

The Transformation of the Policy of the Russian Orthodox Church on Caucasus to the Russian-Ottoman War 1877-1878¹

Anastasiya Pashova, Petar Vodenicharov

The Russian Orthodox Church fully supported the official policy of the Imperial Court. The Church transformed the emphasis on “just war for the brothers Slavs” into “just war for the Orthodox Christians” after the Slav Committees were neglected by the Aristocratic party and the Emperor. The church tended to idealize the Russian-Ottoman War 1877-1878 as a just war for religious and political freedom of the conquered Balkan nations shadowing and justifying the aggressive wars of the Russian Empire on Caucasus since 17th century for political and economic reasons.

During the first quarter of the 19th century the Russian Orthodox Church realized the need of having own periodical as a means for missionary activity and religious propaganda. In 1821 the Sankt Petersburg Ecclesiastic Academy started the edition of the theological journal “Christian Reading” meant for the clergy of high ranks to discuss theological matters. The first more popular edition counting on wide audience was published by Kiev Ecclesiastic Academy and was called “Sunday reading”. Similar journals were issued by Seminaries as well: “School for devotion” in Riga, “Faith and reason” in Kharkov, “Wanderer” in Sankt Petersburg, “Reading useful for the soul” in Moscow.²

The use of religious convictions is an important factor for constructing social reality and effective means for legitimizing and preserving the dominant power. In Russia this role was entrusted to the religious press.

The Russian-Ottoman War in the Russian clerical press.

The accumulated publishing experience of the Church motivated the decision official press – eparchy registers - to be published by each eparchy. The general concept was elaborated by the archbishop of Kherson province – Inokentiy in 1853. The structure was

¹ The research was done in Stavropol, North Caucasus, Russian Federation on the project “Memory policies to the Russian-Ottoman war 1877-1878” sponsored by the program “Marie Curie” of the European Union.

² Макарова, О. А. *Роль прессы русской православной церкви в консолидации общества на территории Ставрополя с 1876 по 1916 гг.* В: Актуальные проблемы социогуманитарного знания, вып. X, ч. 4 М., 2002, с. 230. (O.A.Makarova, The role of the press of the Russian Orthodox Church in consolidating the society on the territory of Stavropol).

designed to include two parts – official one and nonofficial one. The first part was meant for publishing decrees and announcements of the Holy Synod, announcements of the state related to the eparchy, instructions of the eparchy superiors, yearly reports of the church institutions and information about shifting priests. The main task of the official part was to connect priests of different ranks to elaborate common position to different ideological and organization questions. In the nonofficial part sermons, didactic articles, historical, regional and bibliographic materials were published. These publications were meant for wider audience.³ The first eparchy registers were published in Yaroslavsky and Kherson. By the 1860s most of the eparchies were publishing their own registers. The official publication of the Holy Synod appeared later – in 1875 /"Church newspaper"/.

The Russian –Ottoman War /1877-1878/ is known in Bulgaria most of all as a war for "liberating the Bulgarians from the Turkish yoke by the Russian Slav brothers". Most often it is focused only on the Balkan theater of the military actions and the revolutionary – democratic reasons of the war are emphasized – liberating the small Balkan nations from the "Ottoman despotism".

The role of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Russian-Ottoman War /1877-1878/ is researched by a few authors in Bulgaria and Russia in comparison to so many researches related to the war and this fact could be explained easily⁴.

Since 1976, immediately after the April uprising, the Russian church periodicals undertook a wide propaganda campaign focused on "Slavdom". The first information about the April uprising was published only 4 days after the outburst of the conflict⁵. Not only sermons of Russian priests were published but a considerable place on the pages of the journals was preserved for the appeals of the Slav Charity Committees. In support of the "suffering Slavs" a series of articles were published in the "Church newspaper" aiming at proving the roots of the Russian love to the Slavs: "Could we not to love the brothers Slavs"⁶,

³ Макарова, О. А. *Роль прессы....* 233. (O.A.Makarova, The role of the press...)

⁴ In communist Bulgaria atheism was a state policy and any mentioning of the Church was doomed to failure. After the democratic changes researches on the role of the Church in the Russian-Ottoman war 1877-1878 appeared. Interesting are the researches: Адрианополския епископ Евлоги, *Българската православна църков в Русской периодической печати во второй половине XIX и начале XX века*, Москва, 1982 (Bishop of Adrianopol Evlogi, *The Bulgarian Orthodox Church in the Russian periodical press during the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century*). Варненския и Великопреславския митрополит Кирил, *Принос на руската православна църква за освобождението на България от турско робство 1876 -1879*, Варна, 2003 (Bishop of Varna and Veliki Preslav Kiril, *The contribution of the Russian Orthodox Church to the liberation of Bulgaria from Turkish slavery*)

⁵ Църковен вестник, 1876, № 45, с. 8 (Church newspaper)

⁶ Църковен вестник, 1876, № 34, август, с.1-2. (Church newspaper)

“Progress and Christianity”⁷, “The religious aspect of the Eastern question”⁸, “The difference between Christian and Muslim world”.⁹ Articles clarifying the purposes and the necessity of the war “The aim of the war”¹⁰ and “Could Russia alienate herself from the Eastern Question”¹¹ were published.

Our research is directed not to all church periodicals but only to the publications related to the war on the pages of the journal “Caucasus Eparchy Registers” for the period 1876 - 1879.

The aim of our paper is to outline the change of the discourse of the Orthodox Church to the Russian Ottoman War 1877-1878 in the course of the war.¹²

Why “Caucasus Eparchy Registers”? In order to understand better the complex character of the war it should be considered in the context not only of the Balkan front but on the Caucasus front as well where since 18th century the interests of the Russian, Persian and Ottoman Empires collided and indirectly the interest of the British Empire not to permit enlargement of the Russian Empire to South-East toward India was also affected.

The administrative center of the Caucasus Eparchy was constituted in 1843 in Stavropol. The Eparchy included territories of today Stavropol and Krasnoyarsk regions, part of Rostov region, Republics of Nord Ossetia, Karachay-Cherkessia, Ingushetia, Dagestan, Chechnya, Abkhazia, annexed to the Empire after the Caucasus War. Since most of the population in the Eparchy was of other than Orthodoxy religion – Sunni and Shia Islam, Christian sects, Old Believers (Staroobryadstvo), paganism – the main task of the Orthodox missionary activity was Christian religious education and propaganda of Orthodoxy.

On the initiative of the first bishop Jeremiah Ecclesiastic Seminary opened in Stavropol. The aims of the Seminary were: to raise the cultural and educational level of the local priests; to contribute for spreading the ideas of the Russian Orthodox Church among the local population; to provide theological education of Georgians, Ossetians, Kalmyks, Circassians in order to form local clerical elite.¹³

⁷ Църковен вестник, 1876, № 34, с. 7 (Church newspaper)

⁸ Църковен вестник, 1876, № 44, ноември, с. 1-4. (Church newspaper)

⁹ Църковен вестник, 1876, № 33, август, с.1-4. (Church newspaper)

¹⁰ Църковен вестник, 1877, № 41, октомври, с. 13. (Church newspaper)

¹¹ Църковен вестник, 1877, № 41, октомври, с.12. (Church newspaper)

¹² In a previous research we considered the war in the wider context of the conservative- religious interpretation of the war by the Russian religious philosophers – Slavophil and Catholicophil. See Петър Воденичаров, Анастасия Пашова, *Религиозно-консервативният дискурс за Руско-Отоманската война*. В: „Славистичен сборник”, Благоевград, 2013 (Petar Vodenicharov, Anastasiya Pashova, *The religious-conservative discourse about the Russian-Ottoman War 1877-1878*).

¹³ Макарова, О. А. Роль прессы русской православной церкви в консолидации общества на территории Ставрополя с 1876 по 1916 гг. В: Актуальные проблемы социогуманитарного знания, вып. X, ч. 4 М., 2002, с. 231. (O.A.Makarova, *The role of the press of the Russian Orthodox Church in consolidating the society on the territory of Stavropol*).

The beginning of the “Caucasus Eparchy Registers”

In such context the publishing of the journal “Caucasus Eparchy Registers” started. The structure of the journal followed the concept developed by Kherson archbishop Feofilact and did not change in the course of 45 years. The first issue was published in November 1872. An appeal of the editorial board to the local clergy was published outlining the main tasks of the periodical: “To improve the success of the pastor activity of the Caucasus priests, to enforce their energy for religious-moral perfection of their parishioners and for the spiritual enlightenment of the people. To reach these tasks the priests should be acquainted with the way of living of the local population, with their habits, customs, and believes.”¹⁴ Founded by a Decree of the Holy Synod the journal was published since 1872 till 1886 when the Caucasus Eparchy was divided into several independent eparchies – Stavropol, Ekaterinodar, Vladikavkaz, Sukhumi – and the journal continued to be published as “Stavropol Eparchy Registers” till 1917 with periodicity twice a month on 1st and 16th in 2-3 quires.

The permanent rubrics of the official section of the journal were “Instructions of the Government”, “Instructions of the eparchy superiors” and “Announcements”. The analysis of the published materials revealed that the administrative – information function dominated over the “satisfying of the spiritual-moral needs of the readers”. In the nonofficial section sermons, prayers, speeches of the priests on topics concerning the church calendar, chronicles of the local eparchy life of the Caucasus Christians – church construction, education, missionary and charity activities. Many of the publications were direct instructions for Orthodox Christian life and were directed to the clergy. The chronicles revealed the mood and aspirations of the common parishioners on different occasions and especially their attitude to the war.

Caucasus was a peripheral for the Empire region where the Orthodox Russians lived in the surrounding of people of different nation and religion and the Christian religious education and charity, construction of churches started intensively only after the end of the Caucasus war in 1864.¹⁵ Islam and the other confessions of the local nations were commented in a special rubric most often with tolerance and respect. Special attention was paid to the dissidence in the Orthodoxy.

¹⁴ “Кавказские епархиальные ведомости”, 1872, бр. 1 /февруари/, с. 20. (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

¹⁵ Вж. Котков, Вячеслав Военное духовенство России. Страницы истории, СПб., 2003. (Vjacheslav Kotkov, Military clergy of Russia. Pages of History)

The topic of the Russian-Ottoman War 1877-1876 in the 1876 issues of the Journal

The topic of patriotism in combination with emphasis on Christian virtues was present in the issues published in a year before the War, during the years of the War and the year after the War.

In “Caucasus Eparchy Registers” the year 1876 was marked by the news about the cruel crush of the uprisings in Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina and about the war in Serbia. Appeals of the “Slavic Charity Committee” to all believers to collect voluntary donations for “our Slav brothers” were published.¹⁶ On 16th of July 1876 the “Slavic Charity Committee” issued a Proclamation describing the cruelties of the Ottoman power in crushing the uprisings in Herzegovina and Bulgaria and the sufferings of the enslaved Slav nations on the Balkans “whose only sin is that they share the same faith and ethnicity with the Russians”.

„Atrocities, dissipation and wild passions as raping virgins, extinction of thousands of peaceful population, devastation of whole regions by fire and sword – that is what is doing to the unarmed Bulgarian population the furious Asiatic horde which has invaded the great Orthodox kingdom and other Orthodox Slav states. This horde is Turkey and she is a monstrous evil and a monstrous lie. Under the eyes of Europe she is torturing the Bulgarian tribe and crushing the last energy of the Slav ethnicity in Serbia and Monte Negro. The Slav population lost patience. The spark inflamed by the despair of Herzegovina lighted a fire in Bulgaria, Serbia and Monte Negro – they are prepared for a battle – the last tremendous fight of the Slavdom against the enslavers... The only defender of the Slaves in the whole world is Russia. But is not it enough?”¹⁷ In the appeal the Russian clergy and the Russian people are called to help. “*From the very beginning of the Herzegovina fight the Russian clergy all over Russia supported their cause – archbishops and village priests as well. All of them are devoted and true agents of the needs of our Slav brothers to the Russian people. They are motivated not only by Christian mercy but they have preserved alive their ethnical feelings and they understand correctly the historical mission and duty of Russia*”. The Russian clergy was considered as a mediator between the Government and the people.

The parishioners were called to donate on behalf of the “Orthodox brothers” and to pray in the churches for the victory of the “Orthodox brothers”. The donations were to be sent in Moscow to the private addresses of the members of the Governing board of the “Slav

¹⁶ “Кавказские епархиальные ведомости”, 1876, бр. 5 /март/, с. 220. (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

¹⁷ “Кавказские епархиальные ведомости”, 1876, бр. 14 /юли/, с. 520. (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

Committee". This was the last announcement of the "Slav Committee" on the pages of the Journal.

The reaction of the people of Caucasus was quick. In the next edition of the Journal information was provided about the donations of the "St. Andrei Fraternity"¹⁸. The names of 80 contributors were listed, their rank and occupation and the exact value of the donations – from hundreds rubles to kopeks.¹⁹ The poorest ones donated peaces of textile, cloths, objects, breads; there were also children among the contributors. Another note at the same Journal *"The contribution of the natives of the village Bezopasno after the speech of archpriest P. Nevtonovim during the Sunday liturgy"* announced about 185 rubles collected and sent to the Sankt-Petersburg branch of the "Slav Charity Committee".²⁰ The contributions gathered in several Stavropol villages – 807 rubles and 6 kopeks – were also announced.²¹

In the next issue of the Journal new information about donations was published. "In the editor's office of the "Eparchy Registers" donations were received and immediately sent to the *"Slav Charity Committee" on behalf of the Orthodox Slavs from Bosnia, Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Monte Negro*". The names of private contributors were listed; local village priests had collected the sum of 1155 rubles and 55 kopeks. For the first half of 1876 on behalf of the Orthodox Slavs on the Balkans in 19 districts by church donations were collected 4140 rubles and 1 kopek; from the rest 17 districts information was not available.²² Still donations were addressed to the Slav Committee.

To give an idea about the life of the other Slav nations the Journal published an announcement about the new printed volume "Slav words and voices" in which poems of the most famous Russian poets and translators were published – J. P. Polonsky, V.I. Slavjansky, count A.Tolstoy, O. Miler and others „*In the collection 77 poems are included – original and translated; the Russian heart could hear native inspired songs of Russian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Monte Negro, Czech, Polish, Slovenian, Croatian poets... The instinctive love of the Russian people to their Slav brothers should be turned into a conscious rational love by the knowledge provided. The Russian people should get acquainted with the rest of the Slav world, with the words, feelings, sorrows and torments of the Slavs; with the whole various life*

¹⁸ Caucasus eparchy with center in Stavropol was founded on 16th of January 1843. During 1872 the Church initiated an intense missionary activity among the Cossacks Old-believers, Muslims, Lamaist Buddhists, Malokani and other rationalistic Christian sects. In 1873 "St. Andrei fraternity" was founded which supported the educational, charity and missionary activity of the Church.

¹⁹ "Кавказские епархиальные ведомости", 1876, бр. 15 /август/, с. 524. (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

²⁰ "Кавказские епархиальные ведомости", 1876, бр. 15 /август/, с. 554. (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

²¹ "Кавказские епархиальные ...", 1876, бр. 16 /август/, с. 582. (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

²² "Кавказские епархиальные ... бр. 16, с. 603. (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

of the Slav tribes”²³. Still the accent is on all Slavs not only on the Orthodox ones. The addressee of the Collection is also mentioned: *“The volume will be read with enthusiasm by anyone interested in Slav deeds. In the school and family libraries it will find an appropriate place. The priests will give it with pleasure to their parishioners. In the cities and villages it will be handed over to young and old people, to clerical and laic people, to educated and not so educated ones – in other words – to the whole literate Russia”*.²⁴

In the September issue an announcement was published about the donations from 24 districts – 5 131 rubles and 5 kopeks; no information was available for the rest 12 districts.²⁵ An article was published *“The compassion of the Caucasus clergy and parishioners to the desperate situation of the Orthodox Slavs on the Balkans”* which provided a realistic picture of the moods and aspirations of the Russian people on Caucasus to the Slavs: *“We testify about the holly Christian love of the Orthodox Russian people to the brothers of the same faith and tribe – the Slavs on the Balkans – our love is reaching its limits: the Russian people are ready to sacrifice themselves for their brothers. To our consolation we witness how the holly flame of this fraternal Christian love is burning in the souls of the Orthodox residents of our distant from the center region and this flame is getting stronger day by day. The gratuitous and holly love finds its expression on the first place in collecting sources and objects on behalf of the suffering under the yoke and barbarism Slavs. Since the last year soon after publishing of the appeal of the bishop of Serbia and Monte Negro and the appeal of the “Slav Charity Committee” the clergy of the Caucasus eparchy honestly called on the parishioners to collect donations on behalf of the Orthodox victims of the uprising in Bosnia and Herzegovina and they answered compassionately about the collecting of sources on behalf of our miserable brothers. This year the sources increased considerably especially after the printed appeal of the archbishop of Caucasus to the eparchy leadership to cooperate in collecting sources on behalf of the Orthodox Slavs.”*²⁶ The representatives of the Cossack society, mostly old -believers, also contributed.

“On 8th of August the churchwarden of the Labinska church after the end of the liturgy addressed the believers by a warm and sensible sermon calling for donations on behalf of the Slavs. The mob in the church was of common Cossacks and their wives. Obviously each thought and word of the sermon were taken as something familiar and native. Deep sighs could be heard from all sites, tears were evident on the bronzed faces. Solemn was the minute

²³ Кавказские епархиальные ... бр. 17, с. 620 (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

²⁴ Кавказские епархиальные ..., бр. 17, с. 620 (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

²⁵ Кавказские епархиальные ... бр. 18, с. 633. (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

²⁶ Кавказские епархиальные ... бр. 18, с. 633. (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

when the priest passed to collect donations. In a few minutes 22 rubles were collected. After two hours old men gathered in the yard and asked the sermon to be read again. The mop was making the sign of the cross and listened with tense attention and benevolence. They decided to collect everything they could and asked about a place to be pointed where they could bring breads and objects to be sold and the money to be sent to the Slavs. For a short time they collected 470 rubles. The prisoners of the near by prison also got interested in the sermon and collected 50 rubles”²⁷. The parishioners considered prayer as the most important help: “On 29th of August when the holly Church is commemorating the Orthodox warriors and all people who sacrificed their lives for faith and Fatherland the archbishop of Caucasus ordered a dirge to be held in the cathedral to pray for the souls of the dead slaves of God – Russian, Serbian, Montenegrin and Bulgarian Orthodox warriors. The people presented in the church prayed with eagerness and shed bitter tears about the brothers fallen in the war and about these innocent old men, women and children who will present themselves to God”²⁸ The case in Caucasus was not an isolated case and that is evident from the diary of Anna Aksakova who on 23rd of August 1876 had marked off pathetically. “The whole Russian people rose as one man trembling of holly outrage at sufferings of our brothers by blood and faith subjected to extermination by mean Turkey. The sympathy of Russia is an irresistible impulse and she stretches compassionately her hand to the brothers... she is sending her best sons to the brothers-Slavs.”²⁹

By the end of 1876 in the official church publication the discourse of “liberating the Slavs” suddenly changed into “liberating our brothers Christians”. At the beginning the activities of the Slav Committee ³⁰, organized in the middle of the 19th century, was widely supported by the Government and the Russian Orthodox Church. The Slav Committee undertook a wide scale charity campaign for “Orthodox and other Slavs”. The collected donations granted by Russian people and institutions were meant for the ‘brothers Slavs’. During the Serb-Ottoman War 1875-1876 the Kiev Slav Society armed volunteers to fight in Serbia and Bulgaria. The Society helped also to the victims in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Just

²⁷ Кавказские епархиальные ...бр. 18, с. 646. (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

²⁸ Кавказские епархиальные ...бр. 18, с. 646. (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

²⁹ Аксакова, Анна, *При дворе двух императоров*, М., 2008, 592 с. (Anna Aksakova, *In the court of two Emperors*)

³⁰ The Slav committees were constituted as social-political and charity organizations to help the Slav nations under Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian rule. The first Committee was established in 1858 in Moscow; in 1868 a branch of the Committee opened in Petersburg; in 1869 in Kiev; in 1870 in Odessa. In 1877 a statute of all Slav Committees was voted and Ivan Sergeevich Aksakov was elected chef of the Slav Committees. The activities of the Committees were based on the ideology of “pan-Slavism”. See Никитин, С.А., *Славянские комитеты в России в 1858 -1876 г.*, М, 1960. (S.A. Nikitin, *Slav committees in Russia in 1858-1876*).

before the Russian-Ottoman War (April 1877) and during the first months of the war the Slav Committee tried to act independently from the Tsar and the Government who supported unofficially the Committee by that time. The Government paralyzed the attempt of an independent policy of the Slav Committee as early as the end of August 1876.³¹ The editor's offices of the Moscow newspapers were ordered by the Minister of Interior to stop publishing any announcements coming from the Slav Committee; the right of the Committee to collect donations for the "brothers Slavs" was also canceled."³²

The excessive influence of the Slav Committees which have accumulated a considerable charity capital provoked the reaction of the conservative aristocratic party and the Palace suspecting the Committee of spreading nationalistic and revolutionary ideas.

On the other side the disappointment of the Serb reticence to answer to the Russian support and to take active role in the forthcoming war unlike the expected considerable role of Rumania³³ also imposed the change of the Slav rhetoric by Orthodox one.³⁴ Since the end of 1876 all donations collected in the churches were to be transferred to the "Society of Trusteeship on Sick and Wounded Warriors" under the patronage of the Empress. In the following announcements of received donations for October, November and December the rhetoric of the Journal changed. The addressee was not any more "brothers Slavs" but only "Orthodox Christians". The collected sources were not directed to the Slav Committees but it was not mentioned to which organization they were transferred to. Announcements about the new donations were published in №19, №20, №22, № 23 and №24 issues of the Journal. Especially moving was the action of a blind bagger: *"Most of the donors are ready to give their last kopeck for the suffering brothers. One blind by birth woman nevertheless providing for herself by bagging granted on behalf of the suffering Slavs 25 inches of cloth"*. For half a year only from fifth districts 7 315 rubles and 63 kopecks were collected.³⁵ By the end of December the total sum collected for the month was 7 897 rubles and 18 kopecks.

³¹ НИКИТИН, С.А., *Славянские комитеты* (S.A. Nikitin, *Slav committees* ...); Аксакова, А. Ф., *При дворе* (Anna Aksakova, *In the court*...)

³² Аксакова, Анна, *При дворе* ..., 598 с.

³³ Описание Русско – турецкой войны 1877-1878 на Балканском полуострове, т. 1 Обстановка перед войной, Изд. Военного – Исторической Комиссии Главного Штаба, СПб., 1901. (History Commission of the Headquarters of the army, Description of the Russian-Turkish War 1877-1878 on the Balkans. The situation before the War)

³⁴ In an article I.S. Aksakov criticized the Court for the defeatist Berlin Treaty which, according to him, betrayed the interests of the Bulgarian Slavs. The paper passed from hand to hand. Because of the article he was sent into exile to the estate of the sister of his wife; Slav Committees were closed.

³⁵ Кавказские епархиальные ...бр. 22, с. 778. (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

The topic of the war in 1877 issues of the Journal

In the 1877 issues announcements about collected donations on behalf of the “Orthodox Balkan brothers” continued to be published but the prevailing topic was the preparation and mobilization for the coming war. For the first time the new charity organization was mentioned “Society of Trusteeship on Sick and Wounded Warriors”³⁶ The war was not still declared but it was obvious that it was forthcoming. „*With regard to the mobilization of the troops of the active army Her Majesty the Empress a High Patron of the “Society of Trusteeship on Sick and Wounded Warriors” is worried about the preparation of enough merciful brothers and sisters to care about sick and wounded warriors was so kind to express desire the female monasteries as Kostromski, Bogojavlenski and others in which nuns are educated for right treatment of sick warriors to prepare units of nurses to be directed to field hospitals which should be organized inside the Empire near to rail ways on the way of the evacuation line*”³⁷. It was announced that sources needed for the initiative will be received from general-adjutant Baumgarten in the Office of the ““Society of Trusteeship on Sick and Wounded Warriors” in Sankt Petersburg.

In his New Year speech, published in the Journal, archpriest Vasiliy Rozaliev described an apocalyptic picture of the Balkans preparing to the future war.

„During the last year the East was burning and the Slav blood was shed in rivers. Tireless death was doing her work on the battle fields and devastated the lines of our brother Christians. The outrage of the enemies of the cross went further, outside of the battles thousands peaceful and unarmed Christians were slaughtered even old men, defamed were women and virgins, youngsters were not spared. The heart of the Russian people got sick, extremely insulted and shocked, and sons of Russia, not waiting for a state decision, came to the aid of the suffering brothers...remember Russia, you are Orthodox and Slav country and this is your power, your historical vocation and mission”³⁸.

³⁶ Founded in 1867 on the initiative of several military doctors, the jurist K.P. Pobedonoscev (Future Ober – Persecutor of the Holy Synod) and the Minister of War D. A. Miljutin. The statute of the Society was signed by the Emperor and the Empress Maria Alexandrovna took the Society under her protection. In 1876 36 lady’s Committees were constituted including 1200 women mainly noblewomen; the total number of the members of the Committee reached 10 047. In 1878 the Society was renamed as Society of the Red Cross. See. Боцяновский В. Ф., Исторический очерк деятельности Российского общества Красного Креста. СПб., 1896 (V.F.Botsjanovskij, Historical outline of the activity of the Russian Society of the Red Cross); Российский Красный Крест: Исторический обзор деятельности. СПб., 1902 (The Russian Red Cross; Historical survey of its activity); Постернак А. В. Очерки по истории общин сестер милосердия. М., 2001 (A.V. Posternak, Articles on the history of the community of the charity sisters) ; Селиванов Е. Ф. Российское общество Красного Креста // Три века Санкт-Петербурга. Девятнадцатый век: Энциклопедия. Кн. 5. СПб., 2006. (E.F. Selivanov, The Russian Society of the Red Cross)

³⁷ Кавказские епархиальные ведомости”, 1877, бр. 1 /януари /, с. 3. (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

³⁸ Кавказские епархиальные..., 1877, бр. 2, с. 55-57. (Caucasus Eparchy....)

In March an appeal to the nuns and monks of the monasteries to enroll in the “Society of Red Cross” was published. It was announced that in Holmogorsky Uspensky monastery 120 nuns are ready “to help to the Fatherland and Church” even the 70 year old nun Antonia is ready to leave for the front “to wash cups and to cook”.³⁹ Other nuns from the Caucasus eparchy also announced their readiness to enroll in the units of merciful sisters; the ones left in the monasteries expressed their desire to make sanitary materials.

The church warden of the Black Sea Maria-Magdalene Monastery provided one nun and six neophytes to leave for the military hospitals in case of military actions, the church warden of the Stavropol Joan-Maria female monastery provided 10 nuns.⁴⁰

On 12th of April the Emperor Alexander II issued a Manifest officially declaring war to Turkey.⁴¹ In the published text Slavs were not mentioned, only Christians; motives about opening Caucasus front where the war was of aggressive character were silenced. Only Russia was proclaimed as the only country with unique mission to “liberate the Christians of the Balkans” belittling the own efforts of the Balkan countries and the support of Rumania which had signed an agreement for common military actions on 4th of April 1877⁴²; the diplomatic efforts of European countries to solve peacefully the East crises were ignored and the preliminary agreements with some of them to keep neutrality in future war were not mentioned:⁴³

“In Russia we cared to preserve the blessed peace. This care we manifested during the sad events in Herzegovina, Bosnia and Bulgaria...All our subjects know about the compassion we have always had to the Christian population in Turkey. The Russian people express their readiness to self-sacrifice in order to relief the destiny of the Christians on the Balkans – we kept our aspiration in the course of two years to convince the Porte to undertake reforms in order to protect the Christians of Bosnia, Herzegovina and Bulgaria against the arbitrary acts of the local authorities... Our love for peace is exhausted and we are compelled by the arrogant persistence of the Porte to proceed to decisive actions. Our sense of justice and our sense of own dignity incited us act in such manner. The refusal of Turkey compels us to turn

³⁹ Кавказские епархиальные, 1877, бр. 3, с. 101. (Caucasus Eparchy....)

⁴⁰ Кавказские епархиальные, 1877, бр. 5, с. 154. (Caucasus Eparchy....)

⁴¹ Кавказские епархиальные..., 1877, бр. 9, с.282. (Caucasus Eparchy....)

⁴² Сборник материалов по русско-турской войне 1877-1878 годов на Балканском полуострове, в. 11, СПб, 1898, с. 234 - 42. (Collection of materials about the Russian-Ottoman War 1877-1878 on the Balkans)

⁴³ Описание Русско – турецкой войны 1877-1878 на Балканском полуострове, т. 1. Обстановка перед войной, Изд. Военного – Исторической Комиссии Главного Штаба, СПб., 1901. (Description of the Russian-Turkish war 1877-1878 on the Balkans)

to the power of arms. Appealing to the God to bless our heroic army we decree entering in the territory of Turkey.”⁴⁴

The Caucasus front was not mentioned in the Manifest nevertheless the war was already going on there. We hoped to find an answer in the regional journal of the Russian Orthodox Church “Caucasus Eparchy Register” since it covered the whole Caucasus region stretching to the edge of the future military actions – Kars, Erzurum, Bajazet, Ardahan, Alexandropoulos, where a compact Armenian Christian population lived - and Adjara, part of Georgia which was annexed by the Ottoman Empire in 16th century and whose population became predominantly Muslim, but the Journal was focused more on the Balkan than on the Caucasus front. The publishing of the Manifest was followed by an order of the Holy Synod the Manifest to be read in all churches and monasteries after the liturgy. The monks who were willing to care for sick and wounded warriors as charity brothers were advised to attend 8 weeks courses on sanitary work organized by the military hospitals after being approved by the of the “Society of Trusteeship on Sick and Wounded Warriors.”⁴⁵

After the beginning of the military actions information about the events on both fronts were published in each issue of the Journal. All the publications emphasized the just character of the war and the God blessing on the endeavor. The publications aimed at stimulating the patriotic feelings of the various readers of the Journal.

Bishop German called for new donations on behalf of the “Society of Trusteeship on Sick and Wounded Warriors”⁴⁶. In his speech after the announcement of the Manifest he justified theologically the war – the Christian ideal about the international relations is peace for all but this ideal could be realized only after the God Kingdom will be enthroned on the Earth, by that time war is inevitable.⁴⁷

Information about the outburst of patriotic feelings in Moscow after the publication of the Manifest was provided. Millions rubles were granted by the Commercial, Guild and Exchange societies. Sankt-Petersburg, Kiev and Samara Assemblies started a campaign for collecting sources to support “the families of the killed warriors and war invalids” and to equip military hospitals.”⁴⁸ The Orthodox Church issued a permission Ladies’ Committee in Stavropol to gather donations in the churches on behalf of the “Society of Trusteeship on Sick

⁴⁴ Описание русско – турецкой войны.... 1901, с. 376 – 377, (Description of the Russian-Turkish...)

⁴⁵ Кавказские епархиальные ведомости”, 1877, бр. 9 с. 286. (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

⁴⁶ Кавказские епархиальные... 1877, бр. 9, с.302. (Caucasus Eparchy ...)

⁴⁷ Кавказские епархиальные..., 1877, бр. 9, с. 311. (Caucasus Eparchy ...)

⁴⁸ A new charity institution

and Wounded Warriors”.⁴⁹ 10 nuns from Joan-Maria monastery and 7 nuns from the Black Sea Maria-Magdalene monastery announced that they are ready to care for sick and wounded warriors. After getting a permission from the Chef Doctor of the Stavropol military hospital the nuns departed to “the theater of the military actions on Caucasus”. The sources needed for their accommodation in the military hospitals to attend courses on sanitary work were provided by the local population.⁵⁰ The Caucasus eparchy female school started to prepare dressing materials; children granted their money provided by their parents for delicacy to orphans of the killed warriors.⁵¹ An article about the history of the Pitsunsky monastery “The Assumption” on the east shore of the Black sea in Abkhazia recalled the ancient traditions of Christianity on Caucasus to legitimize the military actions on Caucasus front where by that time Muslim population predominated. .

An announcement about the edition of a new journal “Newspaper of National Help” by the “Society of Trusteeship on Sick and Wounded Warriors” was published.⁵²

The topic of the War in 1878 issues of the Journal

1878 was marked by celebrations of victory and appeals for helping war invalids, widows and orphans. In the January edition the speech delivered on the occasion of the 100 anniversary of the birthday of Alexander I (12th of November 1877) in the Caucasus Seminary was published. He was praised for: “liberating Russia and Europe from the Gauls”; raising the level of the national education (founding eparchy schools for primary education, high schools in the province centers, Institutes of Pedagogy in Sankt Petersburg and Moscow and four new universities in Vilnius, Kazan, Kharkov, Petersburg); reforming the administration (eliminating the Secret Chancellery and founding Ministries); improving the way of living of the low classes and limiting serfdom; enlarging the empire in wars with Sweden, Turkey, Persia. He was compared to Alexander II who was praised for: “the heroism of a true evangelical selflessness in liberating the Christians of a native to us Slav nation”; bringing to an end the decades of bloody war against the Muslim nations of Caucasus; contributing to the national education (opening countless schools for the male and female population; founding female high schools, a Seminary for Teachers, new university in Odessa; providing Bibles in Modern Russian Language; opening social libraries and reading rooms). His contributions to

⁴⁹ “Кавказские епархиальные ведомости”, 1877, бр. 10, с. 345. . (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

⁵⁰ “Кавказские епархиальные ...”, 1877, бр. 10, с. 346. (Caucasus Eparchy)

⁵¹ “Кавказские епархиальные...”, 1877, бр. 10, с. 349. (Caucasus Eparchy)

⁵² “Кавказские епархиальные ведомости”, 1877, бр. 12, с. 416. (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

modernizing Russia were also underlined: the Manifest of 19th of February abolishing the serfdom, liberating the courts from administrative control, eliminating the bodily punishments; liberalizing the municipalities, introducing common military subscription. In such way the Church nevertheless a conservative institution was making popular the liberal reforms in the 19th century Russia.

A list with the names of the killed or died of their wounds Cossacks of low ranks during 1877 was published (12 Cossacks) followed by a list of donations for the families of the killed ones.⁵³

During the same year by a Decree of His Imperial Majesty the Holy Synod permitted gathering donations in the churches after liturgy for wounded and sick warriors under the patronage of the “Society of Trusteeship on Sick and Wounded Warriors” of Her Majesty the Empress.⁵⁴ Information was provided about organizing units of charity sisters and brothers from the male and female monasteries educated in right treatment of wounded and sick warriors; the units were directed to the military hospitals.

The male monasteries situated along the rail ways were ordered to be at hand of the “Society of the Red Cross” for organizing hospitals and asylums for sick and wounded warriors.

The collecting of donations from the churchwardens for supporting the needy families of soldiers, orphans and poor men continued. In 1878 the sum of 1 300 000 rubles was collected.⁵⁵ Priests were advised not to marry officers without getting a permission from their superiors.⁵⁶ Several cases of donations for sick and wounded warriors were reported. “A ruble was granted by 70 year old Cossack – a retired soldier who burst into tears and said “I know, I know how it is to be on war”⁵⁷. The graduates of the Caucasus female eparchy school helped wounded and sick soldiers by sewing underwear on the request of the “Committee for Wounded Warriors” (160 pairs of underwear).⁵⁸

In March detailed information about the Thanksgiving service on the occasion of the signing of peace treaty with Turkey held in Stavropol on 23rd of February was provided. „*The noble blood of the sons of Russia shed for the liberation of millions Turkish Christians from*

⁵³“Кавказские епархиальные ...”, 1878, бр. 1, с. 14-15. (Caucasus Eparchy ...)

⁵⁴ “Кавказские епархиальные ведомости”, 1878, бр. 2, с. 32-33 (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

⁵⁵ “Кавказские епархиальные ...”, 1878, бр. 2, с. 37. (Caucasus Eparchy...)

⁵⁶ “Кавказские епархиальные ...”, 1878, бр. 2, с. 39. (Caucasus Eparchy...)

⁵⁷ “Кавказские епархиальные ...”, 1878, бр. 2, с. 40. (Caucasus Eparchy...)

⁵⁸ “Кавказские епархиальные ...”, 1878, бр.2, с. 50. (Caucasus Eparchy...)

*Muslim slavery would serve as a strong cement uniting them if not politically then morally, spiritually and religious with Russia, in a great unity”.*⁵⁹

After the end of the war appeals for establishing parish trusteeships to the Caucasus eparchy were published and the object of their activities was described: „*The need of such trusteeships is sensible now – many children are left without fathers killed in battles or died of wounds and deceases or alive but turned into invalids not able to provide for themselves. The Government entrusted a mission to the trustees to care for the war invalids and the families of the killed ones. In the Caucasus eparchy the number of the persons and families suffering because of the war is greater than in any other inside province of Russia, the victims among the Kuban and Tersk Cossacks count thousands*”.⁶⁰

The Journal informed the parishioners about the establishment of badge of honor of the Red Cross in three degrees for women caring about wounded and sick warriors.⁶¹ On the pages of the Journal an Instruction of the Eparchy Superiors to inform the parishioners about the activity of the “Committee for Providing Help to Families of Killed Warriors, the Ones Died of Wounds and War Invalids” was published”.⁶² The Moscow Commercial, Exchange, and Guild Societies have already granted 1 million rubles for this purpose; the Moscow commercial board is ready to provide money help to needy families; the needy procedures were described.⁶³

For the birthday of the Devout Master Emperor Alexander Nikolayevich – Tsar Liberator and Reformer a speech was published: “*The great mission of liberating and resurrecting one Christian nation is the most precious pearl in the tsar crown of our monarch ... The last East war proved to the whole world how reformed, reeducated and ennobled is the soul of the Russian people; it demonstrated their good heart, their moral greatness and all people around were stroked how far the Russian people went in mastering social life. The Russian people answering the call of the beloved monarch went to war not for themselves, not for mercenary but for the oppressed brothers, for justice, for liberty in the name of superior moral goals, in the name of Jesus himself and his love*”.⁶⁴

In the same issue the article “A Pressing Need of the Fatherland” called for creating a voluntary military fleet which could serve in peace as well. For this purpose local committees

⁵⁹ “Кавказские епархиальные ...”, 1878, бр. 5, с. 190. (Caucasus Eparchy...)

⁶⁰ “Кавказские епархиальные ...”, 1878, бр. 9, с. 319. ((Caucasus Eparchy...)

⁶¹ “Кавказские епархиальные ведомости”, 1878, бр. 10, с. 334. (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

⁶² “Кавказские епархиальные ...”, 1878, бр. 10, с. 338. The Committee for helping widows and orphans of war is a private charity organization founded on 26th of August 1876 under the guardianship of the Great Duke Sergey Alexandrovich

⁶³ “Кавказские епархиальные ...”, 1878, бр. 18, с. 636. (Caucasus Eparchy...)

⁶⁴ “Кавказские епархиальные ...”, 1878, бр. 19, с. 344-350.. (Caucasus Eparchy...)

for collecting donations helped by clergy were organized. The danger of a coming new war was voiced: *“By the time when our enemies were signing a peace treaty, near to our army in the waters of Marble Sea the ugly military ships of the strongest sea country were gathering. In the endmost West of Europe a country quickly and openly prepare for war.”* Donations for the voluntary fleet and for sick and wounded warriors were listed.⁶⁵

Information about the sisters from Joan-Maria Monastery caring for wounded and sick warriors was published.⁶⁶ The return of 4 charity sisters from Caucasus front was also covered; on 14th of September the return of the rest 6 sisters was expected. The arrived sisters presented to bishop German letters from the doctors and chefs of the hospitals where they had served. Letters of gratitude from the “Society of Trusteeship on Sick and Wounded Warriors” and from Her Imperial Highness the Great Count Olga Teodorovna was also presented. Since 1st of July 1877 till 1st of September 1878 they had served as charity sisters to the Caucasus army in Alexandropoulos, Kars and Erzurum.

*“They were forced all winter to live in tents having up to 1000 sick persons per day to care about and despite of this inhuman endeavor and the suffering of typhus they underwent in different forms the nuns followed strictly their duty to the end.”*⁶⁷ In the same issue reportage about the meeting of the Crimean infantry regiment coming back from the military actions in Asiatic Turkey was published. There *“already two hundred years (since 1769) they are doing a glorious military service taking part in 8 great victorious campaigns and 20 smaller conflicts with the Turks”*⁶⁸.

The Journal provided detailed information about the service of the nuns of the Black Sea Maria-Magdalene monastery and about two archmonks from Kizljarski monastery and one neophyte to the Caucasus bishop house caring for wounded and sick warriors...” In July 1877 from the Black Sea Maria-Magdalene monastery to the theater of the military actions in Asiatic Turkey 1 nun and 6 neophytes, one of which after several months selfless service to wounded and sick warriors was taken ill with typhus and finished her live in the Alexandrovska provisional military hospital on 9th of December 1877. The rest of them served compassionately not only to the end of the military actions but several months after signing the peace treaty”.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ “Кавказкие епархиальные ...”, 1878, бр. 19, с. 358. (Caucasus Eparchy...)

⁶⁶ “Кавказкие епархиальные ...”, 1878, бр. 19, с. 692. (Caucasus Eparchy...)

⁶⁷ “Кавказкие епархиальные ведомости”, 1878, бр. 20, с. 728. (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

⁶⁸ “Кавказкие епархиальные ...”, 1878, бр. 20, с. 732-735 (Caucasus Eparchy...)

⁶⁹ “Кавказкие епархиальные ...”, 1878, бр. 21, с. 780. (Caucasus Eparchy...)

In before the last for 1878 Journal a notice was published about a Permission of the Holly Synod from 15-21st of September concerning the nuns of the Bulgarian Kalofer monastery “Christmas” Sofia and Makrina who were allowed to collect donations on behalf of their monastery for a year in whole Russia.⁷⁰

The topic of the war in 1879 issues of the Journal

In 1879 the materials related to the war and to the consequences of the war were only a few. At the beginning of the year an order of the Holly Synod liturgical books, cloths and utensils to be provided to the destroyed and robed by the Turks churches in Bulgaria (Philipopolis eparchy) and Monte Negro trough the agency of the Charity Committee to the Russian Embassy in Constantinople. 60 Gospels and 100 other liturgical books were collected; for the churches in Elena district - 17 suits of priest cloths, silver church utensils and gift preserving boxes. The eparchy priests and trustees of monasteries were appealed to collect money, icons and church utensils for the stricken churches and the monasteries on the Balkan.⁷¹

Conclusion

The Russian Orthodox Church fully supported the official policy of the Imperial Court. The Church transformed the emphasis on “just war for the brothers Slavs” into “just war for the Orthodox Christians”. The church tended to idealize the Russian-Ottoman War 1877-1878 as a just war for religious and political freedom. But the official propaganda served to shadow and to justify the aggressive wars of the Russian Empire on Caucasus since 17th century for political and economic reasons (especially annexing Adjara possessing the strategic port of Batumi which was among the main targets of the last of the series of wars of Russia against the Ottoman Empire).

The cruel encounter of the Porte with the uprisings of the invaded Christian nations in the 19th century which became a matter of common knowledge in Europe was turned into a generalizing metaphor of the “centuries of Turkish slavery” and “Eastern despotism” which doesn’t fit exactly to the real economic, political and religious condition of the rayah in the Ottoman Empire in the course of many centuries.

Besides of the official policy of the Church the journal “Caucasus Eparchy Registers” provides information about the sincere religious experiencing of the war by common

⁷⁰ “Кавказские епархиальные ...”, 1878, бр. 23, с. 826 (Caucasus Eparchy...)

⁷¹ “Кавказские епархиальные ведомости”, 1879, бр. 2, с. 43-44 (Caucasus Eparchy Registers)

Christians who did not realize neither the policy of the Imperial Court, nor the interests of the Slavdom. The war provoked a wave of self-sacrifice and moral heroism testified by thousands of common people, monks and nuns, charity brothers and sisters, priests. Some of them inscribed their names in History only by being mentioned in the lists of donations, charity brothers and sisters avoided even that possibility preferring to stay anonymous. The religious experiencing of the war by a great part of the Russian society could be understood only in the context of religious and social renewal of Russia during the reign of the Tsar Liberator. .

One of the motives for active participation of the common soldiers, charity brothers and sisters in the Russian-Ottoman War was religion, the sincere desire to help to Orthodox brothers and sisters. The publications in the Journal speak about the power of the religious feeling in Russia which was used by the Russian government to assure a wide support, popularity and approval of the war nevertheless it was aggressive on the Caucasus front.