory of modern Turkey give us different interpretation of the events from the one presented in Georgian media of that period.

Our research was conducted on the territories of modern Georgia and Turkey, particularly, in Ajara, which was reunited with Georgia as a result of Russo-Ottoman war 1877 – 1878. In accordance with this, we outlined two categories of women:

1. Women – descendants of Muhajirs living in the inner provinces of Turkey;
2. Women – descendants of Muhajirs living in the former – considered Georgian – territories, which nowadays are part of Turkey.

Unfortunately, we were not able to retrieve specific data about the women participants of Russo-Ottoman war of 1877 – 1878, because the respondents could not remember their names, but we were able to get interesting material, which is useful in the process of reconstructing the historical past. The major topic of our discussions were the stories about Muhajirs, which appeared because of the war.

People from different parts of Georgia were passing the stories about the "great resettlement", sometimes partially and in some cases fully. And even today, these stories are kept among the women living in Turkey and Georgia. They help in studying the ways of survival of Georgian identity, so that the Georgians living in Turkey would not lose their cultural identity.

We encountered some difficulties during the field trip: some women-respondents were suspicious about our intentions, sometimes even scared. Only after a while, when we managed to convince them that we are not working with a political agenda, they accepted to be interviewed and often were very eager to answer our questions. One of the respondents even highlighted, that lately, women-Georgians living on the territory of Turkey did not appreciate being in the center of attention. These women were showing a delight when greeted in Georgian, they were glad that the people interviewing them were well informed about their way of living.

Stories covering the actual warfare were relatively rare and were remember poorly. The main focus was on Muhajir resettlement itself. In addition to that, the main reasons for this process (imperial interests of both the Russian and the Otto-

man Empire), were unknown to them. As usual, they willingly discussed the actual events that have occurred during the process of resettlement – but not the reasons that have caused them.

Our respondents were aware of the villages and places they were once expelled from. For instance, eighteen villages in the region of Ingilo (heavily populated by the descendants of the Muhajirs) were originally from Batumi, Keda, Shuakhevi, Khulo, Kobuleti.

According to our interviewees, cases of resettlement from the territory of Georgia to the Ottoman Empire took place before and after the Muhajir resettlement. One of the respondents names the reason of her ancestors resettlement from Georgia to Turkey way before the Muhajir resettlement started: economical improvement and personal relations. On the other hand, her relative specifies that their grand grandfather killed a man in Georgia, so that is the reason for leaving the country forever. According to them, the biggest flow of immigrants comes from the period of Muhajir resettlement, many of them were brought by ship, but some managed to complete the journey on foot. One of our respondent, Isminaz Iazi is a descendant of Muhajirs which settled in village of Hilmiedan in the region of Inegole.<sup>2</sup> She currently works in one of the restaurants of Oilati resort. She immediately realized the importance of our conversation and agreed to be interviewed. She told many stories. Her grand grandmothers (same as her grand grandfathers) were Muhajirs, immigrants from Georgia. Initially they were settled in different village but later they moved to the place where she currently lives, the village of Oilati.

Another one, Yavuz Sultan, explained the reason for the settlement of brothers or other relatives in different villages:

*"...Some of them came in the period of Muhajir resettlement, but some of them fled because of the murders they committed on their homeland, they fled and settled in different villages so that they and their families would not be wiped out as a result of revenge".<sup>3</sup>*

The story told by the respondent Sultan Takidze (Sezer) presents some interesting issues: he is well aware that he is a descendant of the Muhajirs, but at the same time he is concerned about separation of Georgians, which in some cases leads to assimilation:

*"I don't remember anything about the war anymore, the only thing I know is that when the Russians and Ottomans had confrontations, we moved here. ...We mixed with Turks and became like them, assimilated. Got separated and that's why we are lost: some stayed in Patse, the others in Inegole, some in Bursa, and the others somewhere else. My family was initially from Churuk-Su (Kobuleti) and later became Muhajirs".<sup>4</sup>*

The ancestors of Memed Kai (Makaradze) were transported to the Ottoman Empire on a ship. He proudly talks about Georgian women, who stood shoulder to shoulder next to their men:

*"Georgian women are stronger than Turkish women. That's the reason Turks want to marry them. In the museum of Istanbul Dolma Bahce Palace, there is a portrait of grandmother Khatuna, who was from Meskheta. When Russian and Turks were fighting in 1877, Russian soldiers have seriously wounded her brother. When he came home, she was trying to make her son go to sleep in the cradle. When she saw her brother she jumped up and screamed: "My brother, what has happened to you?" to which he replied: "Too much of lead I got", and died. Furious, Khatuna took the axe and ran outside and started screaming to the villagers: "Come out all of you, Russians are here and want to kill us all, let's get rid of them". And all of the villagers came out: men, women and blocked the way to the Russians. Ninety-eight old Khatuna, when having a conversation with an American general, said: "If the Russians return, I will do the same thing".<sup>5</sup>*

This story is interesting because the main topic of it is the Russian-Ottoman war, and the influence of Ottoman discourse is present there.

Villagers of Ahmedie also make connection between their resettlement and Muhajirs. According to the women living in the family of Sharapetin Oskodju (Surmanidze), initially they settled on a free land. "We come from Dachidze, and people call us Chakveogli. Our mother is from there" - says one of the respondents. According to her, when mother was telling the stories about the difficulties that Muhajirs were facing, she always cried. With the permission of her husband she showed us family photos and old newspapers. She knew very little about the war, but was absolutely sure that the Muhajir resettlement started right after the war.

A resident of Inegole, descendent of Muhajirs, Mehmed Misi was well aware of the history of Muhajirs from his grandmother. His ancestors were initially from Batumi, and were transported by boat to the Ottoman Empire, which was named afterwards "Gul-Jemal". The mother of Sultan Rashid was originally a Georgian:

*"When we were resettled, the Sultan at that time was Abdul Hamid II, whose wife was Georgian. He gave us for settlement this territory. Eighteen villages were built in these forests. Here, we kept our old the customs and laws from the time we used to live in Ajara. We haven't changed, we still retain the passion to dances, and for our food. We have some dishes that Turks don't know: kaladjo, pkhallobio, chimuri, khavitsi, khasuta, etc".<sup>6</sup>*



### **The center of Georgian culture in Inegole**

In the memory of women, the ancestors of Muhajirs, some poems and songs are still preserved, which show the burden of mass migration and grief of families who were separated and lost the ability to see their loved ones:

*"Get up, let's go, Muhajirs, the weather is glorious,  
But as soon as we board the ship, our hearts will die".<sup>7</sup>*

The story of another respondent:

*"My grandmother Gogitidze was from Gogniauri, and her husband was Helbet Abuladze. According to my grandmothers stories she was six at the time. As soon as the war has ended, the border was marked and they said to the people: "The ones who want to go to Turkey - do that, the ones who want to stay and live in Russia – can stay, but the borders will close. The family consisted of two brothers and one sister. The older brother said: "younger brother and sister, move to Turkey". And the older brother stayed in Gogniauri. Younger brother left Batumi on a ship and went to Samsun, but they didn't like the place. Later they moved to Konio, didn't stay there either: no village there and no water. Finally all people who wondered around in different places gathered in Inegole".<sup>8</sup>*

All the difficulties the Muhajirs were facing were associated with the Russians. Grandmother used to say: "We were Muslims, we were praying, reading Koran. Russian soldiers used to come and beat us. We were trying to pray in secret.

When Russians were killing our men, they used to hide them under the barns. We move here and started a peaceful life".

Professor Shumana Phutkaradze published a poem of Muhajirs, which allegorically reflects the struggle of people, who were forced to move to distant lands (We also recorded these poems, which are very popular among the descendents of the Muhajirs:

*"Oh, beauty, why don't you cry? White rooster, why don't you crow?"<sup>9</sup>*

Beauty – represents the ancestors of the Muhajirs, and the white rooster – the symbol of the lost homeland.

Respondent Sevda Tavdgiridze says that Muhajirs were not aware that the borders would be closed and that they would not be able to see and visit their relatives left in their home country. The Russians closed the borders. Her grand grandfather till the time of his death was hoping to go to Gurjistan (Georgia) one day, but it never happened.<sup>10</sup>



**Sevda Tavdgiridze**

In her figurative expression, she compares Muhajirs with the swarm of bees:

*"Russians have thrown us out, so we flew here and settled. My grandmother even taught me a song about it: 'Flown bee, tell everyone else that you come from Gurjistan'"<sup>11</sup>*

At our request, the respondents recounted stories they have heard from their ancestors, trying to recall the interesting details. Some of them talked about the historic homeland of the remaining relatives. As for the events of the Russo-Ottoman war of 1877 – 1878, they either did not want to talk about it, or did not know, or have led us to view these events as recorded in the Turkish historiography. Sevda Tavdgiridze told the following:

*"When the Russian captured Batumi, the war with the Ottomans was over. When the Russian made peace with the Ottomans, the people were told: 'If you want, go to Turkey, if not – stay here. Nobody was interested in us, no one cared, neither Russians nor the Ottomans'"<sup>12</sup>*

The same pain is shown in another poem, where one women is addressing another named Gulchicheg:

*"Where should we go, where to hide, in Turkey or Russia?  
Both of them are our enemies, don't you understand that  
Gulchicheg?  
Here the Russians are pressing us, from there – Turkish soldiers,  
And I only want to stay in Gurjistan, in the village of my ances-  
tors".<sup>13</sup>*

Our respondent also remembered the poem about Ali Pasha Tavdgiridze, who was perceived as a traitor by the locals, because he did not protect Georgian national interests in the period of Russian-Ottoman war. But our respondent, Sevda Tavdgiridze gives us her interpretation of the poem:

*"Ali-Pasha betrayed us, carried us to Kvirike,  
Took the money for it, and betrayed us to Russians.  
But found trouble for himself: he was carried in ropes to the  
ship,  
His screams were heard after Supsa in Baileti".<sup>14</sup>*

The most emotional were the stories about the houses and the homeland they left behind, and about their ancestors they loved so much.

Completely different circumstances are highlighted by the respondents living on the historically ethnic territories, which are part of Turkey nowadays. If Georgian Muhajirs remember more about their ancestors who fled and settled in the new lands, the residents of Tao-Klarjeti talk more about the conflict between Russia and Ottoman Empire itself. Many of them think that Russia took Ajara from Turkey. They express their wish to be with Georgians but within the borders of Turkey. Alie Shubladze, a female resident of Khevtshruli settlement said:

*"The Russians drew the line between you and us after the war. We  
want to be with you – but in Turkey."<sup>15</sup>*

It is worth noting that the information about the war itself is almost entirely gone from their memory. It should be remembered that by the beginning of the war the Mujajirs was a 'single-religious' society, since the 'Islamization' of the nation has already been finalized.

We have surveyed 'Turkish Georgian' who did not have higher education. The number of educated women among them is rather insignificant. In nowadays Georgian Ajara the women surveyed had secondary, and often higher education. Our research revealed that women with higher education living in Ajara have the regional as well as the global understanding of the war and Muhajirism. They think that the return of Ajara to Georgia was the most crucial event in the history of the Georgian nation. Altogether, it was also representation of the global policy that

resulted in the Russian empire acquiring more territory. They thought that following the Russian Ottoman War, "the tsarist and the Ottoman pseudo-appeals and triumphant visit to Georgia as if to support the Georgian nation, in fact, aimed at disorienting and demoralizing the Georgian society".<sup>16</sup>

This part of the respondents also indicated in their stories the specifics of the war. This war was characterized by the reinforcement of the confrontation among the nations. In their opinion, the events related to the war and Muhajirism should not be hidden from the society, and an adequate, coherent and a consistent version of the events has to be reconstructed. All the facts have to be assessed in the context of the historical era.<sup>17</sup>

The women living in Georgia and having no higher education think in a completely different way. Part of them consider that the war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire started over Ajara, and believe that Russia delivered honorable mission. Naturally, the tsarist Russia spread the respective propaganda among the locals, masked its true imperial ambitions in order to extend its territory and influence. However, after the end of the war the illusions disappeared, since the tsarist government planned to 'clean' the territory from the local population, which became one of the main reasons for Muhajirism.

The respondents could not name specific examples of the active involvement of women in the military operations and other events, but they claimed that there were women who inspired men's fight. Interestingly, the position of women of that time was regulated by the norms of the traditional law (*adat*, traditions, in the Muslim part – Sharia). Usually women neither engaged in the social and political life, nor were they involved in deciding important family issue. In spite of this, women were occasionally extremely active. Neile Surmanidze (80), a respondent, spoke of her grandmother and her initiative that prompted her grandfather to enlist as a volunteer and fight for the return of the South-Eastern part of Georgia to the "historic native land". Women also initiated the establishment of the special fund to aid soldiers. Many women themselves decided to collect clothes for the same reason.<sup>18</sup>

These women respondents have rather negative attitude to Turkey that conquered part of Georgia and oppressed the locals. Naturally, it was partly true; however, the position of these women shows the influence of the official ideology of Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Empire afterwards. For example - Liana Partenadze told us what she had heard from her grandmother about the creation of the large-scale espionage network by Turkey, which used promises, threats, or blackmail in order to push the local residents to the decision of moving to the internal provinces of the Ottoman Empire. She claimed that the same was done by the Russians.<sup>19</sup>

One of the respondents, 102 year old Altun Vashakmadze listed the crimes committed both by Russians as well as Turks:

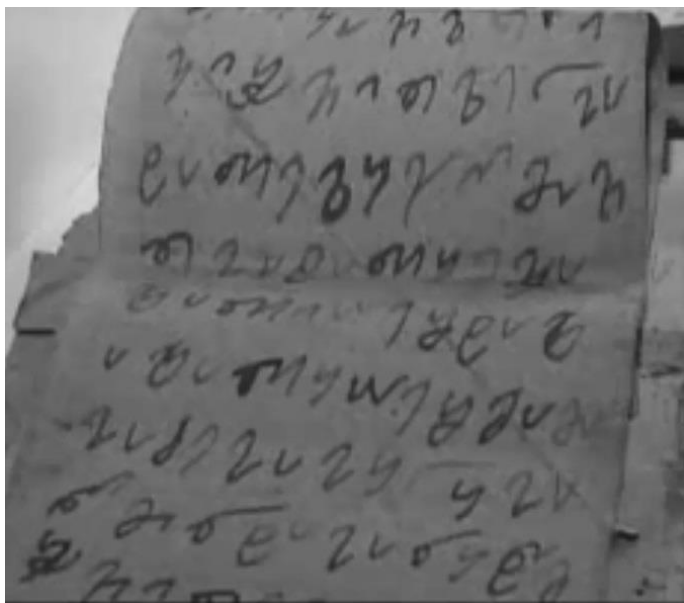
*"I remember my mom used to tell us that the Turks were our oppressors, they took our lands, forced us to pay high taxes, and limited*



*us in everything. My great grandma spoke how they provoked their men to fight in the war against the Turks. The women in our village knitted socks and collected clothes for soldiers. 'We want to be with our Georgians'."*<sup>20</sup>

Particularly interesting was the information on the secret writing system 'Dedabruli'<sup>21</sup> created by the Georgian women and used to safeguard the secrecy of the correspondence under the Ottoman rule. "My grandma said that they used the letters that nobody would be able to read", said Altun Vashakmadze.<sup>22</sup>

Kobuleti Museum holds the scripts dated back to the 17-19 centuries, written with the 'dedabruli' alphabet in the Megrelidze household in the historic gorge of Kintrishi (Kobuleti settlement).



**Dedabruli script, Kobuleti Museum**

Unlike the highlanders of Ajara, the women residing along the Black Sea naturally retained better memory of the war and Muhajirism. The residents of the Ajara seashore were the first to suffer the violence and brunt of that period. Ketevan Motskhobili from the Tsikhistdziri village, Kobuleti District, shares:

*"Our great-grandma used to tell us that Kobuleti was nearly entirely deserted. After the war, the Kvirike village accounted only 23 out of 160 families living there".*<sup>23</sup>

However, some of the villages had the highly respected men whose opinion was valued and trusted by the co-villagers, like Jusup Komakhidze, a villager of Achkvistavi. Under his leadership, none of the families of is village became Muhajirs. This was even mentioned in the poem:

*'Khino villagers left to 'muhajir'. Chakhati villagers got theirs  
stomach aching,  
Achvistavi people are planning to leave too, when bay cherry  
loses its leaves.'*

(Meaning the villagers of Achkhistavi will leave  
when pigs fly, i.e. never).

Ketevan Motskobili told us of the women who nursed the ill and wounded, collected money and clothes for the Georgian soldiers. "Some young women cut and sold their plaits to be able to assist soldiers".

The respondents' stories rarely specified names and surnames. Still, some respondents described the activities of the Georgian nurses. They spoke of Elena Kazbegi who took diligent care of the ill and wounded soldiers throughout the war. One of the families even kept her photo: This family also had two photographs with the other hospital nurses. Similar photographs are kept in the Ajara Archive Department.<sup>24</sup>



**Elena Kazbegi, hospital nurse**



**A group of wounded soldiers, hospital nurses and attendants. Ozurgeti, the War of 1877 – 1878 (photo by D. Ermakov)**

The photograph below shows the group of doctors and nurses: Elena Kazbegi is playing backgammon with Doctor Malinovsky, watched by Kravchenko and Sergeev.<sup>25</sup>

The stories from the respondents presented in our research reflect the key events of that period. The Georgian society has created the narrative based on the facts, collective memory of the Russian-Ottoman War of 1877/78, and the policy of the two rival empires that led to the people's migration (Muhajirism). Now we should assess the issues of the relations between Russia and the Ottoman Empire with Georgia in that historical context.

The anti-Georgian policy of the Ottoman and Russian sides were equal in violence. Thousands of people were forced to leave their ancestors' heritage due to this policy. The latter reflected the interests of the Ottomans to occupy the area economically and demographically. At the same time, the migrating people were seen by the Ottomans as a force with latent anti-Russia attitude that could be exploited if needed. On the other hand, the same policy was in line with the colonial interests of Russia whose long-term plans included the moving and settling of the Muhajirs in the vacant area.



**Nurse Elena Kazbegi and Doctor Malinovsky are playing backgammon. In the centre: Kravchenko, on the left: Sergeev. The War of 1877 – 1878 (photo by D. Ermakov)**

What needs to be created are memorials, monuments, common graves of those who died in the war, specification of the names of the patriot women that raised their voices against the Ottoman and Russian aggression and Muhajirism. The day of the commemoration of those who fell in the war has to be established; streets, schools, hospitals, and alleys in towns and villages should be named after them. The date when the South-Eastern part Georgia was occupied by the Ottomans has to become a day of mourning. Historical research, documentaries, as well as fiction movies have to be produced about these events.

All of the above mentioned initiatives will contribute to the collaboration that occasionally occur between different social groups and to the reinforcement of Georgian national self-awareness, shattered by the long Ottoman and Russian occupations.

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<sup>2</sup> Respondent: Isminaz Iazi, field expedition, village of Oilati.

<sup>3</sup> Respondent: Yavuz Sultan, field expedition.

<sup>4</sup> Respondent: Sultan Takidze (Sezer), field expedition.

<sup>5</sup> Respondent: Memed Kai (Makaradze), field expedition.

<sup>6</sup> Respondent: Mehmed Misi, field expedition, Inegole.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Respondent: Helbet Abuladze, field expedition, Inegole.

<sup>9</sup> Phutkaradze, Shumana, *Chvneburebis Kartuli*, Batumi, 1993, 35.

<sup>10</sup> Respondent: Sevda Tavdgiridze, field expedition.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Respondent: Alie Shubladze, field expedition, Khevtshruli.

<sup>16</sup> Respondent: Sevda Tavdgiridze, field expedition.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Respondent: Neile Surmanidze, field expedition.

<sup>19</sup> Respondent: Liana Partenadze, field expedition.

<sup>20</sup> Respondent: Altun Vashakmadze, field expedition.

<sup>21</sup> *Dedabruli* or *Dedabruli Kheli* is a secret script based on Georgian Mkhedruli script that was prevalent in southwestern Georgia, especially in Guria and Adjara. The *Dedabruli* was used primarily in letters and manuscripts produced by women. The script was first closely examined by Dimitry Bakradze in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and later by Simon Janashia, who coined the term in the 1940s. - Mikaberidze, Alexander, *Historical Dictionary of Georgia*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, 259.

<sup>22</sup> Respondent: Altun Vashakmadze, field expedition.

<sup>23</sup> Respondent: Ketevan Motskhobili, field expedition, Tsikhisdziri village.

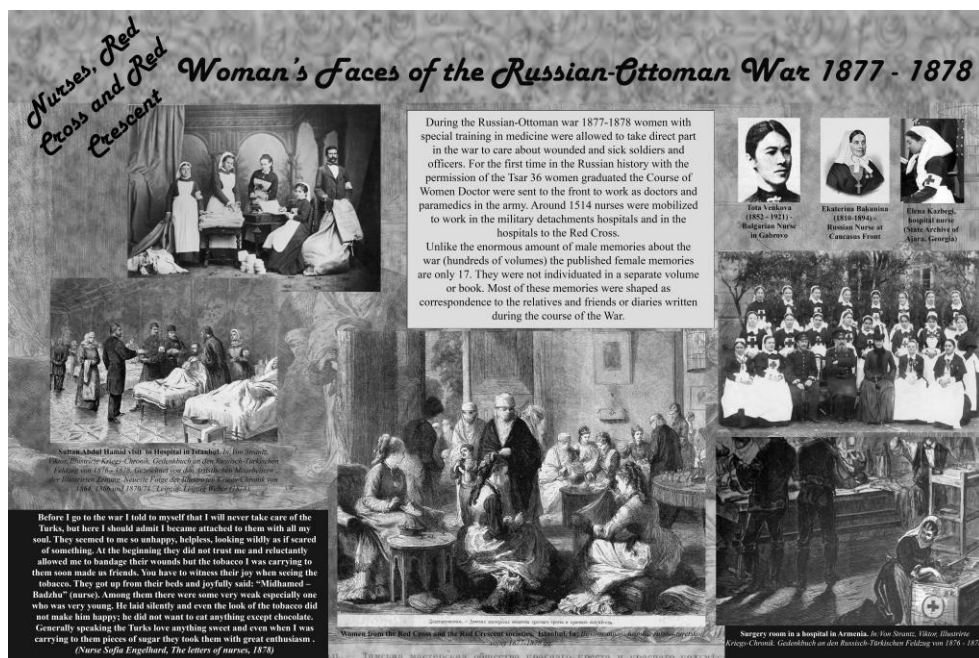
<sup>24</sup> State Archive of Ajara, Photo Archive, Issue 1, photo 245.

<sup>25</sup> State Archive of Ajara, Photo Archive, Issue 1, photo 244.

## EXHIBITION

*Nurie Muratova, Kristina Popova*

## Women Faces of the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878



**The exhibition includes the topics:**

***Women's Movements; Philanthropy; Memorials; Nurses, Red Cross and Red Crescent; Cinema.***

**It is available on the website: <http://nmuratova.wix.com/memoryrow>**

The Russian-Ottoman war 1877 – 1878 is presented first of all as a history of men, as stories about heroism, bravery, conquest, courage and military glory. The memory milestones and memory places are marked by masculinity – they are victo-

ries and defeats, heroic death, battles: they are thought to be results of qualities 'reserved for men: power of organization and planning, purposefulness, punctuality, discipline.

Women don't have their own memory landmarks of the Russian-Ottoman war. The mainstream historiography allows only 'small' narratives of women: women, who see off or meet soldiers, nurses, philanthropists, and sometimes also women-soldiers.

The most well know topic is the participation of women as nurses (more than 1000 in the Russian-Ottoman war). The instrumentalization of their image was done for the purpose of the war: parallel to its own ugly face, associated with violence and blood, the war got new features: beautiful and noble, which it didn't possess earlier. This picture of charity added more romantic aura to the military cause in the eyes of the public. The use of the image of nurses for the military propaganda was noticed since the very beginning of the war by Bertha von Suttner, later a peace activist. The war memory pushed out the personal memories of many nurses, who revealed the violence and the everyday suffering in the course of the war.

The mythological or mythologized images of women-soldiers – like Nene Hatun, Hristina Hranova and others were established by men of the next generations and not by women. The images of women – heroines were spread among the public first of all by memorials, movies, novels etc.

Part of the female images during the war were projections of the orientalist imagination of men: officers, military physicians and journalists as well as of their previously embedded pictures of the Balkan and the Caucasus. Further fears and dreams about the Orient and the seductive power of harems animated the curiosity and interest in the war among the newspapers readers.

Only small groups of women managed to voice their specific views about the war. A group of English women-activists and reformers established their own cultural criteria for evaluating foreign affairs that focused on the impact of war on women. This was done in a sharp contrast to the lack of women's voice on issues of foreign policy – that was largely fuelled by feminism. Reciprocally, women's discussion of foreign affairs and participation in relief work and activism solidified the organization and became an inspiration for the feminist movement.

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NATIONAL MODELS OF MEMORY  
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THE RUSSO-OTTOMAN WAR 1877 - 1878

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